

Our Service Together

Lent 5

March 17th 2024



An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, as a mother feeds her children at the breast you feed us with the food and drink of eternal life: help us who have tasted your goodness to grow in grace within the household of faith. Alleluia

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's
holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 51.1-13 *We say the psalm aloud*

Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness;
according to the abundance of your compassion blot out my offences.
Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my faults and my sin is ever before me.
Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,
So that you are justified in your sentence and righteous in your judgement.
I have been wicked even from my birth, a sinner when my mother conceived me.
Behold, you desire truth deep within me and shall make me understand wisdom in the depths of my heart.
Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones you have broken may rejoice.
Turn your face from my sins and blot out all my misdeeds.
Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence and take not your holy spirit from me.
Give me again the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your gracious spirit
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Scripture Reading Jeremiah 31.31-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel John 12.20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

²⁷ 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' ³⁰ Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' ³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

The days are surely coming, the time for a change says God. A change to how the people know Him and live with him; time for a new covenant.

The first was obsolete not because it was worn out or not fit for the time and age, but because it was repeatedly broken – not by God, but by the people. This was a covenant with God's words of life; words through which the people could have life. It was a covenant broken whilst it was being written onto tablets of stone, high on the holy mountain. As Moses descended the evidence was all before him, a golden calf held high, the people bowed in worship, Aaron declaring 'behold, your God!'. On seeing this Moses, in horror, dropped the stone tablets which shattered just like the covenant they bore witness to.

But all was not lost, God's grace is too big for that, God's love for His people too vast. Moses dealt with the golden bull and his brother Aaron. Then he ascended the mountain once more to appeal to the grace which shapes the heart of God and seek out the 'starting over' of the covenant once more; and new tablets were created.

Jeremiah was the latest, in a long line of prophets who brought the words from the God of grace time and again, reminding a people who wandered, who missed the target, and needed to turn back to the covenant. But it would seem the time was for a new way, a new covenant. Is it that God's patience has run out, possibly with the effectiveness of the covenant, but certainly not with seeking a path of grace over judgment and so, rather than end all things God looks to a new process, a new covenant.

This new covenant will not be written on stone but in flesh and blood, no more words on tablets, now it is to be word in flesh. No longer words on hard stone but written on the living heart of the people. Jeremiah declares 'the time is surely coming' and many generations later people must have been wondering when this time was to be. As the Greeks come seeking Jesus he declares the time is now come for the Lord to be glorified, for the fruit of God's purposes to come into being.

Now is the time for new thing, a new covenant, a new lifting up, both sign and authoring of the covenant. In his crucifixion and death Jesus writes God's new covenant through the outpouring of God's grace. All people can now gather to him. But just as he writes the covenant with his flesh and blood so too he enables it to be

written in the hearts of all who would gather to him. Now there will be no need for stone tablets for the word of God which was made flesh has become the Christ, the Messiah, the way through which all flesh can know the words of God for life written in their hearts.

I do find myself wondering if words written on stone aided in the people's hearts turning to stone offering little love to each other or to God. But now there is a new possibility for the words of life, written on flesh, can become living, breathing, words of God, just as with Jesus himself. If so, I wonder how we might daily look to the words of life written on our hearts and seek to make them known, seek to animate them, so that God's glory is lifted high for all the world to see and for others to gather with us in worship and praise for his gift of grace upon the cross.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.

As we journey through the remainder of Lent may we grow in faith, understanding and service.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Strengthen Michael our Bishop and those who seek to serve you in this diocese. May they be filled with the Spirit and serve you as the first disciples. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for priests, preachers and theologians as they struggle to interpret the mystery of God to be relevant for each generation. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We Pray for the King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us into your peace. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them joy in your eternal kingdom. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. Amen.

The Collect

All: Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.