

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Third Sunday after Trinity - 28th June 2020

Collect:

God our saviour, look on this wounded world in pity and in power; hold us fast to your promises of peace won for us by your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Psalm 13

1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

2 How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

4 and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed"; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.



5 But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

A reading from the book of Genesis (22.1– 14):

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew (10.40-end)

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection:

Our reading today from the book of Genesis is one of the more disturbing stories in the Bible. As Christians, we sometimes hit this problem of God occasionally being depicted (usually in the Old Testament) as being manipulative, bloodthirsty and cruel. How do we reconcile this with the gospel message of God being love? Well, unhelpfully, part of the answer is that not everything has a neat and clear response. And perhaps we should not be trying to make passages like this one seem reasonable or comfortable. But there are two things to consider when we read this story, that might help to make it more understandable within its context.

Firstly, we should consider the world that Abraham lived in. Religions at this time were full of vindictive gods who demanded blood sacrifice. Abraham would have been familiar with the practices of people and religions surrounding him which did require the sacrifice of their children. The gods were thought to be angry and in need of placating - what better proof of loyalty and worship than to give to god the thing you held most dear? Surely, people thought, to do this would mean that the god HAD to listen, and would do what you asked in return. So when God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, it was a common practice in Abraham’s context. So this is a story of God asking Abraham to do something that was normal for gods to require, and Abraham accepts the demand because perhaps it seemed inevitable. That was just how the world was. But despite being quite disturbing, the story which unfolds then demonstrates how different God was - that *Abraham’s* God was NOT like all the other gods.

Secondly, we must consider the Bible itself. Christians have a variety of views on how we should approach the Bible, from taking every word as literally true, to seeing it as just a story containing moral teaching. However you think of the Bible, something important to remember is that it was written by a variety of human beings, in a whole range of different contexts and eras of history. Every person who wrote part of the Bible was on their own journey of figuring out who God is, and how God interacts with us in the world. It can be helpful for much of the Old Testament, to think of these (often alarming!) interactions as being the best human attempt to explain how God made sense to those people at those times, in that context.

Perhaps it helps to think about us today: for example, if we pray for someone to be healed, and they do get better, we see that as being God at work. But someone without faith simply sees that the medicine did its job. So as Christians, we weave God into our stories, from our own perspectives. It’s the same with the writers of the Bible.

So perhaps this story of Abraham nearly sacrificing Isaac is a way of exploring how Abraham’s God was not the same as all the other gods. In this way, it might even be a story of compassion, of provision, of mercy and love. It’s a new, different story of a new and different God. None of this is to say that God asking for a child to be killed makes any sense to us now, no matter how the story ends, but our heritage of the Bible in all its diversity and strangeness means that we hold these stories together alongside our own, as we journey together in our understanding of God.

This is why faith requires discernment. Even today the Bible is used to argue for many varying opinions on all sorts of matters. So the question for us is, what do we believe the gospel message to be? Jesus came to bring a new commandment and new covenant - to love one another, and our short gospel reading today is about welcome. In our world today with everything that is going on, how might we offer welcome to all people? How might we model the open arms of Jesus’ love, as we journey in faith together? **Amen.**

- Rev Cat

*We are the body of Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life.*

Alleluia! The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Here are the words of two hymns you may like to sing or pray this

I come with joy, a child of God,
forgiven, loved, and free,
the life of Jesus to recall,
in love laid down for me.

I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread.

As Christ breaks bread and bids us
share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us makes us one,
and strangers now are friends.

The spirit of the risen Christ,
unseen, but ever near,
is in such friendship better known:
alive and among us here.

Together met, together bound,
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world,
the love that makes us one.

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Call this number ↓ for free,
for a greeting from Justin Welby,
Archbishop of Canterbury!

Then listen to hymns being sung,
prayers, or reflections. Give it a
go, it's a lovely way to worship
from home!



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers



St Thomas Church is open for Private Prayer, on Mondays and Thursdays, between 11 am and 2 pm. Two members of the congregation will be there to supervise. **If you are under 70 and willing to volunteer, please contact the church wardens.** The Peace Garden is Open for use during the day.

Sunday: 5th July: St Thomas Patronal Festival: Following the government's announcement this week, **we maybe able to hold a service in Church on 5 July, which we will also livestream.** We are waiting to receive detailed instructions and will put into place all necessary precautions to keep everyone safe. We will contact everyone next week to tell you what is happening.

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Sophie, Adam, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Frank D., Andrew Derrett, Peggy, Pat, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Julie, Samantha, Jill, Rex, Molly Johansen, Margaret Christian, Marion (Val's sister-in-law)

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily & family (9 years old with cancer), Juliet Adams, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Jean Dominy, Leslie Bloomfield, Pete Tancred, Katie (cancer), Peter, Jim, Richard (June's nephew), Sylvia Eley, Dougie, Robert, Andy (Lynne's neighbour)

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: For **aid agencies** working to curtail the spread of Covid19 in developing countries; **for all health care staff, for teachers and for businesses opening again. For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing.**

For racial justice and peace in the USA and in the UK

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss, among them: Jason Wilcox, Sbusiso Ntuli (Sma's step-father), Hazel Messenger **R.I.P**



Birthdays this week:

Millie Harrison (28th)

Sunday Worship Video & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>

Sunday 28 June Trinity Sunday - 10am

ZOOM Worship St Thomas (Please, let us know if you want to join by phone)

Tuesday 30 June –6.00 pm LiveStream

**Meditation on facebook/
StThomasPilgrimCommunity**

Wednesday, 1 July: 7pm –Faith Pictures on ZOOM Contact Malcolm to join.

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Contacts:

Priest in charge: Revd Jutta Brueck
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Email: jutta.brueck@cofesuffolk.org
Jutta's days off are: Fridays & Saturdays

Assistant Curate: Revd Cat Connolly
m: 07530 412988

Email: revcatconnolly@gmail.com

Cat's day off: Mondays

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

(each week we will include a dozen names)

David Pitt, Helen & Neil Pratt with James, Sophie & Adam, Julie & Amber, Linda Savage & family, Jacqui Rathbone, Rachael with Abigail, Georgina & Ellie, Joan Scott, Judith Scott, Samantha & Gerry, Marilyn

Questionnaire on faith during lockdown: Thank you to everyone, who has talked to Emma already.

If you would prefer **NOT** to be contacted by Emma to take part in this short questionnaire, please let Rev Cat know.

**YOUR SUPPORT NEEDED FOR NWIPSWICH
FOODBANK organised by the Big Local Trust:**

Please drop non-perishable food at Castlehill Community Centre, Highfield Road on **MONDAYS** between 9.30 and 11.00am.

If you would like to chat, please do give us a ring:

Revd Jutta: 07958 360 564 Rev Cat 07530 412988

Roger Elmer 07810 274586 Sylvia Dickerson 07903 739487

Malcolm Gibbs 07906 663530 Mary Bullass 625135

Gloria Elmer 745590

Rev Jackie 07962172639

Revd Pat 01473 464748