

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Last Sunday before Lent - 14th February 2021

& St. Valentine's Day

Collect:

Holy God, you know the disorder of our sinful lives: set straight our crooked hearts, and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Psalm 50.1-6

1 The mighty one, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

3 Our God comes and does not keep silence, before him is a devouring fire, and a mighty tempest all around him.

4 He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people:

A reading from the second letter to the Corinthians (4.3-6)

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

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

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark (9.2-9)

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. **This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**



5 "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"

6 The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge.



Reflection:

So are you sending a card, or flowers? Do you expect to receive something – maybe a surprise? As you might imagine, St Valentine does not get much of a look in in our household. Jutta tells me I'm not romantic and together we adopt the slightly superior air of those who think that we don't really know who St Valentine was – there are apparently three St Valentine's associated with February 14th - and that Valentine's Day is all hype designed to make money for the card manufacturers and florists. But behind all that is another question. How do we show love? How do we show we are loved? How do people know we love them and we know they love us?

And this year Valentine's Day falls on a Sunday, and the Sunday right before Lent starts, the Sunday before we embark on that six week journey with Jesus to the cross. So I wonder what Valentine might have to tell us about this coincidence. Valentine's Day is after all about love. The cross is about love. So maybe there is a connection that will help us through the abstinence of Lent to the glory of Jesus revealed on the Cross and by his Resurrection.

So back to my earlier question and let's think for a moment about people being in love. What happens? They only have eyes for each other. They light up when they see each other. They glow. We have seen this in so many of our friends and family. We've said, "something seems different about her – she's just so much less grumpy," or "she's dressing differently – something's happened", and then we find out what, and very knowingly we say, "I knew it!" We may even have noticed these changes in ourselves, though usually when it happens you only realise what you were like when you look back. Being in love. And it's not just for couples in love, but parents and children too. Think of the face of the infant when mum leans over the cot to pick him up. Or think of the excitement of a child so pleased to tell her dad about her success at football today. They glow, they light up.

Being in love. It is not just about falling in love, it is about the whole process of being in love – the devotion and attention, the adoration and delight, the way their eyes brighten when they see each other, all that continues, even if at a slightly lower temperature. And even if it shows a little less, we know the heart of being in love continues to beat, the ember continues to glow for the beloved.

And being in love means you want to hold on to the moment, to just stay there, to hold onto every word, every glance, every touch. To live there for ever.

A voice from the cloud said, "This is my son, my beloved." The Transfiguration, which is what we call this story of Jesus on the hill top with the three disciples, the Transfiguration is about being in love. It is the love between the Father and the Son – the love of God revealed on earth. "My beloved" the father calls his son, and it is an expression of utter joy and delight. Our cry "I love you" from one beloved to another is a taste of God's pure love. God's love, the love that binds God Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the source of all love, all human love, flowing out for us all to drink from – whether the loving couple, parents and child, best friends. "My beloved" – God's cry from father to son is echoed over and over and over again around the world.

Being in love. This is a story about love – so of course Jesus' appearance changed – he was, we heard, transfigured before them, and his clothes a dazzling white. The beloved shone in the love from his father, he lit up. A moment of sheer adoration, of sheer delight. And Peter wanted to hold on to this moment. He was caught up in this overflow of divine love – "let's stay here!" he cries. We'll build tents to hold on to this moment.

Being in love. In that moment of outpouring of divine love, this display of loving affection and delight, Peter and James and John, are caught up in a taste of pure love, and so a glimpse of heaven, a taste of heaven, of being caught up, held in that eternal thrill of love, caught in what awaits them and us where everyone and everything is bathed in the light of God's love.

It is why our experience of love, of our beloved, of our children, of our dearest friend, why our experience of love is one of the surest signs for us of the reality of heaven, which we taste on earth as a foretaste of eternity. Because in our human love we share in God's love.

That's what Valentine gives us on this Sunday before Lent. Through his lens, we see this glorious story of the Transfiguration as a story of love, of God's love for his son, and so a glimpse of God's love that will be poured out on the cross for everyone for ever. As we walk into Lent, let's think about being in love – of God being in love with us, for we too are his beloved.

- Bishop Martin

Blessed are those who make peace. They shall be called the sons and daughters of God.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

Christ's is the world in which we move,
Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love,
Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,
and Christ is the One who meets us here.

*To the lost Christ shows His face;
to the unloved He gives His embrace;
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ, makes, with His friends, a touching
place.*

Feel for the people we most avoid.
Strange or bereaved or never employed;
Feel for the women and feel for the men
who fear that their living is all in vain.

To the lost...

Feel for the parents who lost their child,
feel for the women whom men have defiled.
Feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,
and feel for the weary who find no rest.

To the lost...

Feel for the lives by life confused.
Riddled with doubt, in loving abused;
Feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,
which longs to be pure but fears to begin.

To the lost...

A prayer mourning the 100,000+ who have died

Gracious God,
as we remember before you the thousands
who have died,
surround us and all who mourn with your
strong compassion.

Be gentle with us in our grief,
protect us from despair,
and give us grace to persevere
and face the future with hope
in Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

Amen.

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian, Jean Dominy

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Katie, Gloria Elmer, Leslie Bloomfield, Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Andy Fosker

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives; the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refugees across the world & diplomats and peace makers, working to end conflicts

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: David Baker (Eric's brother), RIP

Call this number —> for free.



Notices:

Cathedral Lent Course: 'Radical Faith'. This is a series of five talks on inspirational Christians, given by different speakers at the Cathedral, 7pm on Wednesday evenings during Lent. It looks to be very interesting! It'll be on Zoom (but I'm sure you can just listen and keep your camera off). To sign up, email Michael.robinson@cofesuffolk.org.

Our shoebox crafts were very well received with lots of families saying how much they loved them. Emma is planning similar children's craft bags for Lent & Easter Messy Church. ***If you are able and willing to help in any way please contact Emma*** - all help most gratefully received! (emma.knight1@hotmail.co.uk)

Newsletters: it would be lovely to have a couple more newsletters to keep us connected with each other. This time, how about writing about your favourite hobby or interest? Whether it's baking, gardening, knitting, an interest in trains or boats, a love of animals, a passion for fashion, whatever you really enjoy, write a short paragraph to share the joy with others! Send contributions to Rev Cat.

New Vicar Search: Rev Jackie is collecting scripture verses / words of encouragement & inspiration for our prayers. Please email her with anything you'd like to share as this process unfolds. jackie@jbsears.com

Our next Youth Group will be on 21st March 6-7pm.

Prayer for growth! Please join in this prayer at home:

"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Sma & Michael Ndlovu; Simon & Zuzana Pearson; Christine Perfect; David Pitt; Helen & Neil Pratt with Sophie, Adam & James; Rick, Julie & Amber; Linda Savage & family



14th: Frank Dickerson

17th: Wester Harrison

18th: Marilyn Smith, Simon Clark,
Keri Dickerson

This Week:

Sunday 14th February

10am: Zoom church - you can join by phone too! Speak to Malcolm or Rev Cat.

Tuesday 16th February

5.30: Meditation group —livestreamed on [facebook/stthomaspilgrimcommunity](https://www.facebook.com/stthomaspilgrimcommunity)

Ash Wednesday 17th February

10am: livestreamed Eucharist

Thursday 18th February

4pm: Bible Basics on Zoom - all welcome!

7pm: Zoom Alpha

Church website:

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

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

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

Contacts:

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Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs

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If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

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Rev Jackie 07962 172639

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