

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Second Sunday of Lent - 28th February 2021

Collect:

Almighty God, by the prayer and discipline of Lent may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings, and by following in his Way come to share in his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Psalm 22.23-end

23 You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
24 For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.
25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever!
27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the



nations shall worship before him.
28 For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.
29 To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.
30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,
31 and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

A reading from the book of Genesis (17.1-7,15-16)

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." **This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark (8.31-end)

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." **This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

Reflection:

Good Morning.... How is your Lent going so far? Things beginning to flag a little? Statistics for New Year resolutions (remember them?) suggest that most people fail within the first month. Fortunately I am not aware of any statistics for the keeping of Lenten observances, but going from my own experience, I usually find that things begin to flag a little around about the third week.....and the sense of failure begins to raise it's ugly head again! But looking at today's readings, I think that perhaps help is at hand.

The story in the book Genesis, tells us that Abram/Abraham is on a long journey – 30 years or so - a journey which is not only geographical but spiritual as well, since as he journeys he is discovering and learning to trust the One God who he believes has called him out from his comfortable, but unsatisfying homeland to venture into uncharted territory. Like Noah in last week's Old Testament reading, this discovery leads to a covenant relationship with the God who is calling him. The Covenant or promise is all on God's side... there are no sanctions provided if Abram fails; in vs 1 he is told "walk before me and be blameless and I will make a covenant between me and you" and then " you shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations" and in token of this he gets a name change.

Of course Abraham does go on to make mistakes and to fail to understand God's purposes, but each time God is faithful to his promise, and remains loyal to Abraham through thick and thin. As the years roll on Abraham learns to trust him more and more, so much so that the faithfulness of Abraham is honoured in many countries, cultures and religions in the middle east to this day. The gospel reading for this week, on the other hand, rings a much harsher tone and begins to spell out another aspect of our relationship with God..... learning to trust him in and through whatever comes, even suffering.

We find Peter, a descendant of Abraham, a son of the covenant, who knows (he thinks) a thing or two about God. But he is also on a journey of discovery... one that lasts just three years rather than thirty and is therefore much more intense than that of Abraham.

In today's reading Peter's problem is that as a son of the covenant, with several centuries of religious culture and practice behind him, he just can't bring himself to accept a suffering Messiah, he is confused and bewildered..... he so wants to trust in Jesus, but it just goes against the grain of everything that he has previously believed! He is loyal to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, who has shown his power through the mighty acts of Creation and his Glory on Mount Sinai, but he struggles to see how faith in and loyalty to this one God can lead to the cross, both for Jesus and to a lesser extent for those who follow him.

As the journey continues for Peter he begins to understand how this loyalty works, but as with Abraham, and the rest of us, he still continues to misunderstand God's purposes, and falls short at critical moments. Eventually he does discover that loyalty and faithfulness are God's great gift to humankind. That when he fails or falls, God is there to pick him up, dust him down, and set him on his way again. As a result, Peter too gets a name change.

God suffers with us, but remains loyal to his creation.....That too is part of the Majesty of God revealed to the patriarchs.

So, as we journey on with God, when we get things wrong, or misunderstand. When we seem to be just too busy or too tired, or too fed up to bother or if we seem to be flailing in our Lenten observances, let us take heart from the examples of Abraham and Peter.

God is faithful and as we learn to trust him more and more he is there to guide, sustain and enliven us, just as he was with Abraham and with Peter.

- Canon Chris

*Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has given us access to his grace.*

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

PILGRIM SAINTS

Great the God who gave us treasures
more than jewels for our own.
Saints who taught the truths of Jesus
that the love of Christ be known.
Great the richness of their teaching,
pilgrims who were not alone.

Thanks to God, his love enduring;
still he gives again anew
Jesus Christ to be within us
and his promises are true!
Come, Lord Jesus, gentle leader,
make us pilgrims following you.

Father God, when paths are steeper,
mountains towering overhead;
when the way is dark and slippery
- none can see the way ahead.
Keep us faithful, firmly trusting -
pilgrims on true manna fed.

Words: Sandra Hemingbrough
Tune: Regent Square

A prayer for the journey of Lent

Your Word reveals to us a simple truth,
that sin entered this world
through human folly
in believing we could be like you,
and permeated history
through envy, selfishness and greed.
Yet sin, which holds us tight within its grasp
cannot resist a heart that is touched
by your grace through Jesus Christ,
cannot contend with Living Water
pouring into hearts and souls.
Your Word reveals to us a simple truth,
that sin is defeated and we can become
the people we were always meant to be,
by your grace through Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Please pray for:

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

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Katie, Gloria Elmer, Leslie Bloomfield, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Dagmar, Roy

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), Stephen Flewitt, Vincent Lightbody RIP



Call this number ← for free.

Notices:

Back in church: all being well, we will resume in-person services on Palm Sunday, 28th March. Distancing, masks, and our booking system will still be necessary, but we will be able to mark Holy Week in church.

Mothering Sunday: we are creating a special newsletter for the 14th March. *Please send* poems, hymn or song lyrics, personal reflections, photos etc. on the theme of 'mothering' to Rev Cat, by 12th March.

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. On Zoom (but I'm sure you can just listen and keep your camera off). To sign up, email Michael.robinson@cofesuffolk.org.

Children's crafts: Emma is planning 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)

New Vicar Search: The PCC has now had the Section 12 meeting with Bishop Mike. Advertising will be able to start soon. 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

Bible Basics: at the moment we are looking at the language and liturgy we use in a Eucharist service, chatting about what the words mean, why we say them, and how the service holds together. It's very informal and conversational, and you are welcome to join at any point! Just email Rev Cat for the Zoom link.

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

*Julie & Mark Stevens; Rosemary Suggate; Shirley Vivian; Angela Waldrige;
Brian Ward; Audrey West; Natacha & Amber Wilcox; Pat Wright*

This Week:

Sunday 28th February

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

Wednesday 3rd March

10am: livestreamed Eucharist
7pm: PCC on Zoom

Thursday 4th March

4pm: Bible Basics (Eucharist liturgy—what do we say and why?)
7pm: Alpha



28th: Helen Waters; Dale Cory

Contacts:

Acting Priest-in-charge: Revd Cat Connolly
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Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs m:07906 665530

Director of Music: Simon Clark BA (Hons) FLCM ARCO
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Stephen Marginson 01473 258791

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

Mary Bullass 625135 Gloria Elmer 745590
Rev Jackie 07962 172639 Revd Pat 464748
Rev Canon Chris 462109

Church website:

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

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

[https://www.facebook.com/
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