

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

2nd Sunday before Lent - 7th February 2021

Collect:

Almighty God, give us reverence for all creation and respect for every person, that we may mirror your likeness in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Psalm 104.24-end

24 O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.

26 There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

27 These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

28 when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

30 When you send forth your spirit, they are



created; and you renew the face of the ground.

31 May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works—

32 who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.

35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!

A reading from the letter to the Colossians (1.15-20)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers— all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

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

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (1.1-14)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. **This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

Reflection:

As we leave the extended period of Christmas behind, we are now in a brief in-between space before the start of Lent, and the theme that emerges for us this week is Creation. The earth, the world, the cosmos and universe, the green grass and dark soil, growing things and the wonder of it all, is what today's readings ask us to contemplate.

Now that it is February, we are starting to look ahead for the coming of Spring. The evenings are getting lighter, and the complex interconnected beauty of the world is about to burst into bloom. But I wonder if we remember to put on the mindset of our Psalmist - to see that God is in all, because God created all, and to give thanks and praise to the creator. The Psalmist cried out 'May the Lord rejoice in his works', and I love the optimism of looking around and thinking 'this is amazing, I hope God is really enjoying all this'. Do we manage to see what is around us in this way? Do we ever look around and think 'wow!'? Because if we pause, perhaps take a moment to concentrate, we are reminded how intricate, delicate and astonishing the world we live in is.

Now, to create something, to be artistic, is to put something of yourself into what you make. Painters, musicians, sculptors, writers, dancers etc. will put their own emotions, experiences, desires and explorations into their work. Something of who they are will usually shine through, in some way. I believe the same is true for God. All of the world speaks of God's creativity, from the smallest crumb of soil being eaten by the smallest worm, to the power and depth of the oceans, to the wonder that is human beings - you, and me. And if we believe that something of God is within what God has created, then we know that when we marvel at the world, we are marvelling at God. We know that when we see things that are good (remember in Genesis, God saw what God had made, and said it was good?), we are seeing an outpouring of God's nature. And when we contemplate ourselves and each other, as human beings, we know we see the image of God in each soul.

As we have recently passed the terrible milestone of over 100,000 people who have died from the virus, it is appropriate to take a moment to reflect on what makes a human being precious. What is it that we mourn, when we lose a person? Why does death distress us? I would suggest that it is because every person, no matter who they are or how unimportant they might seem, is part of God's creation. Every person carries that spark of God, that breath of the creator which is given to everything like an imprint of the divine hand. We are precious because we are created, because we have souls, because we are human. We are precious because we love and are loved, because we are in relationship with others and with God. And while as Christians we know that death is not the end, we are still sad when we lose someone, because it means an end to the relationship we have had until that point. But what I want us to hold onto is that idea that nobody is too unimportant to matter. Each and every one of those 100,000+ people matters intensely, whoever they were. Each one of us matters intensely. And you matter, and you are precious, too.

Creation is full of small things. Tiny things. Yet all important and all carrying the divine spark of the creator. And as Jesus says, God even cares about something as small and insignificant as a sparrow, so think how much God must care about you, a marvellous human being! So we can be confident that each one of those who has died is also infinitely precious in God's eyes.

Our gospel reading today speaks of the Word (Jesus) being with God at the beginning of all things. Then in the letter to the Colossians we read that 'in him all things hold together'. So we know that God is always present. Creation was not an act at the start of time that was then over and done, but it is continually happening. We are continually held together through Jesus, and we are continually carrying within us the handprint of our creator. Each new atom, new fish, new mouse or sparrow or snail, and even more so each new human, is a continuation of God's creation, and therefore a continuation of God being with us, like the artist pouring themselves into their work. We are precious, you are precious, the world we live in and the people we live among, are precious.

May we have eyes to see, and hearts to wonder and praise, and may we know the presence of God everywhere in our lives, wherever we look for it.

- Rev Cat

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:

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
Bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience,
and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his Name!

Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for thee,
and comfort thy sorrows,
and answer thy prayerfulness,
guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

Fear not to enter his courts
in the slenderness
of the poor wealth
thou wouldst reckon as thine;
for truth in its beauty,
and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to lay on his shrine.

These, though we bring them in trembling
and fearfulness,
he will accept for the Name that is dear;
mornings of joy
give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience,
and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his Name!

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: Emily, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie, Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Lee Grigs, 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: Barry Stammers, David Baker (Eric's brother), RIP

Call this number —> for free.



Notices:

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.

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.

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."

This Week:

Sunday 7th February

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

Monday 8th February

4.30: STPC evening prayer – all welcome, speak to Malcolm for Zoom link

Tuesday 9th February

5.30: Meditation group – livestreamed on facebook/stthomaspilgrimcommunity

7pm: PCC parish profile meeting on zoom

Wednesday 10th February

10am: livestreamed Eucharist

Thursday 11th February

7pm: Zoom Alpha

Church website:

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

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

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

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Jill Last; Zoe Lowe with Conrad, Kurt & Rebecca; James Matthews; Stephen Marginson; Andrea McDonald with Fiona & Patrick; Nigel Messenger with Karen, Hayden & Harrison



10th Feb: Neil Pratt

12th Feb: Christine Fisher

Contacts:

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Cat's day off: Mondays

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

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