

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Fifth Sunday of Lent - 21st March 2021 - with Faith Stories

Collect:

Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world: lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we may know eternal peace through the shedding of our Saviour's blood, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Psalm 51.1-12

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

5 Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

6 You desire truth in the inward being; therefore

teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.



A reading from the letter to the Hebrews (5.5-10)

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. **This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (12.20-33)

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 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. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. "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. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. **This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

Reflection:

This week we hear two more faith stories from members of our congregation. So I want to encourage all of you to spend some time figuring out what your own story is!

Now the idea of sharing our faith with others can be scary. Most of us would rather talk about our favourite restaurant, film, book, sports team, or holiday than discuss our faith. For some of us, understanding where God is in our daily lives can be the most challenging step. Our faith journey —how we view our lives through faith and where we see God at work in our lives—is a story unique to each of us, and is always being written. Sometimes, we may not think we have much of a journey at all, especially if we've been in church since childhood, or we may think our journeys are too filled with potholes and detours to show a walk with God. But Paul tells us that God has equipped each of us with spiritual gifts to share with the world (1 Corinthians 12.4: *'there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit'*). And so each person's unique perspective adds depth, colour and beauty to our vision of God's kingdom.

In my own experience, it was really helpful and interesting to spend some time thinking about my own faith story, and just doing it for myself made it much easier and less scary to think about talking to anyone else about faith. So here are practical ideas for exploring your faith story for yourself.

- Chart Life and Faith Journey Timelines

Draw a timeline across the middle of an A4 piece of paper, from your birth to now, with the decades marked (age 10, age 20, etc.). On the top of the timeline, mark life milestones, both positive and negative. Examples might include graduations, marriage, the birth of children, moving house, career changes, deaths, or anything else that had a big impact on you.

On the bottom of the timeline, mark significant points in your relationship with God. Examples might include events such as baptism, confirmation, or going to a new church, but also include inward moments when God felt very present, or very absent.

It can be really interesting to see if the life milestones connect up with your relationship with God. If you're a visual learner it also works to draw a wavy line, going up when things were good, and down when they weren't. Then spend some time reflecting on what you've drawn! Are there any patterns? Does it bring up any ideas of how to continue to grow in your faith?

- Writing (or talking to yourself!) about some questions for exploration.

Who are the people who guided and helped you on your faith journey? How did they do that?

Describe some defining moments of your faith journey. What made them significant?

How has your faith been reflected in your work, hobbies, values, choices, and priorities at various times in your life? Or has it not been a factor?

In what ways has your faith guided and supported you over your lifetime? How has your church guided and supported you?

After spending some time with these questions, you'll probably have come up with some examples of how God has been in your life, and why it's important to you. Another great thing to do is to talk with one other person who you trust. Trade stories, and share with each other the God moments in your lives.

Of course, faith journeys don't ever end, and your story will continue to grow and change. But in telling and retelling your faith story, you will encourage others to search for and share their own story of God at work in their life too. Your story is part of God's story in the world, so let your light shine! - Rev Cat

Adapted from an article at <https://buildfaith.org/sharing-our-faith-stories/>



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."

*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:

All for Jesus! all for Jesus!
This our song shall ever be:
you our only hope, our Saviour,
yours the love that sets us free!

All for Jesus: you will give us
strength to serve you hour by hour;
none can move us from your presence
while we trust your grace and power.

All for Jesus--you have loved us,
all for Jesus--you have died,
all for Jesus--you are with us,
all for Jesus crucified.

All for Jesus, all for Jesus,
all our talents and our powers,
all our thoughts and words and actions,
all our passing days and hours.

All for Jesus, all for Jesus!
This the Church's song shall be
till at last her children gather,
one in him eternally.

A prayer for the journey of Lent

Lord, grant us simplicity of faith
and a generosity of service
that gives without counting cost.
A life overflowing with Grace
poured out from the One
who gave everything,
that we might show
the power of love to a broken world,
and share the truth from a living Word.
Lord, grant us simplicity of faith,
and a yearning to share it.
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: Stephen Flewitt, Vincent Lightbody. RIP

Prayer for our new Priest-in-Charge:

Lord, give us all wisdom and guidance as the search process goes ahead. We know that you have plans for us as a church - and we trust you. We pray that the right person will be drawn to us, that your Spirit will be at work. Grant us a vision, Lord, to see what we can achieve, to reach out beyond ourselves, to stretch our capabilities, to increase our sense of purpose, to be sensitive to your presence at all times and listen to your call.

Amen.

Scriptures for our new priest:

We are hoping for a priest who can aspire to Philippians 2, and offer joy and humility in serving the Lord at St Thomas. To lift up holy hands in prayer (1 Timothy 2: 8) - and to keep hold of the deep truths of the faith (1 Timothy 3:9).

Notices:

Electoral Roll: It is that time of year when we have to do a new Electoral Roll (membership of our church). Please let Alison know if you have changed address, or if you would like to join.

Back in church: we will resume in-person services on Palm Sunday, 28th March. Distancing, masks, and our booking system will be necessary. Please make sure to book in properly for services!

Church Open for Prayer: 10am - 1pm on Tuesday 23rd March, to mark the anniversary of the first lock-down. You are welcome to come to reflect, light a candle, and hold the past year before God in prayer.

Faith Stories: Today we hear from Amanda and Andrea as they share their faith stories at Zoom church, and in another Faith Story newsletter. A very big thank you to them for sharing with us!

New Vicar Search: Advertising has begun! Rev Jackie is collecting scripture verses / words of encouragement & inspiration for our prayers. Do email anything you'd like to share. jackie@jbsears.com

Booking for in-person services: other than the Wednesday 10am Eucharist, all services must be booked into.

This is especially important for Holy Week! See the separate flyer for Holy Week service details.

Online booking forms will be sent out via email.

To book by phone, call **01473 742973** and leave a message saying which service/s you are booking for, your name, and how many (including yourself) you are booking for.

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

June Browes; Mary Bullass; Chris Chapman; Phyllis Chevous; Margaret Christian; Simon Clark & Chris; Val Derrett & family; Rebekah Devine



Happy 1st Birthday Dylan!

This Week:

Sunday 21st March

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

6pm: Youth Group

Wednesday 24th March

10am: livestreamed Eucharist

Thursday 25th March

7pm: Alpha

Sunday 28th March

10am: Palm Sunday service, in person, Zoom & livestream



22nd: Dylan Lightbody;
Nigel Messenger

Church website:

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

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

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

Contacts:

Acting Priest-in-charge: Revd Cat Connolly

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Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs

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Director of Music: Simon Clark BA (Hons) FLCM ARCO

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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