

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 6th February 2022

Fourth Sunday before Lent

Please take a moment of silence before we begin, you may wish to light a candle

I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything. On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul. (*Psalms 138: 1-3*)

Opening Prayer

Lord, direct our thoughts and teach us to pray. Lift our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: All people that on earth do dwell

1 All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
him serve with fear, his praise forth tell,
come ye before him, and rejoice.

2 The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make;
we are his folk, he doth us feed,
and for his sheep he doth us take.

3 O enter then his gates with praise,
approach with joy his courts unto;
praise, laud, and bless his name always,
for it is seemly so to do.

4 For why? the Lord our God is good;
his mercy is for ever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure..

5 To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
the God whom heaven and earth adore,
from men and from the angel-host
be praise and glory evermore.

William Kethe, (fl 1559-died 1594)(Public Domain)

Introduction to Confession

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world and knows our every deed. Let us open ourselves to the Lord and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Confession

We have not always worshipped God, our creator. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**
We have not always followed Christ, our Saviour. Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**
We have not always trusted in the Spirit, our guide. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Collect

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, bless our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and all who are in authority under her; that they may order all things in wisdom and equity, righteousness and peace, to the honour and glory of your name and the good of your Church and people; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 6:1-13

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

And he said, "Go and say to this people: 'Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.' Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed." Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate; until the Lord sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land. Even if a tenth part remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains standing when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

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

New Testament: 1 Corinthians: 15.1-11

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

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

Gospel Reading: Luke 5 1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep

water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So, they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Reflection

Sometimes we are called to do things differently, to cast our nets deeper ... even though everything in our being thinks it's a crazy idea. Our experience tells us this won't work, we've seen it all before and it doesn't make sense to do what God is asking of us. Put yourself in Simon Peter's shoes for a moment. He was tired out of fishing and catching nothing, he says "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing."

You get the sense that he's had enough, he's tired. He wants things to be different, but he hasn't got the energy left. He thinks they should call it a day. He is a professional fisherman, he knows what he was doing. He knows the lake as much as everyone else, better perhaps, he's fished these waters for years, all his life in fact. This is where he lives. He's seen it all before. He knows the score. He really doesn't feel there is any point in trying again. What does Jesus know about fishing? It would be a waste of time, they would all become more tired ... and for what? What would be the benefit?

And yet, there's something about Jesus, about the way he is asking? There's something about Simon wanting to do the right thing, so he goes on ... "Yet, if you say so, I will let down the nets." What is God saying to us through these readings now? Three years ago the benefice was casting it's nets deeper, in fact these were the very readings which I was requested to preach on at my interview. Challenging us all to do things differently, to start on a new chapter together.

And what a chapter it's been. We could have never imagined what the future would bring, how different church would be for us all. How different our life would be now from then.

Last week we celebrated, in spite of the pandemic, all we've achieved in God's name here across the Bride Valley together. It was actually a very joyful occasion. We talked about being so much stronger as a community because of what we've been through together.

None of us can predict the future and it has struck me this past week, as each community prepares to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee later in the year, how we can look back and reflect on what's been. Today is Accession Day which marks the anniversary of the reigning monarch taking the throne, which in the case of Her Majesty the Queen was 6th February 1952. As the Queen is Supreme Governor of the Church of England and also the head of state, we pray frequently for her work and for her needs. These are her words from almost 70 years ago:

"When I spoke to you last ... I asked you all, to pray for me on the day of my Coronation - to pray that God would give me wisdom and strength to carry out the promises that I should then be making... I have been uplifted and sustained by the knowledge that your thoughts and prayers were with me. (Her Majesty the Queen, Coronation Day, 2 June 1953)

Whatever we think about the monarchy, on this day when we celebrate her accession to the throne 70 years ago, we surely cannot fail to be impressed by the answer to that prayer, prayed all that time ago; for the wisdom and strength given to our Queen and the way in which she has been sustained.

Back to Simon Peter and the casting of his nets - we're used to being careful and responsible with scarce resources. What if Jesus just needs us to discover a bit more generosity for a change (even if it seems like wastefulness), perhaps especially with our time, or our money? Is this what being more like Jesus might mean for us? Of course, I can't promise we'll miraculously find our nets full to bursting, but if we don't go out into the deep at the wrong time of day, we'll never know what might have happened!

Peter, like Isaiah and Paul, is confronted by the holiness of God, and his own sense of inadequacy. It's so easy to think we cannot possibly be enough – good enough, brave enough, wise enough, prayerful enough, young or old enough, holy enough ... (Do you think the Queen has ever felt inadequate for her calling?) Again, God seems to be utterly irresponsible, calling people to things that clearly take them well out of their depth, well beyond their resources.

What does Jesus say to Peter? 'Do not be afraid.'

What are we afraid of? Failing? Looking foolish? Getting it wrong? Losing the status quo? Yes, there are lots of things we can be afraid of. Maybe some of them are sensible things to be afraid of! But if we are trying to follow God's call for our life, what should we fear? In Corinthians Paul reminds us of where we stand with God "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain."

Whatever is going on in your life right now, don't just put your trust in God, be confident in him. He has begun a great work in you and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Be brave, cast your net deeper. Amen.

Hymn: Be thou my vision

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee Lord;
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my
power.

4 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart;
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, c 8th century translated by Mary Byrne (1880-1931) versified by, Eleanor Hull (1860-1935)

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Let us declare our faith in God

We believe in God the Father, **from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

We believe in God the Son, **who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, **who strengthens us with power from on high.**

We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession. Let us pray:

God of our salvation, hope of all the ends of the earth,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the world may know Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That all who are estranged and without hope may be brought near in the blood of Christ,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the Church may be one in serving and proclaiming the gospel,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That we may be bold to speak the word of God while you stretch out your hand to save,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the Church may be generous in giving, faithful in serving, bold in proclaiming,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the Church may welcome and support all whom God calls to faith,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That all who serve the gospel may be kept in safety while your word accomplishes its purpose,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That all who suffer for the gospel may know the comfort and glory of Christ,

we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the day may come when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may ever be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray that we may know life and hope in Jesus Christ as we say:

Our Father, who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name;

Thy kingdom come;

Thy will be done;

On earth as it is in heaven

Give us this day our daily bread

Forgive us our sins,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

But deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom,

The power and the glory,

For ever and ever.

Amen.

Hymn: Lord, for the years

1 Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

2 Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

3 Lord, for our land, in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

4 Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

5 Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;
past put behind us, for the future take us,
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

*Timothy Dudley-Smith (born 1926) © administered by Oxford University Press in Europe
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Blessing:

To him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. **Amen.**

The service ends with the National Anthem

God save our gracious Queen,
long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen.
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save the Queen.

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