



## Ash Wednesday – 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021

Led by David Newton

### Hymn

- 1 Forty days and forty nights  
thou wast fasting in the wild;  
forty days and forty nights  
tempted, and yet undefiled.
- 2 Sunbeams scorching all the day;  
chilly dew-drops nightly shed;  
prowling beasts about thy way;  
stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.
- 3 Let us thine endurance share,  
and awhile from joys abstain,  
with thee watching unto prayer,  
strong with thee to suffer pain?
- 4 And if Satan, vexing sore,  
flesh or spirit should assail,  
thou, his vanquisher before  
grant we may not faint nor fail.
- 5 So shall we have peace divine;  
holier gladness ours shall be;  
round us too shall angels shine,  
such as ministered to thee.

6 Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,  
ever constant by thy side;  
that with thee we may appear  
at the eternal Eastertide.

### **Opening Words**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection and prepared for this by a season of penitence and fasting.

By carefully keeping these days, Christians take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord.

I invite you, therefore, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and self denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

### **Bible reading**

Matt 6.1-6, 16-21

'Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door

and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

### *Musical Interlude*

#### **The Bright Field by R.S. Thomas**

I have seen the sun break through  
to illuminate a small field  
for a while, and gone my way  
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl  
of great price, the one field that had  
treasure in it. I realize now  
that I must give all that I have  
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after  
an imagined past. It is the turning  
aside like Moses to the miracle  
of the lit bush, to a brightness  
that seemed as transitory as your youth  
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

## **Self-Examination**

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

God the Father,

**have mercy on us.**

God the Son,

**have mercy on us.**

God the Holy Spirit,

**have mercy on us.**

Trinity of love,

**have mercy on us.**

**Most merciful God,**

**Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**we confess that we have sinned**

**in thought, word and deed.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us.

We have not been true to the mind of Christ.

We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you, Lord:

all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Our anger at our own frustration

and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts

and our dishonesty in daily life and work.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship  
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

*A prolonged silence in kept*

Make our hearts clean, O God;  
**and renew a right spirit within us.**

*Musical Interlude*

### **Ash Wednesday by Malcolm Guite**

Receive this cross of ash upon your brow,  
Brought from the burning of Palm Sunday's cross.  
The forests of the world are burning now  
And you make late repentance for the loss.  
But all the trees of God would clap their hands  
The very stones themselves would shout and sing  
If you could covenant to love these lands  
And recognise in Christ their Lord and king.

He sees the slow destruction of those trees,  
He weeps to see the ancient places burn,  
And still you make what purchases you please,  
And still to dust and ashes you return.  
But Hope could rise from ashes even now  
Beginning with this sign upon your brow.

### **Intercessions**

*Written by Barbara Preece*

Mysterious God, Morning, noon and night reveal your creative power;  
around us the whole earth cries glory. Your presence beats in our

blood, children of creation. Yet we go on our way deaf to the larks above the track, looking down into the mud and not up into the clear sky. And, even then, we miss the myriad small signs of hope: the crocus opening its heart to the sun, colours of sea washed stones, rainbows in the mist. We despair so easily. We say: 'Where is God in all this?' And we deny it has any meaning. We say: 'God is dead.' We cannot find or feel the pulse of your life in us. We put our shaky faith in things we have made, we give cringing power to the institutions. We give up on ourselves, saying: 'We are no good.' We live in a way that says: 'There is no God.'

And the song of creation turns to dust and ashes on our lips. Forgive us.

Dust we are, and to dust we shall return.

But in Jesus, you chose to share our human frailty, to enter into our mortality in all its mystery, to redeem this handful of dust. We are yours, and to you we shall return. Amen

Truly dust we are, and to dust we shall return; and truly yours we are, and to you we shall return. Help this to be a time of turning round and beginning again. Through the forty days of Lent, help us to follow you and to find you: in the discipline of praying and in the drudgery of caring, in whatever we deny ourselves, and whatever we set ourselves to learn to do. Help us to discover you in our loneliness and in community, in our emptiness and our fulfilment, in our sadness and our laughter. Help us to find you when we ourselves are lost. Help us to follow you on the journey to Jerusalem to the waving palms of the people's hope, to their rejection, to the cross and empty tomb. Help us to perceive new growth amid the ashes of the old. Help us, carrying your cross, to be signs of your kingdom. Amen

Lord Jesus, desert dweller, help us now, at this time of Lent, to accompany you.

If we have grown soft, cushioning our lives with excuses, expose us to the toughness of your way.

If we have grown lazy, cushioning our minds with easy thin thoughts, expose us to the rigour of your truth.

If we have grown comfortable, cushioning our living with satisfaction and success, expose us to the challenge of your life.

As we walk, God, be our way.  
As we learn, God, be our truth.  
As we grow, God, be our life.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen

*Musical Interlude*

### **The Collect**

Holy God,  
our lives are laid open before you:  
rescue us from the chaos of sin  
and through the death of your Son  
bring us healing and make us whole  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray  
**Our Father in heaven,**  
**hallowed be your name,**  
**your kingdom come,**  
**your will be done,**  
**on earth as in heaven.**  
**Give us today our daily bread.**  
**Forgive us our sins**  
**as we forgive those who sin against us.**  
**Lead us not into temptation**

**but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

### **Blessing**

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,  
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**