

Worship at Home - 14th March 2021

4th Sunday in Lent God so loved the world

Welcome to today's written and recorded service.

We start with a prayer

Loving Lord, as we consider your love for us today, and as we travel towards that day of sacrifice and look towards your resurrection teach us your ways.

Amen

Hymn 317 - At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him King of Glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning was the mighty Word:

Humbled for a season, to receive a name
from the lips of sinners unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious when from death he passed.

Bore it up triumphant with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast;
filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue
all that is not holy, all that is not true:
crown him as your captain in temptation's hour;
let his will enfold you in its light and power.⁴

Brothers, this Lord Jesus⁵ shall return again,
with his Father's glory, with his angel train;
for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him King of Glory now.
Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

A Prayer of thanksgiving and adoration

Loving Heavenly Father, You are our magnificent God and Your name is great in all the earth. You spoke the worlds into being and stretched out the heavens by the might of Your great power. You have established Your strength from everlasting

to everlasting, and the heavens are the work of Your fingers.

You looked down in mercy and grace on the children of men, and sent the eternal Son of Your love to visit us and redeem us. We rejoice in Your gracious love and great compassion, and we joy in the God of our Salvation. We sing Your praises for ever and ever, for You alone are worthy to be praised and worshiped.

How excellent is Your wonderful name in all the earth, and how majestic are the works of Your hand. We will lift up our voices to proclaim You are the Lord and God of our Salvation, delighting to sing praises to Your holy name and to worship at Your feet. Praise the Lord for all the many blessings You have poured out onto all those that love You.

Praise the Lord forever and ever. In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-for-Worship>

A moment to acknowledge the times we have not walked in the light.

In the quiet ask Gods Spirit to bring to mind those areas of your life He would have you confess.

Reflection

Lent is a time of preparation for us as we move towards the Easter moment of awe and wonder. In days gone by that preparation was for those that were seeking to be baptised into the church on Easter Day.

All through Lent they would be asked to prepare themselves by fasting and they would have received teaching on Resisting Temptation, of the true cost of Following Jesus in Taking up ones Cross, the importance of keeping oneself free from wrong behaviours and habits and many other teachings too, all describing what it means to call a follower of Jesus, to be able to call themselves Christian and be part of the Church of God, so they can be sure of the commitment they were making at that time of Baptism.

In this passage the whole thing is laid bare. The requirements of being able to be called 'Follower of Jesus, Christian, part of the Church of Jesus.

And over Lent we too echo this preparation in our giving up of something, or focus on Gods word for 40 days, and the lectionary teachings set for each year.

And so we come to todays reading, and one that most of us will know so very well. It is one of the few passages that if I mention just the first three words, most people will be able to tell me the rest and the chapter and verse without even thinking.

But it contains the whole essence of why you and I are here today, and how we need to live our lives.

For God so loved the world!!
What an amazing statement
For God so loved the world
It's awesome

Just savour what that means.
For God so loved the world!!

God so LOVED you and me that he allowed the most precious thing in the world to be risked as a sacrifice for all the wrongs we would be doing, have done and still do.

But before we go too far lets look at that reading in full.

Reading - John ch 3 vs 14 - 21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.

But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

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Let's put a bit of context on this. This passage is when Jesus is teaching Nicodemus. Nicodemus is a teacher himself, and has come to Jesus to question him and get honest answers. Nicodemus is a bit confused about that phrase 'You need to be Born Again' and so Jesus goes on to tell him that The Son of Man - who Nicodemus would know is a reference to a dream that Daniel had (Daniel 7 vs 13) - The Son of many would become the salvation of all who look to Him.

And so we come to this wonderful and amazing statement that Jesus makes.

For God so loved the world!!

Gods' love is central to all we are, and all we can ever be. God has loved us from the very moment he thought of us, each and every one.

God created this world, and he loved it - it is VERY good He proclaimed. And yet, we all know that we are a wayward people. This has been the pattern forever, since the first time Adam and Eve forgot themselves and were convinced by the devil to rebel.

And you and I, have we never rebelled, have we never gone our own way, have we never forgotten that we owe all to God's love.

When we said Yes to Jesus call for us to follow Him, did we never rebel ever again?

And yet, God loves us so much that He wants to put this right. Not that we deserve this in any way, but simply that God loves us enough to want us to be right with him.

And so He sent His only Son, to be the sacrifice.

God loves His people enough to give them, to give us, His Son.

God so loved the world that He gave us His Son, that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that a light that has come into the world. We all know how good the light is, we know how comforting and renewing light is. But

light is no good if we are not to look into it, to allow it to flood our lives and reveal to us all that needs to be revealed.

No so long ago I had a splinter in my hand, it was one of those nasty, little, stingy splinters, and the first thing I did was reach for the tweezers to pluck it out. But I could not see it, so I went to the window where the light was shining in and there, in the light, I got hold of that splinter and pulled it out. The pain stopped, the relief came through and I could go about my work again.

Now I want to pause and remind us all that we are in Lent, a time of preparation, and for those that would be followers this next bit is vital.

You see, our human tendency is to walk in darkness, to hide what we know to be wrong in our lives and hope that no one notices. But this is not God's way.

The Light has come so that all may be revealed, and just as the light revealed my little and irritating splinter, so this light reveals all that is wrong with each of us. Now that is a frightening thing no doubt. And that is why it is so challenging and a big decision, not to be taken lightly. For when we approach the light in the right way we are revealed to be less than we would want to be. All laid bare in front of God Himself, and as a result revealed to ourselves too.

And this is why God sent His Son into the world. So that as we approach the light that is God Himself, we are also approaching the Son who is we know is the Light of the World and our forgiveness and our salvation.

This is the Love that God has, that in order to us to be with Him, we need to be willing to be revealed in the light for what we are. But that Jesus can, if we believe (and we must), Jesus can take all that away, not condemn but give us new life. Truly to start again, to be Born again.

Lent is a time of preparation, not just for new believers, but for those of us how have believed for a long time too.

Have any of us wandered from the light a bit?
Come back to the light, all is not lost.

**God so loved the world that He gave us His Son,
that everyone who believes in him may not
perish but may have eternal life.**

For you and for me
Amen.

A prayer

Jesus, I know you to be the light of the world.
Help me to come into the light, let me know each
day that you are there, and that as I come to you
and believe that I am saved.
Amen

Hymn 175 - Light of the world you stepped down into darkness

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, Let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore you
Hope of a life spent with you

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

King of all days
So highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly you came to the earth you created
All for love's sake became poor

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

Tim Hughes

Prayers for others

The Light of Christ has come into the world.
The Light shines in the darkness, and the
darkness has never been able to put it out!

Liberating Christ, Shine your Light into the
prisons of our world:
the places where people are held
for the sake of others,
for the things they have done,
for the things that they believe.
through fear,
bereavement,
broken relationships,
injustice.
in illness,
tragedy,
loneliness,
worry.

Compassionate Christ, Shine your Light into the
darkness of the lives of the people who need your
Living presence with them today
Amen

A mothering Sunday prayer

Lord, on this day set aside to honour and
remember mothers, we give you thanks for our
mothers.

We are grateful that you chose to give us life
through them, and that they received the gift of
life from you, and gave it to us.

Thank you for the sacrifices they made in carrying
us and giving us birth.
We thank you for the women who raised us, who
were our mothers in childhood.

Whether birth mum, adopted mum, older sister,
aunt, grandmother, stepmother or someone else,
we thank you for those women who held us and fed
us, who cared for us and kissed away our pain.

We pray that our lives may reflect the love they
showed us, and that they would be pleased to be
called our mums.

Amen

We say the prayer that Jesus gave us:

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.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us
from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are
yours, now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn - 94 - To God be the Glory, great things he has done

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth
hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the
people rejoice!
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the
Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath
done.*

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He
hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

Frances Jane van Alstyne
(Fanny Cosrby) (1820-1915)

Blessing

As we live in the light, may the source of that
light, Jesus Christ, who we call Lord, renews us in
the Spirit and be with us all.
Amen