

**Welcome** to our service on this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

God's Word says in Philippians 3:17-4:1 *Brothers and sisters, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord*

Let us **pray** the special prayer for today

Almighty God, you show to those who are in error the light of your truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: Grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow such things that are agreeable to the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Hymn** Jesus shall reign.... by Isaac Watts

1. Jesus shall reign where the sun doth his successive journey run  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more
2. Blessings abound where e'r he reigns, the prisoner leaps to loose his chains  
The weary find eternal rest, and all the sons of want are blessed
3. Let every creature rise and bring peculiar honours to our king  
Angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud amen

Our **Readings** come first from **Genesis 15:1-7**

- 1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."
- 2 But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"
- 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"
- 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."
- 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."
- 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.
- 7 Then He said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

This is the Word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

And secondly from **Luke 13:31-end**

- 31 On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You."
- 32 And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.'
- 33 "Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.
- 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!
- 35 "See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'

This is the Word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

### **Reflection**

In your collection of plastic cards do you have any Reward Cards that give you 'surprise' benefits?  
In Genesis 15:1 God promised: *Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward*  
What a lovely word from God In this verse he says three things that begin with the letter P:

-*I am your shield* - I am your **protection**

-*I am your exceeding great reward* - I am your **provision**

-and, in all the changes, delays & disappointments of life God said to Abram : *don't fear* .. have faith. That's about **peace**

If you have any reward cards you know that the more you use them the more you benefit from them

Let me unpack these three benefits God gives that are found on our reward card

**1<sup>st</sup> I am your shield** - your **protection**

In fact Jesus repeated this to the people of his day in Luke 13 *How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.*

That's just like the cygnets we see at Abbotsbury huddling under the wings of the swans - what a lovely picture of protection when today's 'Herod's want to get rid of God and us.

As never before we're in a battle of good against evil (not just internationally between Russia and Ukraine) but a moral battle for our hearts. Just read the book of Revelation that shows: Conflict, destruction & judgement is on it's way; but in all this it also reminds us that when Satan attacks us God promises: *I will be a shield* for you

**2<sup>nd</sup>** in Philippians 3 Paul also refers to a spiritual battle where those who reject the Christian faith to follow the god of

materialism and their natural passions, turn their backs on Christ and the forgiveness he offers and so become *the enemies of the cross of Christ*.

In contrast Paul turns the Christians eyes upward to focus on **God's provision**: *Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body*. The King is coming, and with him the kingdom of heaven is on its way  
Christians are citizens of Heaven; we will be with Jesus, and we will be made perfect by God's grace in Christ  
As a Christian youngster I would sing *This world is not my home I'm just a passing through, my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The Saviour beckons me from heavens open door, and I can't feel at home in this world anymore*.

Jesus is our *exceeding great reward* now in this life and the world to come. By his undeserved grace he will welcome us into heaven and transform us into what he intends us to be - like him. What a reward to anticipate, what a provision!!

**3<sup>rd</sup> He is our peace.** One of the most frequent divine words spoken in Scripture is this phrase given to Abram: *Don't be afraid*.

What are we afraid of? Disappointment, or difficulty, loss or loneliness, conflict, or calamity, doubts or danger  
God took Abram out into the night and said, *Look, count the stars* - which of course he couldn't! God was simply showing Abram that his plans and power are far bigger than anything else - especially Abram's fears for the future.  
We need to put our fears in their proper context and have faith in God, who says in v7: *I am the LORD*.

There is no *thing*, there is no *one* greater than the Lord our God

*Do not be afraid*, He says. *I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward*.

Genesis 15:6 is a verse that S Paul quoted in the New Testament, and that brought about the reformation revival of C16th.

when Abram (Paul/ Luther/ Wesley) *believed the Lord, he accounted it* (he put it on their reward card) as *righteousness* - for them and us. That's our peace - all is well with God Friends, It's time to look at our card  
Praise God our Reward Card will never be empty because of God's promised **provisions** for us, **protection** and **peace**, guaranteed in God himself.

And now a short lively **Song of celebration**: God is so good by Graham Kendrick

1. God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, he's so good to me
2. God answers prayer, God answers prayer, God answers prayer, he's so good to me.
3. He cares for me, he cares for me, he cares for me, he's so good to me.
4. God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, he's so good to me

Let us **pray**

- First a confession. As it is Lent we remember **God's Commandments**

I am the Lord ... you shall have no other gods but me  
You shall not make any idol and worship it  
You shall not dishonour the name of the Lord  
Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy  
Honour your father and mother  
You shall not commit murder  
You shall not commit adultery  
You shall not steal  
You shall not bear false witness  
You shall not covet

Lord we have not obeyed your Word in thought, word or deed. **Lord have mercy**

We have not loved you and our neighbour as we should. **Christ have mercy**

so in faith we receive and rejoice in the forgiveness Christ provided through his death and resurrection. **Lord have mercy**

- Next, let's approach the Lord with worship and thanksgiving

Thank you Lord that you are our provider, our protector, our peace, and our pardoner, and can approach you with confidence

- Now let's pray for others

Lord our great High Priest who bears our burdens, we pray for all those suffering from the consequence of greed, oppression, violence, sin

Lord our Comforter we pray for those seeking to counsel, comfort, support and relieve those who have so little and lost so much

Lord of all truth, we pray for those confused and led astray by false teaching

Lord our healer we pray for all who are sick and dying, and we praise you that in the end you hold the keys of death and hell

Lord the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, we pray for those uncertain and fearful for the future.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers**

The **Lord's prayer**

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, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that 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**

**Song:** How firm a foundation by Richard Keen

1. How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent Word,  
What more can he say than to you he hath said, all who unto Jesus for refuge have fled
2. Fear not I am with thee, O be not dismayed, For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.
3. When through the deep waters I call thee to go, The rivers of grief shall not thee overflow;  
For I will be with thee in trouble to bless, And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress
4. The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake, Ill never, no never,  
no never forsake.

### **Blessing**

Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to God only wise our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever

**Amen**

And the Lord bless you and keep you, make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord turn his face toward you and give you his peace **Amen**

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