

THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:

Telephone Service for Sunday 20th March 2022 – The Third Sunday of Lent

The service can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley Benefice for Sunday 20th March which has been put together by Liz Howlett. We worship together across the valley in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Today's service has a more meditative feel to it and we begin with some words from the 14th century English mystic, Mother Julian of Norwich:

'God's goodness floods creation, infusing all of his blessed works, endlessly overflowing all that is, for he is everlastingness. He made us for himself alone. He restored us through his blessed passion. He sustains us always in his perfect love. And all this flows from his goodness.'

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Come unto me and rest;
lay down, thou weary one, lay down
thy head upon my breast.'

I came to Jesus as I was,
weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink and live.'

Hymn: I heard the voice of Jesus say

I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'I am this dark world's Light;
look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
and all thy day be bright.'

I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk,
till travelling days are done.

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889) CCLI Licence 2370586

Invitation to Confession

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all. Let us come to him, in sorrow for our sins, seeking healing and salvation.

Prayers of Penitence

God be gracious to us and bless us, and make your face to shine upon us:

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

May your ways be known on earth, your saving power among the nations:

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You have made known your salvation and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations:

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; 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 forever. **Amen.**

Isaiah 55: 1 – 9

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy one of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts

Gospel Reading

Luke 13: 1 – 9

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Stilling Exercise

Lent is often thought of as a time of giving things up. Another way of looking at this is to think that by letting go of some things, we are creating space in our lives for other things. Activities that maybe get squeezed out, but might be fruitful for us if we gave them time. I would suggest that one of the things Lent can be good for, is to give us more space for listening – that could be listening to the world around us, it could be listening more carefully to ourselves and certainly it could be listening to God. So today's reflection is different from the usual – instead of me giving you more words, today I am offering an invitation to spend a short time together listening. In the next few minutes, I will be guiding us through a gentle stilling exercise which can be a form of prayer in itself.

To help get ready, you might like to sit in a relaxed position, with your back straight, your feet side by side on the floor, and your hands resting in your lap. You might want to lower your gaze, or close your eyes.

Pause to prepare

This stilling exercise is about listening. Firstly, take a few moments to focus on any sounds you can hear outside the room where you are sitting. What can you hear? Take time now to try to identify each, paying attention to it, before moving on to the next.

Pause to listen

Now, without trying to block out those sounds, but allowing them to be, let your attention move inwards, to any sounds you can hear within the room where you are – what can you hear in this space? As before, become aware of the sounds and let your attention be on them in turn.

Pause to listen

Again, without blocking these out, let your point of attention take another step inwards, and be aware of all the ‘noise’ going on within yourself – perhaps the sound of your own breathing...

and then maybe an awareness of the rush of thoughts and feelings passing through your heart and mind. Whatever you become aware of within, give some time to pay attention to each.

Pause to listen

Finally, take one step further inwards, and let your awareness come to rest in some quiet, still place at the centre of yourself. Rest there, in the quiet, for as long as seems good to you.

A verse from Psalm 131: ‘Keep my soul tranquil and quiet, like a child in its mother’s arm.’

Hymn: Be still, for the presence of the Lord

Be still for the presence of the Lord
The Holy One is here
Come bow before Him now
With reverence and fear
In Him no sin is found
We stand on holy ground
Be still for the presence of the Lord
The Holy One is here

Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around
He burns with holy fire
With splendour He is crowned

How awesome is the sight
Our radiant King of light
Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around

Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal
To minister His grace
No work too hard for Him
In faith receive from Him
Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place

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Prayers

Mother Julian wrote this: ‘God’s love for us is so great that it surpasses the understanding of any living being... And so we can approach our Beloved with great devotion, asking for our heart’s deepest desire, knowing that what we really want is God, and that all God really wants is us.’ And so let us pray.

As God’s children, we come to our creator with our world on our hearts. *(Pause)*

We long for peace and freedom in those places where there is war and oppression.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer.**

As God’s children, we come to Jesus our brother and saviour with the church on our hearts. *(Pause)*

May the church the world over be a source of life and flourishing for all touched by it. Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer.**

As God's children, we come to our sustainer, the Holy Spirit, bringing our families, friends and neighbours in our hearts. *(Pause)*

May those in need be supported and those struggling with illness find health and healing.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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 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**

Blessing

May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the source of all goodness and growth, pour his blessing upon all created things and upon you, that you may use his gifts to his glory and the welfare of all peoples; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you now and always. **Amen.**

Hymn: Beauty for brokenness

1 Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer.
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase!

3 Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.

2 Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen, trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause of those who can't
speak:

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray;
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

4 Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned - our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed;
make us content with the things that we need.
Chorus

5 Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame
until your justice burns brightly again;
until the nations learn of your ways,
seek your salvation and bring you their praise.
Chorus

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Quotations from Mother Julian taken from: Julian of Norwich: The Showings: a contemporary translation. Mirabai Starr (Canterbury Press; 2014).