

The Bride Valley Telephone Service for Sunday 5th February 2023

3rd Sunday before Lent and available on 01308 293062

To prepare ourselves for our worship, we reflect on the day and on our relationships.

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What will I try to do differently in future?*

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Hymn: Christ is the King, O Friends rejoice

1 Christ is the King! O friends rejoice;
brothers and sisters, with one voice
tell all the world he is your choice.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

2 O magnify the Lord, and raise
anthems of joy and holy praise
for Christ's brave saints of ancient days.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

3 O Christian women, Christian men,
all the world over, seek again
the way disciples followed then.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

4 Let love's unconquerable might
your scattered companies unite
in service to the Lord of light.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

5 So shall God's will on earth be done,
new lamps be lit, new tasks begun,
and the whole Church at last be one.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

George K A Bell (1883-1958)

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Let us now ask for forgiveness of our sins, and the grace to be reconciled with one another.

Lord Jesus, you reconcile us to one another and to the Father.

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

You heal the wounds of sin and division.

Christ have mercy **Christ have mercy**

You seek out and save the lost.

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect (special prayer for today)

Eternal God, whose Son went among the crowds and brought healing with his touch: help us to show his love, in your Church as we gather together, and by our lives as they are transformed into the image of Christ our Lord. Amen

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 58:1-9a

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. "Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not

make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 2:1-12

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5: 13-20

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Reflection

We are called to live so that we shine like lights which direct others to God, the source of all light. Salt and light can both make a big difference. As well as its wonderful preserving and

disinfecting properties, just a pinch of salt brings out the full flavour of other ingredients; light allows everyone in the room to see the shape and texture of all kinds of different objects which were once hidden by darkness. And as Christians we are called to live so that our way of living brings out in others their full potential. We are called to live in a way that helps people see where they are going, in the room, or context, of eternity.

We have all met people whose attitude and behaviour towards us makes us shrivel up inside, and others in whose company we feel accepted and acceptable, and therefore able to be our true selves. It is loving reverence for one another that makes the difference, and the gospels are full of incidents where people noticed this in their encounters with Jesus.

If we behave as the salt of the earth, we will be happy to make ourselves available so that others feel free to become more truly themselves, and we shall recognise the need to be there but not to overwhelm! Too much salt kills off the flavour. If we behave as the light of the world we shall once again be in the role of enablers: we are at the service of the world, quietly enabling it to see more clearly. And again, we recognise the need to provide illumination, but not to blind or dazzle. Dazzling performances of ostentatious 'religion', such as those we heard about in the reading from Isaiah are not at all what God has in mind for his people, either then or now. What God wants is for the people of the world to be so impressed with the light we shine around that they want to find out where we get it from. Our shining is to set others off on their way to discover God for themselves.

Of course, we can only behave as salt and light if we are the genuine article, and are prepared to work co-operatively with God. That is where it is so helpful to have our faith 'earthed' in practical living. As Christians we all need to have our feet on the ground; we need to be engaged in the messy hard work of caring, challenging injustice and offering practical help and support. Only then will your praises mean something, and our worship glorify God. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.

Be with us today, as we offer ourselves to you. Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves and keep us in your care. Amen

Our God made us and our universe, and delights in us. Prompted by the Spirit of God in us, let us pray.

We pray for the godly wisdom that is touched by the beauty of creation, delights in the diversity of people, and warms to the possibilities of co-operative prayer and work for the coming of the kingdom. **Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the godly wisdom that engenders awareness and guides our response to the real needs of others; that strives not to control but enable, not to manipulate but empower. **Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the godly wisdom that gives others both space and support, that encourages and guides, that knows when to speak and when to be silent; that questions the assumptions of worth and cherishes those whom the world discards.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the godly wisdom that gives us patience in times of adversity and courage to trust in the power of our prayer for those who suffer in body mind or spirit. Particularly we hold in our prayers those whose lives are affected by cancer.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the godly wisdom that entrusts those who have died to this life, to the care of our merciful Lord and Saviour who is the resurrection and the life.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the godly wisdom that lives simply and thankfully, rejoicing in all that God is and does.

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

Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us

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

We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen

Hymn: Here in this place, new light is streaming

1 Here in this place, new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away.
See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in - the lost and forsaken,
gather us in - the blind and the lame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2 We are the young - our lives are a mystery,
we are the old - who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in - the rich and the haughty,
gather us in - the proud and the strong.
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.

3 Here we will take the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth.
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you.
Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away,
but here in this place, the new light is shining;
now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in - and hold us forever,
gather us in - and make us your own.
Gather us in - all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Marty Haugen (1952 -) CCLI Licence 2370586

We pray God's blessing on each other

May you treat each other in the same friendly way Christ has treated you. May you clothe yourselves in sincere compassion, kindness and patience. May your love not be mere words but something real and active. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you, and those whom you love and pray for, this day and for evermore. **Amen**

Prayers adapted from Susan Saye