

St George's Anglican Church

22 March 2020 | 4th Sunday of Lent

May we feel close and united in prayer.

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

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayers of Penitence

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:
The first commandment is this:
'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'
There is no other commandment greater than these.
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Invitation to confession

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.
Let us come to the Lord, who is full of compassion,
and acknowledge our transgressions in penitence and faith.

Confession

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.
We have not loved our neighbours
as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been.
Help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy
and walk humbly
with you, our God.
Amen.

Absolution

The almighty and merciful Lord
grant *us* pardon + and forgiveness
of all *our* sins,
time for amendment of life,
and the grace and strength
of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Collect

**Merciful Lord,
you know our struggle to serve you:
when sin spoils our lives
and overshadows our hearts,
come to our aid
and turn us back to you again;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

First Reading: 1 Samuel 16. 1 - 13

1 The LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' 2 Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD." 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' 4 Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' 5 He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. 6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the LORD.' 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.' 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the LORD chosen this one.' 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the LORD chosen this one.' 10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The LORD has not chosen any of these.' 11 Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' 12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose.

Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name.

If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil would I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff;

with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Epistle: Ephesians 5. 5. 8 - 14

8 Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – 9 for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. 10 Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; 13 but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

Gospel Reading: John 9

1 As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 3 Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' 6 When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, 7 saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. 8 The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' 9 Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' 10 But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' 11 He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight.' 12 They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.' 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' 16 Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. 17 So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.' 18 The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight 19 and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' 20 His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.' 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.' 24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, 'Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.' 25 He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' 26 They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' 27 He answered them, 'I have told

you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' 28 Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' 30 The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' 34 They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out. 35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 36 He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' 37 Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' 38 He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. 39 Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' 41 Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.

A Reflection from The Revd Canon Christopher Jage-Bowler, St George's.

Dear friends

I write to you today - as the corona virus impacts our world more and more - with an encouragement. An encouragement to pray.

In Aachen cathedral lie (some of) the bones of St Corona who was a second century Christian martyr in Syria. St Corona is Patron Saint for pandemic sufferers.

Her remains are not on display in Aachen - perhaps because we thought the days of pandemics were behind us?

St Corona reminds us that everything has a spiritual dimension - including the current crisis. The question is, how are we to respond with faith and love to the situation we are in today?

Prayer is inviting God to be present among us, in and through our thoughts, words and deeds. Asking that our lives may be channels of God's healing, loving, redeeming presence. Prayer is taking seriously the call to follow Jesus Christ and become "little Christs" (literal meaning of "Christians") in and for the world.

"I am the light of the world" Jesus tells us in John 8.12 and again in John 9.5. The Gospel text today is about coming to see the light.

Opening our eyes to see the world and one another in the light of God's love, is to see with the light of faith. People who claim to be "in the know" and yet fear and despise others, are still in darkness. People whose eyes are opened by God, see others and what happens from a different perspective:

Psalm 23 is a prayer, a song of learning to see with eyes open to God's guiding hand. Today's Epistle calls us to live as "children of the light".

In this corona crisis, we seek to live lives that are enlightened by our faith. We need not fear, indeed we are called again and again in the Scriptures not to fear, for God is with us. In times of anxiety, stress and danger, we recollect ourselves and say, "Lord, I believe in you, come and be among us".

And so we can intercede with God who has promised his presence when we ask for it. And we walk into the day with open eyes. To be responsible and caring and loving to all, albeit perhaps at this time in cards, letters, emails, phone calls, on social media, remembering especially the elderly and the frail.

Encouraging one another, for we know that "in all things God is working for the good with those who love him and are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8.28).

So please join us in prayer in these turbulent times, and let us open our hearts to God and to one another, and give ourselves to live as children of the light.

The Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

The Prayers (Intercessions)

We pray for ourselves and particularly on behalf of others. In our prayers we pray for the Universal Church, this nation, our home countries and all who govern, the welfare of the world, the concerns of our community of faith, including those who are in need or suffer, and for the departed. We are reminded in prayer that we are part of a larger fellowship, the Church—the Body of Christ.

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, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

My Jesus, I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen. (cf. St. Alphonsus de Liguori, 1696-1787)

Silence is kept.

**Lord God,
whose blessed Son our Saviour
gave his back to the smiters
and did not hide his face from shame:
give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Blessing

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

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord: In the name of Christ. Amen.

Much love from Fr. Joachim.

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