

# 16<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – Morning Service

## Lent 2

Andy Haynes

### Call to Worship - Psalm 27 v 1

The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?

Words of our opening hymn reflect on our call to worship when it says ‘and let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight’

### StF 372 – Come down O love divine

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) Come down, O Love divine,<br>Seek thou this soul of mine,<br>And visit it with thine own ardour glowing;<br>O Comforter, draw near,<br>Within my heart appear,<br>And kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.    | 3) Let holy charity<br>Mine outward vesture be,<br>And lowliness become mine inner clothing,<br>True lowliness of heart,<br>Which takes the humbler part,<br>And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.               |
| 2) O let it freely burn,<br>Till earthly passions turn<br>To dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;<br>And let thy glorious light<br>Shine ever on my sight,<br>And clothe me round, the while my path illuming. | 4) And so the yearning strong,<br>With which the soul will long,<br>Shall far outpass the power of human telling;<br>For none can guess its grace,<br>Till he become the place<br>Wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling. |

*Biano da Siena translated by Richard Frederick Littledale*

### Prayer of Adoration

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden, cleanse us from all unrighteousness by the inspiration and works of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your Holy Name through Jesus our Lord and Saviour. So help us in our worship now to recognise Your amazing glory, Your majesty, Your beauty, Your wonderful creation, which all tell of Your greatness. In love and tender mercy you draw near to us in Christ Jesus, the word made flesh who came and dwelt amongst us, through whom You show care to those in need, friendship to those bereaved, forgiveness for sin for all who believe, through a cross which He embraced, and in Risen power comes to meet us now as we gather in His name.

We do give You thanks for all You've done in Jesus, especially as we remember His suffering throughout this period of Lent. We also give thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus to His disciples prior to His death, and so we pray that through the Spirit on which our first hymn was based, we will be encouraged and inspired in our Christian journey of faith and hope.

And so Lord forgive us we pray, when our worship is often less than wholehearted, and when our daily lives do not reflect what we aspire to be, and what you would have us be. Our selfishness, our carelessness, our irritability are all evident in us missing the mark. So please forgive us all our sins and misdemeanours as we give You thanks for Your greatest gift in Jesus, who lived His life an example for all to follow, and who taught us when we pray to say together:-

## 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 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.**

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.**

### StF 518 – Father hear the prayer we offer

- 1) Father, hear the prayer we offer:  
Not for ease that prayer shall be,  
But for strength that we may ever  
Live our lives courageously.
- 2) Not for ever in green pastures  
Do we ask our way to be;  
But the steep and rugged pathway  
May we tread rejoicingly.
- 3) Not for ever by still waters  
Would we idly rest and stay;  
But would strike the living fountains  
From the rocks along our way.
- 4) Be our strength in hours of weakness,  
In our wanderings be our guide;  
Through endeavour, failure, danger,  
Father, be there at our side.

*Love Maria Willis*

### Reading: Luke 13:31 - 35

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

### StF 251 – Jesus Christ is waiting

- 1) Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets;  
No one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too:  
Make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait on you.
- 2) Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets,  
Where injustice spirals and real hope retreats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too:  
In the Kingdom's causes let me rage with you.
- 3) Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets,  
Curing those who suffer, touching those he greets.  
Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too:  
Let my care be active, healing, just like you
- 4) Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets,  
Where each sign of hatred He, with love,  
defeats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too:  
Where good conquers evil let me dance with you
- 5) Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets,  
'Who will join my journey? I will guide  
their feet.'  
Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few:  
Walk one step before me; I will follow you.

*John L Bell & Graham Maule © 1988 WGRG Iona Community CCL No. 515642*

## Sermon

In our set reading for today, we find Jesus in Galilee, being warned by some Pharisees that Herod wanted to kill Him. It is unusual to find these Pharisees almost trying to protect Jesus, and one has to wonder whether their apparent friendship was genuine, or whether they just wanted to frighten Jesus into moving out of their area as it were. But Jesus knows all things, even the very thoughts of men, and His response is to Herod when he says *“Go tell that fox ....I shall finish my work.”*

Jesus deliberately describes Herod as a fox for he was cunning and sly, subtle and treacherous. Jesus does not fear Herod and his threats, because He knows this is not part of Gods plan, for He goes on to say that *“it is not right for a prophet to be killed anywhere except in Jerusalem.”* This is the place that the Sanhedrin court sat, the only court that tried so called ‘false prophets’ and condemned them to death.

Jerusalem, the Holy City of God, as recognised by all the Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. King David established it as the capital of the united Israel and his son, King Solomon built the first temple in the city. To many its importance lies in a sentimental past, King David conquered the city and brought the Ark of the Covenant.

Luke 13 v34 - *“Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You kill the prophets, you stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times have I wanted to put my arms round all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me!”*

Have you ever spent some time on the farm and seen free range hens? I visited a farm the other day, where I saw a new breed of chicken. It had 12 legs! I thought what a fantastic idea, it means all the guests at the dinner table get to have a leg each – how brilliant. Then I thought to myself ‘I wonder what these new chickens would taste like?’ But then I thought ‘I bet nobody knows ‘cos they won’t be able to catch one!’ But when I asked the farmer about them he called me a fool – and said ‘that hens not got 12 legs – it’s got 5 chicks under it’s wing!’

You see, that’s how the caring mother offers protection for her young; she offers comfort and warmth and security. Shelter from the rain, out of harm’s way, hidden in her wings. She spreads her wings out so that her young may run to her for safety. Does this not illustrate perfectly the compassion of Christ?

Let’s look at what Jerusalem meant to Jesus. Was it not the city that God himself had chosen through His servant David? Didn’t Jesus have a conversation with the woman from Samaria concerning the place where one should worship the true God? The home of the temple, the place of the feasts and festivals, to which ever Jew made a pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime. Steeped in history for God’s chosen people, and here Jesus shows such compassion for this chosen nation of people whose heart and culture radiated from this great city when he laments for them in this scripture from Luke’s gospel. It’s an agonising plea of what could have been if only they had listened. If only they had not been so hard hearted and stubborn towards the Son of God. And yet Jesus here does not curse these stiff-necked people, He has already given them stern warnings, but now he laments for them.

We are also told in Luke 19 v 41 that as Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem *“He wept over it.”* Like a hen would sense danger when birds of prey hover over head, and spread her wings and signal to her chicks making sure they are safe whilst exposing herself to the danger, so Jesus protects us from Gods judgement which hangs over us and has left himself exposed to it in our stead. And like a hen stretches out her wings to save her chicks, so Jesus stretched out His arms to save His children. The children of God, those whom He chose, those who respond to His love. This wonderful salvation freely given so that we may freely receive.

And yet Jesus still laments today for all the lost souls of the world, especially for those who gather in His house and yet still don’t know Him. Those who live in this community and still haven’t heard about him.

Do we lament also when we look around and cry out, 'Oh people how long has Jesus longed to put His arms around you and love you, but you would not listen?' Is Jesus calling to you this day? Are you the lost child of today?

Psalm 17 v 8 says "*Hide me in the shadow of your wings.*" Psalm 63 v 7 says "*You have always been my help, in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.*" Psalm 91 v 4 says "*He will cover you with his wings, you will be safe in his care*"

Amazing love, that He should show such pity to a people who were about to call for His crucifixion. It illustrates the mercy of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that he who was about to suffer at their mercy could show such mercy and forgiveness in return, and yet we have no or little compassion for those that do not know of the love of this man is incredible in itself. The very lack of our zeal for what our saviour has done for us is in itself an injustice to this man Jesus. For I believe Jesus would have us weep and lament for our world rather than curse and condemn it like we often do today.

When Jesus appears to His disciples after the resurrection we read in Luke 24 v 47 that He says "*The message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations – beginning in Jerusalem*" Even after they had done their worst, Jesus still shows compassion for them and wants them to be saved. Incredible love. A love that can be ours too if only we repent and accept Jesus into our lives as Lord and Saviour. Amen.

### **StF 636 – O love that wilt not let me go**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) O love that wilt not let me go,<br>I rest my weary soul in thee:<br>I give thee back the life I owe,<br>That in thine ocean depths its flow<br>May richer, fuller be.                 | 3) O joy that seekest me through pain,<br>I cannot close my heart to thee:<br>I trace the rainbow through the rain,<br>And feel the promise is not vain,<br>That morn shall tearless be. |
| 2) O light that followest all my way,<br>I yield my flickering torch to thee:<br>My heart restores its borrowed ray,<br>That in thy sunshine's blaze its day<br>May brighter, fairer be. | 4) O cross that liftest up my head,<br>I dare not ask to fly from thee:<br>I lay in dust life's glory dead,<br>And from the ground there blossoms red<br>Life that shall endless be.     |

*George Matheson*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

We are grateful for the many blessings we receive and the freedom we enjoy in this country, but we begin now by praying for the matters concerning our wider world which is in desperate need at this time. Worries about climate change consume many causing anxiety and fear. And yet no one turns to the maker and creator for answers as we watch on in horror as the futile arguments continue. World poverty increases as the rich get richer and the poor poorer in our world that seems so unfair at times, where justice is lacking and unrest spreads in places such as India, Syria and the Congo to name but a few where Christians are facing persecution and death. This adds to the already numerous places around the globe where Christianity is outlawed causing such suffering to those believers. We pray earnestly that You will be near them and encourage them as they remain steadfast in their faith in such difficult circumstances, asking that You comfort and strengthen them in their hour of need.

We pray for peace and stability in a world that seems to be lacking in basic common sense, we are appalled at what is going on and being said by those in power and authority, especially thinking of the situations at this present time in Ukraine and Gaza, and now the West Bank. Help all involved in trying to find solutions that appease everyone, a somewhat difficult task that needs our urgent thoughts and prayers.  
Lord in Your mercy – **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our nation and the problems it faces as we try and make ends meet with rising costs both individually and nationally. We pray for those in positions of authority, may they rule with fair justice, and not for any gain or reward of their own, but for the benefit of those they serve in office. We pray for local communities and the issues they face with many cut backs to services and the uncertainties which the future holds. We pray for local businesses and schools, health departments and food banks, be with all those who support and assist those in greatest need at this time.

Lord in Your mercy – **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the churches of the land and remember Your promise to never leave or forsake us. As Christianity is on the decline we do pray for a revival during this time of Lent, that men and woman of this land would once again turn to the things of God restoring moral values once more. We pray for our own circuit, giving thanks to all those who serve in it to keep our churches functioning. We thank you for our superintendent and his family, together with our ministers. We know difficult decisions have to be made from time to time which concern all involved. So strengthen us and encourage us all along the way as we remember and declare the life-giving truth we believe and see in Your love for each of us gathered in Your name. And so we ask a blessing on this our own church here, giving thanks for all that goes on in this place, may it be to the glory of Your name and as a witness to all. We ask You to bless the offerings given each week, that they may be used for the extension of Your kingdom here on earth, and ask that You bless everyone connected with this congregation. We pray now for all those of the fellowship who are troubled and in need at this time, sharing our concerns and worries as You build us up in faith and perseverance through Your grace and love.

Lord in Your mercy – **Hear our prayer. Amen**

### **StF 357 – Jesus the name high over all**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) Jesus - the name high over all,<br>In hell, or earth, or sky!<br>Angels revere, and nations fall,<br>And devils fear and fly.              | 4) O that the world might taste and see<br>The riches of his grace!<br>The arms of love that compass me<br>Would all the earth embrace. |
| 2) Jesus - the name to sinners dear,<br>The name to sinners given!<br>It scatters all their guilty fear,<br>It turns their hell to heaven.    | 5) His only righteousness I show,<br>His saving grace proclaim;<br>'Tis all my business here below<br>To cry: 'Behold the Lamb!'        |
| 3) Jesus - the prisoner's fetters breaks,<br>And bruises Satan's head;<br>Power into strengthless souls it speaks,<br>And life into the dead. | 6) Happy if with my latest breath<br>I might but gasp his name;<br>Preach him to all, and cry in death:<br>'Behold, behold the Lamb!'   |

*Charles Wesley*

### **Blessing**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us now and evermore, **Amen.**