

## Traditional Home service Sunday 20th March

### OPENING PRAYER

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 for ever.  
Amen

### PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

My God, for love of you I desire to hate and forsake all sins by which I have ever displeased you; and I resolve by the help of your grace to commit them no more; and to avoid all opportunities of sin. Help me to do this, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts. Open our lips, Lord:  
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Just as I Am, Without One Plea*)

READINGS - Isaiah 55.1-9  
1 Corinthians 10.1-13  
Luke 13.1-9

### TALK

### CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.*

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*Rock of Ages, cleft for me*)

### CONCLUSION

Now may the blessing of God the Father, who made from one every nation that occupies the earth; of God the Son who bought us for God from every tribe and language and people and nation; and of God the Spirit who brings us together in unity, be with us and remain with us always.  
Amen.

## HYMNS TO USE

1 Just as I am, without one plea,  
but that thy blood was shed for me,  
and that thou bidd'st me come to  
thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

2 Just as I am, and waiting not  
to rid my soul of one dark blot,  
to thee, whose blood can cleanse  
each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

3 Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

4 Just as I am, thou wilt receive,  
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse,  
relieve;  
because thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

1 Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
let me hide myself in thee;  
let the water and the blood,  
from thy wounded side which flowed,  
be of sin the double cure;  
save from wrath and make me pure.

2 Not the labours of my hands  
can fulfill thy law's demands;  
could my zeal no respite know,  
could my tears forever flow,  
all for sin could not atone;  
thou must save, and thou alone.

3 Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to the cross I cling;  
naked, come to thee for dress;  
helpless, look to thee for grace;  
foul, I to the fountain fly;  
wash me, Savior, or I die.

4 While I draw this fleeting breath,  
when mine eyes shall close in death,  
when I soar to worlds unknown,  
see thee on thy judgment throne,  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
let me hide myself in thee.

Sermon - Adrian Morton  
Isaiah 55.1-9; 1 Corinthians 10.1-13,  
Luke 13.1-9  
Invited into His Presence

I want to use mainly the Isaiah passage this morning.

Isaiah was one of many prophets who called Israel to renounce their waywardness.

They had broken their covenant with God. They would have to suffer the consequences of their sin.

Yet throughout Israel's history, there had always been a faithful remnant who stood firm on the Word of God.

And had stood firm and trusted His plan of salvation.

And this Isaiah 55 is an invitation to whoever is thirsty for truth.

To come to God, to drink deeply of His excellent provision.  
A provision given freely and with out cost.

The previous chapters of Isaiah are about the promised suffering servant.

And this Isaiah passage is a prophecy that of course points us forward to Jesus.

And it is still therefore an invitation to come to Him.  
To the one who will satisfy our souls.

To the One who will offer mercy to all who turn to Him.  
To the One who will freely pardon...

A few of us went to the New Win Leaders conference in Harrogate at the beginning of March.

That's where Louise and I caught covid!  
We were reminded again though how as Christians our first calling is to be with Him.

Our calling is not first to a purpose but to a person.

So in Mark 3, when Jesus appointed the 12 apostles, it says this:

*Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve **that they might be with him** and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.*

He appointed the 12 to firstly be with Him...

At the end of Matthew where he goes the great commission, he says to His disciples:

*And surely I am with you always...*

That was his parting encouragement...

My presence will be available to you, always...

Our invitation is to be with Him.

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A mark of spiritual health is not that we don't experience stress, anxiety, disappointment, upset, discouragement...

A mark of spiritual health is how well we recover from those things...

Its the same in the physical world.

I use to play football every week in Bozeat.

When I wasn't fit, which was often, it would take me into the next week to recover.

I'd be hobbling around much of the following week.

Elite athletes will still get tired and exhausted.  
But they will recover quickly.  
Because they are physically healthy.

It's the same in the spiritual realm.

We will still experience anxieties, disappointments, setbacks, discouragements.

But if we are spiritual healthy, we will recover quickly.

And we get spiritual healthy by spending time with Him.

By spending time in His presence.

Times where we listen to Him.

Times where we taste of His goodness.

Where our souls will 'delight' in the richest of fare, as it says in Isaiah.

Our souls will delight in His provision.

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A couple of weeks ago, when Matthew so ably filled in.

I was due to speak on the temptations of Jesus.

Just to remind you of that account in Luke 4.

It says Jesus was full of the Spirit.  
And was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

There the Lord allowed Satan to tempt Jesus in three ways:

Jesus was tempted to prove to himself that He was the Son of God.

Yet His Father in heaven has just told him he was.

So Jesus was being tempted to doubt the word of the Father over Him.

Secondly Jesus was tempted to worship Satan not God.

There will always be a temptation for us to worship something other than God.

In other words, we will be tempted to put our seat of affection somewhere else.

It maybe sport, your football team, your job or career, cars, shopping, money, fame.

Whatever will compete for your ultimate affection.

That which takes your time, your energy, your focus in life.

And none of those things are wrong in themselves.. of course there not ...

But whenever something replaces our ultimate source of affection, that which we give our life to, then it becomes what we worship.

It becomes something we worship other than God...

Thirdly Jesus was tempted with status and popularity.

Yet His road was to be one of humble service, of reliance on the Father, of intimacy with Him, of quiet subversive kingdom growth, of strength in weakness, of persecution even...

In the 1 Corinthians 10 reading that is set today, but which wasn't read out.

It says:

*"No temptation has seized you except that is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."*

We won't in all probability be tempted the same way as Jesus was.

But, and you don't need me to tell you, temptations will always come.

*An overweight businessman decided it was time to shed some excess pounds. He took his new diet seriously, even changing his driving route to avoid his favourite bakery. One morning, however, he showed up at work with a gigantic coffee cake. Everyone in the office scolded him, but his smile remained nonetheless. "This is a special coffee cake," he explained. "I accidentally drove by the bakery this morning and there in the window was a host of goodies. I felt it was no accident, so I prayed, 'Lord, if you want me to have one of those delicious coffee cakes, let there be a parking spot open right in front.' And sure enough, the eighth time around the block, there it was!"*

We will be better positioned to withstand temptations that come in life...

If we have cultivated a healthy inner life by spending time with Him.

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In our Gospel reading this morning we hear about a couple of fairly distressing happenings.

Pilate has slaughtered some pilgrims from Galilee.  
And a tower had fallen and killed 18 people.

Those around Jesus were obviously talking about these things.  
Probably with the assumption that the people who suffered must have been particularly sinful and under the judgement of God.

It'd be like us discussing whether those living in Ukraine were under particularly sinful and being punished by God.

And Jesus responds by saying a resounding 'No!'.

It doesn't mean that at all.

And actually, rather than worrying about that theological question, he essentially says, Get your own house in order.

You need to turn to God...  
You need to get right with God.

There's a time to ask questions isn't there.  
We run the Alpha course to encourage people to ask questions.

Jesus himself said, Count the cost before coming to Him...

Yet there is also a time, where people need to turn to God.  
To get right with Him.  
Even if we haven't all the answers..

I know of people (not from this church) who have gone through Alpha.  
And still not repented and turned to God.  
Because they are still wrestling over questions they have.  
Or theological difficulties...

We are never going to understand everything there is to understand about God.

We were never meant to.

As it says in Isaiah 55:  
*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways declares the Lord."*

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Jesus then tells a parable about a fig tree growing in a vineyard.  
And it hasn't been fruitful.

*For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" " 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' "*

I think Jesus was simply saying, God is merciful and patient.

He will give us time to repent, to turn to Him.

I was reflecting though on the link between our being called into His Presence and our being fruitful.

I'm sure we all want to be fruitful followers of Jesus.

Yet I believe there is a direct link between fruitfulness and spending time with Jesus.

After Jesus was tempted, it says in Luke 4 that he returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.

So he entered full of the Spirit.  
And he returned in the power of the Spirit.

Power, anointing comes from the wilderness place.  
The secret place, the time alone place.

If we are going to succeed in any form of public ministry.  
If we are going to fulfil the plans the Lord has for us.

Then we will have to be victorious in the private place.  
Private victories are the foundation for public ministry.

For Jesus, if he couldn't win the victory here, then there would have been little point carrying on.

The biggest victories we have in life are the in the private place.  
Those we win at a personal, intimate level.

We may have a great public ministry.  
We may be pursuing the right aims in life.

But if we are not being victorious in the private place.  
Then actually, we are not being victorious from a kingdom perspective.

A lot of people aim for greatness in the public arena.  
What if we aimed for greatness in the private arena.

Where the only audience we have is God.

I'm convinced that we will bump into people in heaven.  
Who will be considered great in heaven who we will never have heard of.

But heaven considers them great because their greatness was built and worked out in the secret place.

The times spent with Him...

If we want to be the most anointed worship leader, then the anointing comes from spending time in His presence.

If we want to be the most anointed speaker, then it comes from His presence.

Whatever 'ministry we have, anointing for it, kingdom fruitfulness comes from the secret place.

Talent, personality, gifting will only get you so far...

Anointing comes from His Presence.  
And victories won in the secret place.

It's what Jesus was saying in John 15 when he talked about the vine and branches and the need to abide in Him...

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We are getting to the end of the season of Lent...

I'm not sure whether you gave up anything?

I saw an article in the Independent newspaper, so it must be true...

The most common things given up for Lent were:

Alcohol  
Twitter  
Facebook  
School  
Meat  
Sweets  
Coffee  
Fizzy drinks

Thing is it's not what we give up that matters.  
We give things up so we can cultivate our relationship with the Lord.

If given up anything doesn't lead to us spending time with Him.  
The one who is inviting us to come to the waters...  
So that our souls will delight in the richest of fare...

Then we may as well have drunk the alcohol, eaten the meat, whatever it was...

I realise that I should have maybe mentioned this before Lent had started!

Also, I know that it can be good to teach our children about sacrifice etc..

But you know what I'm saying!

Lets finish...

The invitation is still there to come to Him.  
To the one who will satisfy our souls.

To the One who will offer mercy to all who turn to Him.  
To the One who will freely pardon...

Amen!