

O Christ Church, Ipswich
Sunday 23rd March 2025
Family Worship for the Third Sunday of Lent

Hello. I hope all is well. Let us worship God together:

Call to worship and opening prayers

Come and seek the Lord wherever you are.

We call upon God, he is always near.

Let go of your unkind ways of thinking and acting.

We call upon God, he always has mercy.

God will cleanse us of all our wrongdoing.

We call upon God, he always gives new life.

Creator God, as we gather today,
 we know we have often failed to choose well.
 Be with us, as we hear again
 the stories of your limitless love
 and measureless grace. **Amen.**

Are you thirsty? Are you hungry? Are your pockets empty?
 Come, eat, drink and be satisfied.
 For money cannot buy such soul-enriching fare
 as you will find in the presence of our holy, merciful God. Amen.

R&S 560 Glorious things of thee are spoken

1 Glorious things of thee are spoken,
 Zion, city of our God;
 he whose word cannot be broken
 formed thee for his own abode.
 On the Rock of Ages founded,
 what can shake thy sure repose?
 With salvation's walls surrounded,
 thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

2 See! The streams of living waters,
 springing from eternal love,
 well supply thy sons and daughters,
 and all fear of want remove;
 who can faint, while such a river
 ever flows, their thirst to assuage—
 grace, which, like the Lord, the giver,
 never fails from age to age.

3 Saviour, if of Zion's city
 I, through grace, a member am,
 let the world deride or pity,
 I will glory in thy name.
 Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
 all his boasted pomp and show;
 solid joys and lasting treasure
 none but Zion's children know.

John Newton (1725-1807)

A prayer of adoration

Merciful God, who directs our life,
we adore you.
 Faithful God, who never changes,
we adore you.
 Glorious God of forgiveness and second chances,
we adore you.
 God of all nourishment,
we adore you.
 All powerful, abundant God,
we adore you. Amen.

A prayer of confession

Father God, you give us the gift of abundant life,
 providing for our physical and spiritual needs.
 We're sorry for taking your provision for granted.
 We're sorry: when we lose sight of your loving mercy
 and get wrapped up in our own self-indulgent desires;
 for failing to rejoice and sing your praises;
 for focusing on the negatives instead of the positives;
 for being judgemental and not giving others a second chance.

**We repent, Father God:
 help us to turn around and to bear good fruit. Amen.**

Assurance of forgiveness

God has mercy on all who turn to him.
 He freely pardons and forgives our sins.
We are free to begin anew. Amen.

A prayer of thanksgiving

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, entwined as One,
 we give you thanks and praise.
 Our deepest longings are satisfied in you.
 You allow us second chances, never giving up on us.
 Repentance changes our life and shapes our future,
 one that you tend and nurture, day by day.
 You help us endure trials and temptations,
 ensuring we are never pushed beyond
 our boundary of endurance.

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit, entwined as One,
 we give you thanks and praise for satisfying our souls.
 All thanks and praise to you. Amen.**

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. 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.

Family Talk**GG 35 As the deer pants for the water**

1 As the deer pants for the water,
 so my soul longs after You.
 You alone are my heart's desire
 and I long to worship You.

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
 to You alone may my spirit yield.
 You alone are my heart's desire
 and I long to worship You.*

2 I want You more than gold and silver,
 only You can satisfy.
 You alone are the real joy giver
 and the apple of my eye.

3 You're my friend and You're my brother,
 even though You are a king.
 I love You more than any other,
 so much more than anything.

Martin Nystrom (1956-)

Old Testament Reading**Isaiah 55:1-9****(OT page 623)***An Invitation to Abundant Life*

55 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.
² 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.
³ 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.
⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.
⁵ 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.
⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found,
 call upon him while he is near;
⁷ 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.
⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
⁹ 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`****(NT page 70)***Repent or Perish*

13 At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?' ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴ 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? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

⁶ 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. ⁷ 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?" ⁸ He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

R&S 277 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
 in a believer's ear:
 it soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,
 and drives away our fear.

2 It makes the wounded spirit whole,
 and calms the troubled breast;
 'tis manna to the hungry soul,
 and to the weary, rest.

3 Dear Name! the rock on which I build,
 my shield and hiding place,
 my never-failing treasury, filled
 with boundless stores of grace:

4 Jesus! my Shepherd, and my Friend,
 my Prophet, Priest and King,
 my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
 accept the praise I bring.

5 Weak is the effort of my heart,
 and cold my warmest thought;
 but when I see thee as thou art,
 I'll praise thee as I ought.

6 Till then I would thy love proclaim
 with every fleeting breath;
 and may the music of thy Name
 refresh my soul in death.

John Newton. (1725-1807)

Reflection***A moment for reflection as Stephen plays for us***

R&S 353 There's a wideness in God's mercy

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice
which is more than liberty.

2 There is plentiful redemption
in the blood that has been shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the Head.

3 There is grace enough for thousands
of new worlds as great as this;
there is room for fresh creations
in the Lord's unfathomed bliss.

4 For the love of God is broader
than the measures of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

5 But we make his love too narrow
by false limits of our own;
and we magnify his strictness
with a zeal he will not own.

6 If our love were but more simple
we should take him at his word;
and our lives would be illumined
by the glory of the Lord.

F. W. Faber (1814-63) altd.*

Prayers

Lord, we choose to turn back to you.

Help us to start afresh: renewed and restored.

Lord, we come to you admitting our weakness and failure.

Thank you for giving us the chance to turn around and start afresh with you.

Indeed, Lord, you are the God of second chances and we know, in our lifetimes, you have been the God of third and fourth chances, forgiving and restoring us a countless number of times. We are profoundly grateful. We know that without you, we would have no hope and yet, because of your love, we remain your children – even if rather wayward children at times.

Lord, we choose to turn back to you.

Help us to start afresh: renewed and restored.

Lord, we think about the times this week when we have wandered away from you; and the times when we have determinedly gone in unwise and selfish directions. Yet you still desire to bring us back. We ponder those moments when we have found ourselves safely back with you. What was it that brought us there? A word of encouragement from a friend? A sign of love from our family? Verses from Scripture that challenged and enabled? Something beautiful that we saw or heard that reminded us of you? Lord, whatever or whoever you used to bring us back, we thank you. Help us to remember those joyful moments of reconciliation so that we are less inclined to wander away again.

Lord, we choose to turn back to you.

Help us to start afresh: renewed and restored.

Lord, as we think about the disasters that Jesus spoke about, we remember things we have heard on the news this week that have shocked or saddened us. We remember particularly.... the Middle East as the ceasefire has crumbled and more people are dying. We think of the progress of diplomacy between Russia, the USA and Ukraine. Lord, may your words of peace and love rule in these places. May conflict cease and goodness return.

We also pray for those places which are no longer in the headlines but are still seen and remembered by you...

We thank you for the aid agencies that work tirelessly to bring supplies, medicines and comfort. Lord, may your people be fed, clothed and given safety wherever they find themselves. These are big prayers, Lord, but you are a big God.

And we pray for the people or places that never make the news, where only you see the hurt and the pain. We know how much it grieves your heart of love. We pray for those who are trafficked or abused... those who suffer from addictions and long to be free... those who are in prison... or feeling desperately alone... . We long to see the world restored to the way in which you intended it. Lord, may your kingdom come.

Lord, we choose to turn back to you.

Help us to start afresh: renewed and restored.

Lord, we think of those who we have struggled to give a second chance to this week... perhaps a friend or colleague who let us down; someone in our class who was annoying; someone in a shop who was rude or someone who cut us up in traffic; a family member that was trying our patience. We pray for each of those people now, whether they are known to us or just an incident we remember... Give us the grace to forgive and the patience to accept situations that we cannot control.

And we think of all those who have given *us* second chances this week... We pray for them now with gratitude for their kindness and patience.

Lord, we choose to turn back to you.

Help us to start afresh: renewed and restored.

Lord, we bring to you all those we know who are suffering for whatever reason. We pray for those who are sick... those who are sad... those who have had a difficult diagnosis and don't know what will happen next... the confused and anxious...

Lord, you care about each and every situation we face – we do not have to go it alone. We ask that you will bring your peace into each situation we have just prayed for. May there be restoration and healing and renewal of hope no matter how hard everything may seem.

Lord, we choose to turn back to you.

Help us to start afresh: renewed and restored.

Lord, as we go forward into the new week, may we go from here restored and refreshed by having spent time with you. Send us out, filled with your love, to be peacemakers and forgivers. Help us to see you in the eyes of everyone we meet this week and to serve them as if it is you we are serving. Give us a new strength and determination to follow your way no matter how hard, challenging, or glorious it is!

Lord, we choose to turn back to you.

Help us to start afresh: renewed and restored. Amen

R&S 345 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
 pilgrim through this barren land;
 I am weak, but thou art mighty,
 hold me with thy powerful hand:
 bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
 feed me now and evermore;
 feed me now and evermore.

Open thou the crystal fountain
 whence the healing stream doth flow;
 let the fiery, cloudy pillar
 lead me all my journey through:
 strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
 be thou still my strength and shield;
 be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
 bid my anxious fears subside;
 death of death, and hell's destruction,
 land me safe on Canaan's side:
 songs of praises, songs of praises,
 I will ever give to thee;
 I will ever give to thee.

A sending out prayer

Loving God,
thank you for your promise to do something new in each of our lives.
Help us to give people a second chance, as you do for us,
today, in the week ahead and always. **Amen.**

The Blessing

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
be upon us and those we love, this day and always. **Amen.**

The Grace

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