

Christ Church, Ipswich
Sunday 30th March 2025
Worship for the Fourth Sunday of Lent
Mothering Sunday

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

Call to worship

Loving God,
 we gather in this place assured of your love.
 You know our failures, fickleness and faithlessness,
 yet you still welcome us into your presence.
 Help us to do the same,
 welcoming all in your name. **Amen.**

A gathering prayer

God, our father and mother,
 we quieten ourselves to be present
 to ourselves, to you and to each other.
 We come as we are, sometimes lost,
 because we choose our way and not yours,
 because we make an outward show of your way,
 but without love – and that is not your way.
 Thank you for your outrageous love,
 always and forever welcoming us home. **Amen.**

A prayer of approach

On this Mothering Sunday,
 we open our hearts before you, faithful God,
 bringing those we love,
 and those we struggle to love,
 those we have lost, and those we are afraid of losing.
 We bring our tears and our joy,
 our disappointments and our hopes.
 We bring all that we carry
 and all that we long to lay down –
 in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

R&S 712 All people that on earth do dwell

1 All people that on earth do dwell,
 sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
 him serve with mirth his praise forth tell;
 come ye before him and rejoice.

2 The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
 without our aid he did us make;
 we are his folk, he doth us feed;
 and for his sheep he doth us take.

3 O enter then his courts with praise,
 approach with joy his courts unto;
 praise, laud and bless his name always,
 for it is seemly so to do.

4 For why: the Lord our God is good,
 his mercy is for ever sure;
 his truth at all times firmly stood,
 and shall from age to age endure.

William Kethe (Publ. 1560-61) altd. Psalm 100

A prayer of adoration

Living God,
 you do not save us from our mistakes,
 but you release us to learn from them.
 Thank you for being there
 to welcome us back when we have lost our way,
 to challenge our resentment when we have lost our grace,
 to embrace our need
 when we have exhausted our self-sufficiency.
 We are so grateful. **Amen.**

A prayer of confession

God of the prodigal and the elder sons,
we are sorry for the times we get lost in our world with no thought for others.

Forgive us and help us to find our way home.

We are sorry when we use our resources selfishly.

Forgive us and help us to find our way home.

We are sorry when we doubt your love,
and our pride prevents us from admitting our mistakes.

Forgive us and help us to find our way home.

We are sorry when we resent your generosity towards others,
and judge their failures more harshly than our own.

Forgive us and help us to find our way home.

We are sorry when we hurt those we love and abuse their trust.

Forgive us and help us to find our way home.

In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Assurance of forgiveness

Faithful God, in a world that judges and blames, you forgive and understand.

In a world that has no time for failure and mistakes, you forgive and understand.

Thank you that your heart is so full of love, it can never run out. **Amen.**

A prayer of thanksgiving

Generous God,
on this Mothering Sunday, we thank you for mothers, parents and
all who care for us. Love shapes our life.

But none more so than your love, which is beyond any other.

Thank you that you do not leave us wallowing in the mess
we make of life, but wait patiently for us to come to our senses.

Thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who paid for our sin
with his immeasurable sacrifice.

Thank you for your Holy Spirit, who keeps us on track.

Thank you that when we return to you, we are always sure of
a warm, comforting embrace.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thank you for restoring us. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

BPW 330 Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

1 Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2 Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3 Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
Why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
Home! weary wanderers, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4 Come to my heart now, O wonderful Love,
come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride;
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of Thee.

Robert Walmsley (1831–1905)

Old Testament Reading**Joshua 5:9-12****(OT page 184)**

⁹The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.' And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

The Passover at Gilgal

¹⁰While the Israelites were encamped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. ¹¹On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. ¹²The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Gospel Reading**Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32****(NT page 73)**

15 Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

³So he told them this parable:

The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

^{11b}'There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." ²²But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

²⁵'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" ³¹Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."

BPW 382 I will sing the wondrous story

I will sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
how he left the realms of glory
for the cross of Calvary.

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
sing it with the saints in glory,
gathered by the crystal sea.*

I was lost, but Jesus found me,
found the sheep that went astray,
raised me up and gently led me
back into the narrow way.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story...

Days of darkness still may meet me,
sorrow's path my feet may tread;
but his presence still is with me,
by his guiding hand I'm led.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story...

He will keep me till the river
rolls its waters at my feet;
then He'll bear me safely over,
made by grace for glory meet.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story...

F.H.Rowley (1854-1952)

Reflection based our readings today***A moment for reflection as Stephen plays*****R&S 72 Now thank we all our God**

Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices;
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mother's arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be ever more.

Martin Rinkart. (1586-1649)
tr. Catherine Winkworth. (1827-78)

Our prayers of intercession

Father, we thank you for welcoming us into your family.

Help us to welcome others too.

Father, we rejoice that we are welcomed into your presence today and every day. Thank you so much for taking the first steps, making the first move, rushing towards us with open arms of forgiveness, love and joy. Help us never to take your love for granted. Instead, give us the grace and the courage to be as welcoming to others as you are to us.

Father, we thank you for welcoming us into your family.

Help us to welcome others too.

Father, we think of all those who have been welcoming to us this week. Our colleagues, our teachers, our friends, people in shops and offices, at the doctors... we pause to think of one particular person who was welcoming and helpful to us this week. We thank you for them and pray for them now, even if we don't know their name. Help us to take what we have learned from their hospitality into the week ahead so that we can behave in the same way towards others, whether they are friend or stranger.

Father, we thank you for welcoming us into your family.

Help us to welcome others too.

Father, on this Mothering Sunday in the UK, we turn our thoughts and prayers to our families. We thank you for all those who behave as mothers towards us whether we are related to them or not. We pause for a moment to think about what we can do to show kindness and care to them too...

We pray for everyone who lives in the same house as us, as well as those who are our neighbours, or who we long to see face to face but, for whatever reason, can only speak to over the phone or the internet.

Thank you for the technology that can bring us closer. We think of a particular special moment with our loved ones this week. Help us to hold it in our hearts and minds so it brings a smile when things get tough.

Father, we thank you for welcoming us into your family.

Help us to welcome others too.

Father we pray for all those who do not feel welcome where they live. For children who are unhappy, abused, afraid... For those who are in care and longing for the love of a forever family.... We pray for those who have lost touch with people they love and don't know how to find a way back.... For those who have had arguments this week and don't know how to say sorry and start a reconciliation...

We pray for refugees and those living in unfamiliar places who just want to go home but cannot....

Help us to be ready to provide love and care wherever we see a need. We pray for our local foodbanks, for refugee agencies, foster carers, warm welcome spaces... anywhere and anyone in our locality that provides welcome and care.

Father, we thank you for welcoming us into your family.

Help us to welcome others too.

Lord, we thank you for this church congregation. We think back to the first time we came here... what or who was it that encouraged us to return? We pray for the people sitting on either side of us today; for those behind and in front of us; our friends and those whose names we do not know. And we pray for those who will come into this church for the first time this week: as a visitor; as someone enquiring about you; those who want time alone with you to pray; for those who may come to a funeral or a wedding or just want to look and see. Father may our welcome be as warm as your welcome is to us. May those who come through our doors meet with you in a deeply meaningful way and may they leave here rejoicing that they have had an encounter with a Father who loves them.

Father, we thank you for welcoming us into your family.

Help us to welcome others too.

Father, we focus now on the world around us. We think of those places in our world where we have seen evidence of welcoming love this week, particularly....

And we cry out to you for those places where love and joy seems to have disappeared, as if it will never return... especially in the Middle East, the Ukraine and Russia, so many parts of Africa. We pray for those who work to bring peace, harmony and restoration. May they be kept safe and given all the wisdom they need to bring conflicts to a successful conclusion.

Father, we thank you for welcoming us into your family.

Help us to welcome others too.

As we go forward into the week ahead may we know the loving Father-heart of God in us and all around us. May we take that love to everyone we meet and into everything we do. And may we return next week refreshed by God's love ready to praise him for all that he has done for us. **Amen.**

The Junior Church will join us for our closing hymn

R&S 366 And can it be that I should gain

1 And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain;
for me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

2 'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
let angel-minds enquire no more.

3 He left his Father's throne above—
so free, so infinite his grace—
emptied himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.

'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
for, O my God, it found out me!

4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
fast bound in sin and nature's night;
thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
my chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

5 No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach the eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

A sending out prayer

As we go into the coming week, O God,
and strive to walk as people of welcome,
fill us with your grace, mercy and peace.
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,
and help us to share these gifts with all we meet. **Amen.**

The Blessing

And may the blessing of our loving God,
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.**

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