

All Saints' Church Thornton Hough



Morning Prayer
First Sunday of Lent
Sunday 21st February 2021
Online (from 10:30am)

The Greeting

The grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

Hymn: Drop, drop slow tears

- 1 Drop, drop, slow tears,
and bathe those beauteous feet,
which brought from heaven
the news and Prince of Peace.
- 2 Cease not, wet eyes,
his mercies to entreat;
to cry for vengeance
sin doth never cease.
- 3 In your deep floods
drown all my faults and fears;
nor let his eye
see sin, but through my tears.

Phineas Fletcher (1582–1650)

Prayers of Penitence

Jesus says 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'
So let us turn away from sin and turn to the Lord,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

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

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. ***Amen.***

Bible readings

1 Peter 3: 18-22

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits – to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Mark 1: 9-15

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Reflection: Promised and Sent

When I went to the Holy Land just prior to coming to Thornton Hough, one of the many highlights of the pilgrimage was going to the River Jordan. I had the privilege of helping some fellow pilgrims into the water as they renewed their baptismal vows. It was enormously moving – people of all ages being immersed in the water, declaring their trust in Jesus Christ as Lord. They were reminded of the way that Christ died and rose again, and being raised out of that water brought to life the promise that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and that all who live and believe in him will never die.

The Jordan is not how the films portray it: a wide, sparkling river, whose banks allow the crowds to come to the waters with ease: it is an uneven, muddy ribbon of water and reeds have grown in its banks. You certainly wouldn’t want to drink it, and you won’t get clean by bathing in it. When I came out of the water, not only was I dripping wet, but my clothing had dark, scummy tide-marks which took some cleaning afterwards.

Yet out of the dirt and messiness of the water, God’s grace and love flowed.

I wonder how clean the Jordan was when John the Baptist baptised Jesus? It might have been a wider river, but with the crowds of people coming to throng

the banks to see John and gathering to be baptised, I imagine that it would have been pretty muddy then, too.

But even in the dirt and messiness of the water then, God's grace and love flowed. The promise of God coming to reunite earth's brokenness with the glory of heaven is made manifest. Heaven is torn open, and God the Holy Spirit rests upon Jesus as a gentle dove. God the Father's voice thunders from heaven, affirming his love for Jesus. This is the promise of a new beginning.

A tidier, a more easily digestible version of the life of Christ would edit out what happens next. Surely Jesus should go out and start doing his miracles, healing the sick, teaching the people after this thunderous endorsement?

That's not the way it happens. His journey to the wilderness is not some kind of slow journey after a few weeks' celebrating and reflecting on the enormity of that event at the Jordan, but a sudden, abrupt move: "At once". He is "sent out" by the Holy Spirit, into an utterly inhospitable environment with "wild animals", tempted by Satan for forty days.

Jesus is sent into the harsh, dirty, hungry extremes of life. His baptism is a reminder of his identity, a promise of a glorious future, but it doesn't mean that he is withdrawn from suffering. Rather, here in this lonely place, he is stripped bare and asked what really matters.

The season of Lent sends us on a journey. We journey knowing that, upon us, within us and before us, is the seal of baptism, the promise that Jesus died and rose again for us. This doesn't make us perfect or "clean". Life is messy and complex. Yet Lent gives us the opportunity to take stock. We have the opportunity to strip back all the "stuff" of our life. What really matters? What does this promise that Jesus makes to us mean to me?

Where I am I being sent out? What is God's calling for me? And what glimpses of his glory might we see as we ask those questions this Lent?

Lent

Barer than blackthorn in its winter sleep,
All unadorned. Unlike Christmas which decrees
The setting-up, the dressing-up of trees,
Lent is a taking down, a stripping bare,
A starkness after all has been withdrawn
Of surplus and superfluous,
Leaving no hiding-place, only an emptiness
Between black branches, a most precious space
Before the leaf, before the time of flowers;

Lest we should see only the leaf, the flower,
Lest we should miss the stars.

Jean M. Watt

The Apostles' 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

Lord God, we ask that this Lent would be a time of renewal, that the spring of your love would well up in us.

We pray for the Church, and for all those baptized in the name of Jesus, that we would be drawn more closely to follow you, to go in your way of peace and justice.

We pray for those who have lost heart; for those whose faith has dwindled, for those who find prayer a struggle. Kindle that flame in them which assures them that you always believe in them infinitely more than they in you.

We pray for those who have been exploited and trapped in slavery, both in this country and abroad; and we pray for those who have enslaved them, the exploiters, the abusers, those whose hearts are hardened to the suffering of others. We ask for your justice to be

done, and give thanks for the work of those who work for their release.

We give you thanks for those who inspire us, who lead by good example and live out their faith with confidence and courage, especially in the face of danger, ridicule and abuse. We pray for Christians in the public eye; for sportspeople, politicians, commentators, financiers.

We thank you for all those working in reconciliation, who help to bring barriers down. We pray for those working in the criminal justice system, especially at this time when the courts are struggling with a backlog of cases. For victims of crime and the perpetrators.

We pray for those who are mourning today: for healing in their hearts, for the assurance that you are indeed the resurrection and the life.

The Collect for the First Sunday of Lent

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

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

Hymn: Praise to the holiest in the height

- 1 Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise:
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways.
- 2 O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came.
- 3 O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
which did in Adam fail,
should strive afresh against the foe,
should strive and should prevail;
- 4 And that a higher gift than grace
should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence and his very self,
and essence all-divine.
- 5 O generous love! that he, who smote
in Man for man the foe,
the double agony in Man
for man should undergo;
- 6 And in the garden secretly,
and on the cross on high,
should teach his brethren, and inspire
to suffer and to die.
- 7 Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise:
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways.

John Henry Newman (1801–1890)

The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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