

# **St Swithun's Church Family**

## **Lent 2**

**Sharing together in Spirit**



**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**Faith, Hope and Love**

*Please use this booklet to **worship with us** on zoom at 10am – or read through this service knowing that we are joining our prayers together in Spirit.*

*Create a sacred space – if possible gather a candle and a cross if you can find them. The children might like to use the Sunday school resources provided by Izzy.*

*In addition we will be audio recording today's sermon which will be uploaded to the website [www.saintswithuns.org.uk](http://www.saintswithuns.org.uk)*

*There are various prayer resources and other things to look at on the website – if you have any feedback or anything to share please let me know.*

***Giving - if you usually give your collection on a Sunday morning in cash, and you are able to, please put this aside each week to bring to church when you are next able to. Even better would be to set up your giving online ('Saint Swithun's PCC' ; 60-05-11 ; 16126718 ; NatWest Bank) if you haven't already done this.***

*You might like to enhance your worship by singing or listening to a hymn or a song at various points – I have a few suggestions below – you tube is a great resource...*

**Praise my Soul**

[https://youtu.be/iuLmDye\\_5ys](https://youtu.be/iuLmDye_5ys)

**My song is love unknown**

<https://youtu.be/lv7OZSoA22w>

**When I survey he wondrous cross**

[https://youtu.be/4\\_fvFfPqjO4](https://youtu.be/4_fvFfPqjO4)

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[www.saintswithuns.org.uk](http://www.saintswithuns.org.uk)

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## Introduction

Today is the second Sunday of Lent and we hear Jesus telling his followers about what is coming – but Peter takes Jesus to one side to rebuke him – Jesus’ response is that Peter is not looking at this as God does. This is an important theme in Lent where we are to journey together trying to see with God’s loving eyes. God’s love does not protect us from suffering – but God’s love will liberate us. As we come to worship together, let us ask God to give us courage to tread the path of God’s love - despite the inevitable struggles we will encounter along the way.

## The Gathering

### The Greeting

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.  
**and also with you**

### Prayer of preparation

God who is with us at our beginning and ending,  
be with us now, help us to find you in the chaos of our lives.  
Let your light shine in our darkness so that we may be guided to  
walk in your ways, all the days of our life. **Amen**

### Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love:  
fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy; **Lord, have mercy**

We confess to you our fear and failure  
in sharing our faith: fill us with your Spirit.

Christ, have mercy; **Christ, have mercy.**

We confess to you our stubbornness  
and inability to trust: fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy; **Lord, have mercy.**

## **We are forgiven**

God forgives me/you. Forgive others. Forgive yourself.  
Be at peace. **Amen.**

## **The Collect**

Almighty God, by the prayer and discipline of Lent  
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,  
and by following in his Way come to share in his glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

### **The Gospel Reading** *Mark 8: 31-38*

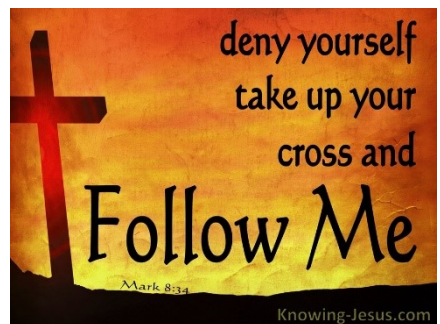
Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

**Glory to you, O Lord**

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**



## **Sermon**    *Rev Frances*

'Whoever wants to be a follower of mine must renounce self: he must take up his cross and follow me. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospels will save it'. Today's reading seems highly appropriate for any Sunday in Lent. On the face of it, it appears to confirm the understanding in the popular imagination of Lent as a period of self-denial and gloom, seemingly for their own sake; of giving things up for the simple reason that we enjoy them - which must somehow be wrong - all adding weight to Richard's reference in last week's sermon to anyone particularly miserable as having a 'face as long as Lent'. To many people - non-churchgoers and all too often, ex-churchgoers - Lent symbolises a religion that inexplicably emphasises the importance of sin, suffering and sacrifice and judgment for no apparent reason other than to diminish the quality of our lives.

Many of us might therefore empathise with Peter, whose instincts are to resist Jesus' description of the Messiah as one who 'must endure great suffering, be rejected by the elders, chief priests and scribes: to be put to death and to rise again three days afterwards.' Although Peter names Jesus as the Messiah, he has no insight about what sort of Messiah this is. Similarly, at the Transfiguration, he sees, but does not understand. When Jesus is arrested, though Peter protests that he will never abandon him, he forsakes and then denies Jesus. And yet Peter is also the one who follows without a second thought when Jesus calls him to be his disciple; the one who is the first to recognise him as the Son of God, and the one whom Jesus declares to be 'the Rock upon which I will build my church'.

In Peter's attempts to grapple with what it means to follow Jesus, I believe we can recognise our own insights, misunderstandings, conflicts, betrayals and epiphanies - which should give us great hope. The ultimate question Jesus asks, after the Resurrection: 'Simon Peter, do you love me?' strikes right to the heart of our Gospel meaning. Peter has found the one thing that really matters: 'Lord, you know that I love you'. 'Then feed my sheep', Jesus instructs him. No longer is there any conflict in Peter; to love Christ and neighbour and to proclaim and live out that love is the thing he

wants most to do, regardless of risk and cost. This illustrates what a life lost for Jesus' sake, but in the most profound sense, gained, may look like. To take up the Cross and follow Christ is his deepest desire and joy.



I remember the congregation of a local church once being asked in a sermon: what do think the purpose of religion is? This elicited various replies - to worship and obey God, to learn the difference between right and wrong, to love God and neighbour. He suggested that religion is ultimately about acknowledging and recognising our need for God - that we can't be perfect on our own; and will always fall short. Nor are we self-sufficient or in control of what happens to us - though our instinct for self-preservation militates against that truth. Self-preservation, though, easily evolves into self-interest and self-centredness, so that we are driven by the desire to flourish regardless of others' circumstances. That instinct for safety and security above all else inhibits spiritual growth: to follow Christ is the opposite of timidity. We cannot know where the call to love indiscriminately will take us. Jesus gives the disciples a new commandment just before his arrest, 'that you love one another as I have loved you', and a little later, he tells them that 'there is no greater love than this, that someone should lay down his life for his friend.' The more we love, the more we truly live. 'I came that you should have life and have it abundantly', Jesus declares. The more

we live like this, the more we must accept risk and suffering, and face the truth of our vulnerability. We have in Jesus' life, death and resurrection the revelation of what a life of complete love means, the cost and the consequences.

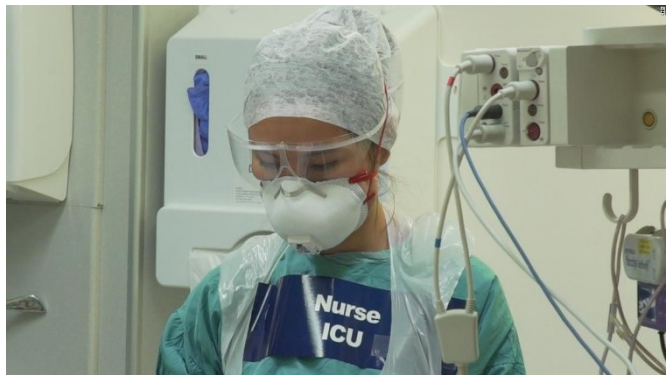


'Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy' Jesus tells the disciples - and this reading may be familiar from Ash Wednesday - for however much we wish for the insurance of security and safety, they are illusory. 'Even when someone has more than enough, his possessions do not give them life', Jesus declares in Luke's gospel, and tells the parable of the rich man who

enjoys such a good harvest that he has more than enough and so decides to build extra storehouses for his wealth. There is a resonance here with rich countries who have used their wealth to secure enough Covid vaccines to inoculate their populations two or three times over, when other nations lack the purchasing power to protect even the most vulnerable. Time will tell whether they follow the example of the rich fool in the parable, or whether compassion will hold the greater sway.

Our Gospel seems particularly pertinent to the times we are currently living through. Covid potentially threatens our security in the deepest senses: our lives, loved ones, livelihoods, well-being, and identity. This threat understandably provokes a desire to be insured against adversity, to make ourselves safe from danger. It has been tempting to think that if we can control and micro-manage all aspects of our own and other people's behaviour, this will keep us safe. Yet there is no such thing as certainty here: Covid 19 has forced upon us the truth that control is an illusion, and we cannot shield ourselves from potential suffering. And in resisting that truth, is there not a danger here that 'Whoever wants to save his life will lose it?' Because the temptation to think we can make ourselves safe leads to ever greater precautions which are unlikely ever to satisfy and lead us to project our fears onto blaming others for putting us at risk.

I've observed that, paradoxically, the less the actual risk of Covid, the greater the desire to be insured against adversity. In contrast, one of the most inclusive, generous and loving atmospheres



I have encountered is the intensive Care Unit at one of the hospitals where I work - an environment perceived, certainly last Spring, as one of the places of greatest potential risk in a hospital setting on its own considered hazardous. Staff knew they were putting



themselves at potential risk, but that knowledge did not stop us carrying out the work of seeking to heal physically and spiritually. Perhaps the prioritisation of physical safety above all else lies behind the fact that the recently introduced strict hotel quarantine measures are already under attack for not being stringent enough. There has been criticism that individuals are allowed an occasional breath of fresh air; that face masks for security guards are inadequate (the same type of masks, I understand, that are sometimes worn on Covid wards where contact is not close). Would enacting these greater measures truly reassure the anxious? And these abstract 'guests' whose rights are seemingly to be so casually dispensed with in the name of working towards zero tolerance risk: they may be individuals travelling abroad for a funeral or visiting terminally ill relatives. Where is the love and mercy of Christ here? This is certainly not to advocate a rash and impractical disregard of the very real and potentially deadly risks that exist, or to say that we should not take very good care, particularly when people are particularly vulnerable - but rather, perhaps, to balance self-preservation and the need for sensible precautions with a recognition that seeking to love God and neighbour sometimes entails risk, both moral and physical. 'See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.', Jesus tells his disciples. And amidst the particularly intense atmosphere of the pandemic - but also in our often busy outer and inner lives - it is easy, I think to become so preoccupied with fast-changing developments; and with our own concerns and worries, that we can lose sight of the things that really matter. 'Where your treasure is, there also is your heart': what is most important to us? When Martha rebukes Mary for not helping her with her many tasks, instead sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to her he tells her, '...only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part and it shall not be taken from her.'

Perhaps being a Christian is more about the process of becoming rather than of arriving; one that takes a lifetime and beyond. How might this time of Lent help you to perceive more deeply where your treasure is; to contemplate and rejoice in 'the one thing that is necessary', so that you may journey towards and witness to life in abundance? Amen

## Profession of Faith

*We remember that we are joined together as a family however physically distant we have to be at the moment...*

**We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.  
We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.  
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.  
We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

## Prayers

We pray for healing in our world and our nation - especially for the vaccination program around the globe, for those impacted by Covid, for all those who work in healthcare...

God of compassion

**In your mercy hear us**

We pray for all those who suffer through injustice and the greed of others; those who suffer because of violence and war, those who suffer because of a lack of food and inadequate housing...

God of compassion

**In your mercy hear us**

Help us to be sensitive to the sufferings of others, to see, hear and feel your pain in the pain of your people.

We pause for a few moments to remember all those we love, those we worry about and ourselves before you...

And those who have asked for our prayers – for Fran and family, Claudia, Laurenda, Louisa and Lily, Lamar, Maureen, Karen, Paulette and their families, Andy and family, Philbert and family, Catherine and Alfrina and family, Betty, Canon Richard, Martin, Rossy and family, Kevin, Gwen, Pamela, Neil, Debbie, Elaine and

family, Clinton, Francis, Cynthia, Diane, Harold, Ivy, Sean,  
Taneisha, Talabi, Susan, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Ena and Stephen.  
God of Compassion

### **In your mercy hear us**

For all those who have died recently... Carl, Emanuel, Gloria,  
Alan, Joseph, Sydney, Simone and John.

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord

### **And let light perpetual shine upon them**

Merciful God

**Accept these prayers,  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

## **The Prayer Jesus taught us**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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.**

## **The Peace**

God has called us to live in peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**



## Notices

- Lent study 4<sup>th</sup> March via zoom 7- 8pm
- PCC meeting 4<sup>th</sup> March via zoom 8 - 9pm
- Happy Birthday to all those who have a birthday



## Dismissal and Blessing

### The Blessing

Loving God, Mother and Father of us all,  
Bless us as we struggle to live within your harmony.  
Enable us that our lives may sing your praises.  
Encourage us to journey through any temptations  
which take us away from your love.  
And the blessing of God:  
Creator, Redeemer, Spirit  
be with us always. **Amen.**

### The Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

