



This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Tim Swindell. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

This Sunday is the Second Sunday in Lent, and we hear as Jesus begins to give the disciples hints about the difficult times that lie ahead.

Call to Worship:

Through the psalmist, God says,
'Be still, and know that I am God!'
Let us come into God's presence and still our hearts.
Let us come together to listen to God.
Let us be still and know that God is indeed God.

Holy God, we come from our everyday lives.
Sometimes busy beyond our ability to manage,
Sometimes humdrum and seemingly endless.
We often forget that you walk with us.
As we gather now, help us to be more aware of who you are.
Give us the awareness to admit when we don't understand,
so that we might grow more like you in all we do.

Amen.

Prayer of Adoration:

All-powerful God of past, present and future,
keeper of promises, we praise you for all you have been,
all you are, and all you will be.

Son of Man, the way, the truth and the life,
loving despite rejection, we love you for all the potential you
offer us.

Holy Spirit, living Power within,
helping, guiding, testing and transforming, we adore you for all
the lessons you offer us.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
in your unique relationship, you are open to us in many ways.
We thank you for the closeness of relationship you offer us,
and ask only that you help us draw closer to you.

Amen.

**Hymn: Praise to the Holiest in the height (Singing the Faith
334)**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAAz_iWp6vE

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.

O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came.

O wisest love! That flesh and blood,
which did in Adam fail,
should strive afresh against the foe,
should strive and should prevail;

And that a higher gift than grace
should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence and his very self,
and essence all-divine.

O generous love! That he, who came
as man to smite the foe,
the double agony for us
as man should undergo;

And in the garden secretly,
and on the cross on high,
should teach his followers, and inspire
to suffer and to die.

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)

Prayer of Confession:

Lord Jesus, you give us the example
of how to greet others and love our neighbours
forgive us when we fail to act as you do, Lord.
When we are tempted to words of retaliation,
insincerity and malice, prompt us, but also
forgive us when we act towards others in this way, Lord.
When we are overwhelmed by complex matters and
relationships,
forgive us for not setting our minds on you and your ways.
When we fear rejection or are wary of being our true selves,
forgive us and help us to give of ourselves as you give.
Forgive us, Lord, for our failure to trust you;
for not allowing you to fully guide us.
Lord of promises and relationships, lead us
and help us to live your way.

In your name we pray.

Amen.

Let's spend a moment in quiet, reflecting on our lives.

Assurance of forgiveness

Jesus was handed over to be crucified because of our sins.
He died and rose again to make us right with God.
Through him we are forgiven.

Let us follow the Lord our God, giving our lives as he gave his
for us.

Amen.

Today's readings:

Matthew 8: 31-38 New International Version – UK

Jesus Predicts His Death

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must
suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief
priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed
and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this,
and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he
rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not
have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human
concerns."

The Way of the Cross

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and
said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves
and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to
save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me
and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone
to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can

anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16 New International Version – UK

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. ² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.'

³ Abram fell face down, and God said to him, ⁴ 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations.

⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

¹⁵ God also said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.'

Reflection

Many of us may feel that we have been bearing some kind of 'cross' over the last 11 months or so. Most of us have faced challenges that were entirely new and unexpected. In that, we often had little option – many of the challenges have not been things that we had a choice about. Lots of people have also taken up a new challenge by their own choice, a new cross, sometimes to help others who need a helping hand bearing their own troubles, sometimes just trying something new in order to fill the time or deal with our mental well-being. These things may have been shopping and supporting a neighbour in a new way, dealing with the challenges of technology that was previously unfamiliar, or getting out the knitting needles or the walking shoes. For me it was the walking – wearing out at least one pair of boots in the process!

From whatever place we have been in, and whatever challenges we have faced, we may have tried to do it alone – by our own strength. I know that is usually my own default position. Sometimes that is helpful; in the many miles of walking that I have done over the last year I am sometimes reminded of a line from a poem written by JRR Tolkien in 'The Lord of the Rings' where he says, "Not all those who wander are lost." I have enjoyed diverting from my walk onto a previously unexplored footpath, just to see where it goes. However, that approach isn't universally helpful. In dealing

with the estate of my uncle, who died a couple of months ago, it has been invaluable to have the advice of a lawyer – I couldn't have managed without her. Equally, sharing the challenges of the last year with family, with friends and with colleagues has been completely necessary. The walks have also been made more enjoyable by being accompanied by a friend, when permitted.

When Jesus asks us to take up our crosses and follow him, he is both challenging us and offering assistance. We need both. The harder the times, the more we need both.

It's been my experience that if we don't face the crosses that confront us, then the worries bury us, they consume us and overwhelm us. Worries don't go away if we ignore them. But facing them requires strength – strength that we might not always have. Jesus offers to share the burden.

The deal, offered by Jesus to us, is the same deal that God offers to Abram (meaning – 'exalted father') in our Old Testament reading. By falling down before God, Abram is renamed Abraham (meaning – 'father of many nations'). Abraham, by showing weakness, vulnerability and dependence on God, becomes stronger and more valuable. Sarai's name change is a bit more disputed, but the change from Sarai to Sarah reflects a similarly wider role moving from being a 'princess' to being the 'mother of nations'. Reliance on God

brings blessings and assurance.

I suspect that we all need help and assurance at the moment. The Prime Minister has laid out his roadmap from the lifting of lockdown this week, for many of us that route, combined with the promise, and for many the reality, of first vaccinations, has led to a glimmer of hope, or light at the end of the tunnel. But we may also have our doubts, and memories of Christmas arrangements dashed. As I heard a comedian say this week, there is perhaps irony in calling it a road map when for many of us we are denied the opportunity to drive on a road! It's been a long and winding road, to quote the song, but I want some optimism. I want to see you all physically in a church before long, and I want, even more urgently, to see my mum escaping her bungalow and see her friends at least once a week.

But I don't want a return to 'normality', nor even a 'new normality'. I want us to have travelled with Christ on a road, carrying our crosses, following him and to be a different people, people who have learned by an experience. I want us to be a people who have learned to rely on God, to lean on him more heavily. I want us to be a people carrying a cross. I want us to be a people of hope, a people of light in a sometimes dark world. To do that I think we need to learn to tell our stories more clearly – our stories of how we have found God in the places we have been – the dark places, and how he has helped us bear our crosses and walk out. I want to urge you in the coming week to sit with a pad of paper and a pen, or

maybe with your computer and just to write a couple of reflections of your time over the last year – the good and the bad. Think about where God has been in that. Maybe, just as in that old story about the footprints in the sand (I'm sure you know it so I'm not going to recite it now), reflect on when God has carried you and what you have learnt.

Why write it down, I hear you ask? Well, to be honest, that's a personal thing, learned in the experience I referred to of dealing with my reclusive uncle's estate. In his possessions there are many pencil notes to himself. Often inconsequential lists about music, but occasionally about his hopes and dreams. As I have been sorting out his house, I have learned more about him than I did while he lived, and that's such a shame. Write it down, and then think about sharing with someone you trust. I guarantee you will feel better for the experience, you will learn, and so will the one you trust! Lean on them and lean on Jesus.

Amen.

A time of prayer

Let us remember the Methodist Church throughout our own Circuit in Enfield, but also throughout the United Kingdom and in the wider world. Let us hold in our prayers the many communities of faith that are working and sometimes

struggling to find an appropriate way forward during the continuing pandemic.

Let us pray:

Faithful God,
as a cautious route out of lockdown is planned,
may we hold on to the hope it offers but not run ahead of the realities.

We pray for those in this country both giving and receiving vaccines,
and we ask for wisdom for those in authority, that all people around the world should have fair access to vaccines, regardless of economic circumstances.

Your promise is to all generations:

We believe that all things are possible with you.

May we find new and creative ways to reconnect with friends, family members and our church community.

May we live the story that we tell –

of your suffering love for us,

of your creative power,

and of the gospel promise of a world made new.

May we be ready to play a part in the healing and restoration of our relationships and of your world,

and may we be ready to heal the hurt that separation has brought.

Your promise is to all generations:

We believe that all things are possible with you.

Faithful God,

we pray for children of all ages, that they will have opportunity to play,

to study and not to have their futures jeopardised.

We pray today for parents and teachers dealing with schooling in new and uncertain ways.

Assure children, parents and teachers of your love, and may we find long-term responses to the needs of children and young people.

Your promise is to all generations:

We believe that all things are possible with you.

Faithful God,

We pray for those financially disadvantaged by the pandemic.

For those in this country facing furlough and redundancy, unable to work for whatever reason.

For households struggling to feed themselves.

We pray for those in other parts of the world who, through crop failure, conflict and oppression are starving.

As we begin to think about the future,

may we focus on your priorities

and be ready to work for change,

so that no one goes hungry and all find a place to live.

Your promise is to all generations:

We believe that all things are possible with you.

Faithful God,

as days lengthen and signs of spring appear,

we thank you that you have placed us in community,

and we remember today all the people who fill our lives with hope.

We remember in silence all we know who are struggling today: the sick and hospitalised,

those who are waiting for treatment,

and those whose lives have become isolated by circumstances.

May your love surround them.

Give us strength to follow the footsteps to the Cross:

help us to make ourselves ready to respond.

Your power is seen when love is poured out

in the broken body of your Son

and by your Spirit we are made whole.

So, in your healing and your hope we stand this day.

Your promise is to all generations:

We believe that all things are possible with you.

May your faithfulness give us hope in believing.

Amen.

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: We have a gospel to proclaim (STF 418)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcZdqa3PNDE>

We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem –
not in a royal house or hall
but in a stable dark and dim,
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of his death at Calvary:
hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross,
for all he loved his life he gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for He was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.

Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified.
He sends his Spirit on His Church
to live for him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Edward Joseph Burns (b1938)

A sending out prayer

As we continue our preparation for Easter in this time of Lent,
let us keep in mind the things of God, and put aside the
thoughts of our own. As we remember how Christ shouldered
his cross and lost his life, so that we might live, so let us think

deeply about the things we do and say that separate us God's love, using this time to draw closer to him, bearing our own crosses and growing as disciples.

A prayer of blessing:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, and those that we love, now and for evermore. Amen

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