

**Sunday 27 February 2021**

# The Sunday before Lent



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**Sermon and prayers of intercession** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Liturgy** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1 Christ whose glory fills the skies** (click on this link to hear the hymn)

### The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

### The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Therefore, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,  
firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments  
and to live in love and peace with all.

**All** Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name.  
**Amen.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

## **The Gloria**

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

**All** Glory be to God in Heaven,  
Songs of joy and peace we bring,  
Thankful hearts and voices raising,  
To creation's Lord we sing.  
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,  
Glory be to God our King:  
Glory be to God our King.  
  
Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,  
Bore the load of this world's sin;  
Only Son of God the Father,  
You have brought us peace within.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,

**Now your glorious reign begin:  
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,  
You we praise with one accord.  
None in heav'n or earth is like you,  
Only you are Christ the Lord.  
With the Father and the Spirit,  
Ever worshipped and adored:  
Ever worshipped and adored.**

### **The Collect for the Sunday next before Lent**

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All Amen.**

### **First reading**

A reading from the Second Book of Moses called Exodus

Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him. *Exodus 34:29-35*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians

Since we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

*2 Corinthians 3:12—4:2*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 20 perfect love**

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing

what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and (in those days) told no one any of the things they had seen. *Luke 9:28-36*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

Light. It's an idea that permeates the whole of the Old Testament: the glory of God is seen as light. It's there at the beginning. We see it again when the Israelites are fleeing from Pharaoh, and are led at night by a pillar of fire and during the day by a pillar of light-emitting cloud. The word 'light' first occurs right at the beginning, in Genesis 1:1, where God says, 'Let there be light' and there was. It can't have been the sun or moon, because the light was formed on the first day and the sun was made on the fourth. In fact, we learn what the light was on the very last page of the Bible, in Revelation 21, 'The city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the lamb is the lamp.' It's the same light throughout the Bible; it's the glory of God.

The light is powerful. Ezekiel saw the light and could only sit in a stupor for seven days: in his own words, 'overwhelmed.' St Paul saw a light on the road to Damascus and saw a brilliant light and was blinded. He was so traumatised that he could not eat for a week. Isaiah saw the brilliance of God and was appalled by the stench of his own sin. When God wished to speak with Moses, a cloud descended on the tent, and 'The Glory of the Lord was apparent.' We see the glory of the Lord again in the newly-constructed Temple in Jerusalem: the priests carry in the Ark of the Covenant, and leave it in the holy of Holies, and suddenly the temple is filled with the Glory of God. The light is so intense that the priests are forced back. Again, have you noticed how often, when angels are mentioned in the scriptures, that they are described as glowing white? It's the glory of God.

So, to the Jewish audience for whom these passages were written, the light seen at the Transfiguration was no mere 99p bulb from *Tesco's*: it's the glory of God. The ancient Jews even gave it a name: it was called the *Shekinah*.

Today's first reading says that Moses was glowing when came down from Mount Sinai. The glory of God had rubbed off. But it goes wider. I wonder if you know that the Cherubim—archangels of amazing power and glory—the Cherubim glowed with light? The word Cherubim means '*Shekinised*.' The glory of God had rubbed off on them too.

This same glory can rub off on us too. It follows the laws of nature. If we want to avoid Covid, we stay away from the infected but if we wish to get warm then we must sit close to a fire. A hug cannot work from afar. Therefore, *if we want to share in the glory of God, we must get close to him*. The angels get close and they glow. The Cherubim are *Shekinised*. Moses met with God face-to-face and glowed. And we can share the glory of God but we must get close to Him. Only then will we be '*Shekinised*'.

There is a cost. Isaiah saw the glory of God and was changed: it caused him to see things God's way. Note the way he railed against the injustices he saw around him. Ezekiel saw the glory of God and saw the hearts of his fellows as God saw them: he railed against impurity and laxity in the Temple worship. Both were consumed by the vision they saw. St Paul, when he saw the *Shekinah* on the road to Damascus, was terrified. He was blinded and not eat for a week: the vision never left him and was still talking about it 20 years later, in today's second Bible passage.

All these people got close and the experience changed them. Moses too. Daniel also. That's probably why God allowed them to see the glory full strength. But even if we see the glory partially—in a person, in the Scriptures—some of it will still rub off. In fact, if we see the glory half strength, and a little rubs off, we are likely to have a passion for the Lord to the point where we are allowed to see more. We grow in our vision of who God is.

How do we get close? St Paul in today's second reading emphasises this basic law: if we want to grow in holiness and goodness, then we must constantly look at, meditate upon, immerse ourselves in goodness. It needs to become second nature. And as we become totally immersed in God's word, our prayer life grows. The scriptures make sense in a way they never did before. The words of scripture sink deep within our hearts, and we find that we want to do what God wants. Exposing ourselves to God is the way for His glory to rub off. We become holy.

Sadly, the discussion can't be allowed to end there. In the Church Calendar, the principal remembrance of the Transfiguration occurs on 6 August. By an appalling coincidence, that day also commemorates the first time an atomic explosion was detonated in anger (over Hiroshima) when more people perished in an instant than in any other instant in recorded history. It was a moment of unparalleled evil.

That coincidence suggests that we can grow as Christians by getting close to God but we can grow close to the powers of darkness too. And some of his spiritual potency can rub off in the same way it does when get close to God.

But we don't need to see Satan in his majesty: we can get close to his works and modes of action. A psychologist may say we become hardened to sin by exposure. That's another way of saying that the glory of darkness is rubbing off: we no longer see sin for sin, but just say, 'Oh well!

I think are now in a position to see why St Paul was so careful to emphasise that we don't lead a double life. Everything we do has spiritual currency. If we are growing toward God then we going away from evil. And if we are growing toward darkness then we're growing away from God. We cannot stay still—we are always moving in one direction or he other.

Do you want the glory of God to rub off on us? Then get close to him. Are we careless, and not too worried if the glory rubs off or not? Then we walking away.

Who do you want to get close to? When we die, and stand before the throne of God, these external bodies will become, as it were transparent, and we will see the true spiritual self beneath. When you die, will the glory of God be seen, flaming and bright, or will the glory be the devils? Whose glory are *you* glowing with?

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,**

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

**Amen.**

## Prayers of intercession

Loving Lord, thank you for bringing us to worship today. Help us to become pliable, teachable, available, so that something of Your glory may rub off on us.

Lord in Your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

Your Scripture says that it is impossible to see You without being holy so help us to become holy; show us how to be. Show us how to worship appropriately when we meet with You.

Lord in Your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

As we congregate, show us how to be a Church—a collective of worshipers and a communion of saints, a gathering to express our love for You and for neighbour.

Lord in Your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

As a Church, show us how to communicate your love for everyone, seeking the lost, gently bringing each soul into your Kingdom and thereby assist your Kingdom as it is transplanted from Heaven to here on earth.

Lord in Your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

We ask You to bless those who lead our Churches, nationally and locally, and those who hold positions of responsibility in this place of worship.

Lord in Your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

We ask You to intervene in the affairs of humankind. We think first of the situations in Ukraine and Afghanistan. We also ask your help in places of passive aggression, apartheid, injustice, wrong.

Lord in Your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

We pray for those in any kind of distress or need. We pray for those known to us who are ill or in any other kind of trouble. In a moment of silence we pray for ...

Lord in Your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who have passed from this world to the next and have seen You face to face. We ask you to comfort their friends and families as they grieve. In a moment of silence we pray for ...

Lord in Your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

Merciful Father,

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

## The peace

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.  
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.  
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver  
The peace of the Lord be always with you,  
**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 How deep the Father's love for us** ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.  
**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 Indescribable** ([please click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

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

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

Father, you made the world and love your creation.  
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.  
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.  
And so we gladly thank you,  
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.  
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.**

## Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All** We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us.  
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Holy God,  
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ:  
may we who are partakers at his table  
reflect his life in word and deed,  
that all the world may know his power to change and save.  
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen

**All** Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.