

JESUS
PAID
IT ALL

*Sunday worship
Survival kit*

LENT AND EASTER 2021

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Hello Everyone,

I hope that this time of lockdown is passing peacefully and you have been able to find ways of joining in worship and community activity whilst remaining safe and healthy.

This service book will take us through Lent, Holy Week and Easter. There will be additional resources available throughout Lent so please check the Paulton Benefice website, or ask for them to be delivered to you.

This will be a time for making space for God in our lives, and thinking about our physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. I hope you will enjoy joining with us in looking for new ways to encounter God and understand yourself and your faith.

I hope that by the time we arrive at Easter we will be able to worship together in church once more.

Every Blessing

Rev. Adam Pitt

Sunday 7 February 2021

2nd Sunday before Lent

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

Almighty God,

give us reverence for all creation and respect for every person,
that we may mirror your likeness in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings:

Proverbs 8.1, 22-31, Psalm 104.26-end, Colossians 1.15-20, John 1.1-14

Thoughts for today:

We are now through epiphany and into a short interval before we head into lent. So this is the time for a bit of planning and preparation.

We need to think through what Lent is about, and I suppose, the ongoing process of thinking what this whole 'Christian' thing is about.

All of the readings this week talk about the centrality and primacy of Jesus. That he is there at the beginning, that he is the head of the church, that He is the very word of God made flesh.

This is a point worth dwelling on. That in a religion that can become very bogged down by words, and very defined by our text, God incarnated his word.

It is one of my favourite points of misconception that, as a sign of respect and shared heritage, Muslims used to refer to Christians as people of the book. This is easy to use as a term of endearment, because of the regard we have for our book.

But the book is only ever as means to an end, a pathway to a relationship. The Bible is a complex and confusing collection of poetry, prophecy, letters and historical accounts that are like a set of signs that point to Jesus. But you must never mistake the signs for the thing itself.

The Bible is human words, inspired by God and used by the Holy spirit. But Jesus is the world of God. Our faith is not in what we read, but in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and what this means for us.

Any amount of faith in the Bible is really faith in ourselves and our own religion. Jesus is central to everything because it is him, not us, who has secured our salvation and adoption into God's family.

And this is how we need to shape our thinking as we head into Lent. Lent is the combination of thought and action, of mind and body and spirit, where we enact our faith to connect with Jesus. This is not about our sacrifice, about what we give up, about our strength or resolve. Lent is about making space for Jesus and allowing this relationship to grow in our lives.

Communion Prayer:

God our creator,

by your gift

the tree of life was set at the heart of the earthly paradise,

and the bread of life at the heart of your Church:

may we who have been nourished at your table on earth

be transformed by the glory of the Saviour's cross

and enjoy the delights of eternity;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sunday 14 February 2021

Sunday next before Lent

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

Lord God, Holy God, you know the disorder of our sinful lives: set straight our crooked hearts, and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings:

2 Kings 2.1-12, Psalm 50.1-6, 2 Corinthians 4.3-6, Mark 9.2-9

Thoughts for today:

lent is almost upon us now and we have time to dig a bit deeper into what we might do with this wilderness time. The 40 days of Lent reflect Jesus' time in the wilderness. This is a time when Jesus is tempted by the devil towards self-reliance, towards power, and away from trusting in God. This is the beginning of Jesus ministry and of His undoing of our sins and mistakes.

This is possible because Jesus' life reflects the life of Israel, which in turn reflects the hearts of all humanity. Jesus' time of temptation reflects Israel's 40 years in the desert. But where the people of God complained, accused and ultimately convicted God of abandoning them, Jesus remains faithful.

Our time in the wilderness during Lent is a time of testing, but not of God testing us. Lent is a time when we test our own resolve, when we deepen our relationship with Jesus through intentional choices. But we don't do it to prove ourselves to God.

Our goal in lent is just to see Jesus more clearly. We use our discipline and practice to focus our minds and make space to pray. So we can learn from our readings about what we may then pray for:

A double helping of His Spirit, that we would have our lives and actions more filled and guided by the Holy spirit.

That we would not be blind to what God is doing in the world around us, that we would see God's light shining in the darkness.

And, as with the transfiguration, that we would see Jesus more clearly. That His life and work would be more revealed to us.

We don't need to anticipate what the impact of this may be for each of us, or what success and failure may look like. Lent is not about our achievement, our effort, our success or failure. Our faith is not in any of these things. In fact, this is not even about our faith. The great miracle of Christianity, the good news, is that our faith is in Jesus' faith. We are faithless, but He is faithful - He is the author and perfecter of our faith. So when God says 'well done my good and faithful servant', this is because of Jesus' faith, credited to us.

It is this relationship that we need to reflect on and grow deeper into during Lent.

Communion Prayer:

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.

Wednesday 17 February 2021

Ash Wednesday

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Readings:

Joel 2.1-2, 12-17, Psalm 51.1-18, 2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10, Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21

Thoughts for today:

Ash Wednesday is a time when we think about repentance. I much prefer to think about this as a time of turning towards God rather than turning away from something. Lent is not about what you give up, but about what you make space for.

But both these things are wrapped up in this undertaking. There is the joy and the revelation of what is being gained or discovered. But there is also the sadness and mourning for what has been lost.

The joy and discovery come from making space for God in your life. This is the well from which all other life is drawn. Making space for this relationship can bring peace and contentment that seems impossible, even though it is promised by so many other things pretending to be like God. It is like Solomon's prayer for wisdom, where in choosing this one thing, God grants all other things as well. In our choice to prioritize our relationship with God, our other strivings for comfort and security can be sated and satisfied, even though this is not where we were aiming. This is also like Paul's claim to contentment in all situations.

Our mourning comes in part from our repentance and regret at time wasted and misspent. We confess to God what he already knows, that we have not loved him with our whole heart and have not loved our neighbor as ourselves.

But if we are honest, this is our pious 'holy' mourning. In our broken and self-destructive hearts we also mourn and grieve for what we give up, for all those things that we love and long for, that we turn to for satisfaction, that are not God.

This giving up should be easy for us to do, because we gain this pearl of great price. But lent is never easy, if our fasting is true. The brokenness of our nature is revealed in our struggle to do what we love and to not do what we hate. But we find another rule at work with us.

These are the contradictions we hold as we repent before God. Like the contradiction between our public profession of faith on Ash Wednesday, and the need for our repentance to be private, between us and God.

What we may take away, as we receive our ashed cross, is that our faith is in word and flesh. Our faith is in a God incarnated. Therefore we build our relationship with God through both words and actions, faith and works.

The ashen cross is not a token of repentance, so much as a first step in another new chapter of our life with Jesus, as we live out our lives under cover of His sacrifice for us.

Communion Prayer:

Almighty God,

you have given your only Son to be for us

both a sacrifice for sin

and also an example of godly life:

give us grace

that we may always most thankfully receive

these his inestimable gifts,

and also daily endeavour to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sunday 21 February 2021

1st Sunday of Lent

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

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

Readings:

Genesis 9.8-17, Psalm 25.1-9, 1 Peter 3.18-end , Mark 1.9-15

Thoughts for today:

In this first Sunday of Lent we will reflect on God's promise. The promise, the covenant that God makes with us is a foundational thread that runs through the story of redemption. It begins with God's promise to Eve that her child shall crush the head of the serpent. It runs through God's covenant with Noah, that God will not bring destruction upon us but will save us another way.

It covers His promise to Abraham that he will make a great people, to be a light to all the nations. His promise to Moses that he will be with Him to redeem his people, to guide and provide for them as they journey to the promised land.

It takes us through His promise to David that he will live with him and that his descendants shall always be on the throne. Through to the last of the old testament prophets who speak of the promised child and a coming Messiah. All the way up to John the Baptist telling of His imminent coming, and finally to Jesus.

In Jesus God's covenant is fulfilled, all of these old testament promises are brought together in a life and death that are credited to us as righteousness. That through Jesus our relationship with God is restored, as He lived a perfect life for us, He died a criminal's death for us, and rose again for us so that we can know that these promises are true.

And there is one final promise that Jesus leaves us with. This growing awareness that we are praying and making space for during this wilderness time. The promise that Jesus would send the Holy spirit, so that God will be with us at all times.

Communion Prayer:

Lord God,

you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven;

by it you nourish our faith,

increase our hope,

and strengthen our love:

teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread,

and enable us to live by every word that proceeds from out of your mouth;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sunday 28 February 2021

2nd Sunday of Lent

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

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

Readings:

Genesis 17.1-7, 15-16, Psalm 22.23-end, Romans 4.13-end, Mark 8.31-end

Thoughts for today:

Last Sunday we explored the promise of God to be with us. On this second Sunday of Lent we explore another, slightly less marketable promise. This is the promise that we will suffer!

This is a promise that is going to need a bit of unpacking. So firstly, to be clear, regardless of what may occur in the Old Testament, God is not causing or suffering. All of scripture leads up to Jesus, to his suffering, his death and his resurrection. The events of the Old Testament are signs pointing forward, just as the accounts and letters of the New Testament point backwards. Whilst these accounts can help us to understand our lives, we don't live in those times any more, and don't need to relate to God as they did, as though we did not have the revelation of Jesus.

So what is this ominous promise of suffering, made by a loving God who died to save us, and who does not cause our suffering. What is being referred to, is what it is to be a follower of Christ in a broken world. In a world of strife and conflict, both human and spiritual, being a Christian means choosing the side of love.

This choice means that we can no longer ignore injustice, poverty or suffering where we find it in others lives. We cannot ignore where we have failed to love.

We are therefore called to 'take up our cross' and to follow Jesus in challenging these things, confronting and alleviating them where we can.

Our suffering then comes from our own choice to sacrifice, to forego our comforts in order to share with others. But also our suffering may come from our coming into conflict with the principalities and powers, both human and spiritual, that still seek to supplant God in human hearts. Here we can encounter persecution and spiritual conflict as our efforts call into question values and worldviews that thrive on division and greed.

All of Church is both a celebration of what has been done for us, and a rehearsal for our lives in the world. In Lent we are reminded of Jesus' sacrifice for us, and rehearse this sacrifice in our lives, that we are better prepared for being sent out to love and serve the Lord.

Communion Prayer:

Almighty God,

you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:

keep us both outwardly in our bodies,

and inwardly in our souls;

that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body,

and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sunday 7 March 2021

3rd Sunday of Lent

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

Eternal God, give us insight to discern your will for us, to give up what harms us, and to seek the perfection we are promised in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings:

Exodus 20.1-17, Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 1.18-25, John 2.13-22

Thoughts for today:

For The 3rd Sunday of Lent we will look at probably our most notorious and most reliable source of idolatry and conflict with God. I am referring to our tendency towards religion.

This may seem counterintuitive to begin with, as you may be convinced that it is religion that we are preaching, and religion that we are practicing. But the problem of religion brings us back to one of our fundamental questions, 'who killed Jesus and why?'.

Jesus was killed at the request and contrivance of the scribes and Pharisees, of the religious leaders of his time. These were people who were steeped in Old Testament scripture, experts in the law. Not just the ten commandments, but all of the extra bits, all the sacrifice, all the prayers.

And what was the outcome of all of this piety and religion? When they encounter God 'in the flesh' they are so offended that they have him executed.

There must be an acknowledgement that if the Bible is a cautionary tale about the dangers of sin, then chief among these is the caution against religion. The first commandment is this, 'you shall have no other gods before me'

Religion is the ultimate idol. It is the attempt by humans to control or even replace God with rituals and routines. We turn our fathers house into a marketplace as we allow our faith to be supplanted by human systems of exchange.

This is what religion becomes in human hands, a system we can manipulate to secure our salvation. This puts us in control, so we think. It gives us a world that we can make sense of.

But Christianity is not supposed to make sense. We have nothing to trade with God, yet he still sacrificed his Son to save us. Christianity is not a religion of rituals to earn our salvation, but faith in a God who saves sinners. The way of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Communion Prayer:

Merciful Lord,

grant your people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sunday 14 March 2021

4th Sunday of Lent (mothering Sunday)

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

Merciful Lord, you know our struggle to serve you:
when sin spoils our lives and overshadows our hearts,
come to our aid and turn us back to you again;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings:

Numbers 21.4-9 5, Psalm 107.1-3, 17-22, Ephesians 2.1-10, John 3.14-21 14

Thoughts for today:

We began our thinking about Lent with the idea of making space for God in our lives. Of turning towards God and turning away from sin.

Our understanding of God's promises and our human tendencies towards idolatry are helpful in understanding this. However, as with every Sunday, the vital meditation that turns our hearts towards God is that of sin and grace.

The translation of the Old Testament Idea of sin is something like 'missing the mark'. As though you were an archer and your goal was to hit the bullseye, but you missed. However, more poetic, and maintaining the idea of turning, is C.S. Lewis' definition of sin as man turned in on himself.

This is a helpful understanding of sin for several reasons. Firstly, it moves the notion of sin away from individual laws and infractions, and towards an overall understanding of our total brokenness.

Secondly it helps our understanding of turning and repentance, as we can understand that God is the source of all things. When we are turned outward we acknowledge the reality of God's kingship. When we are turned inward we maintain the delusion of our own power and control.

And thirdly, we are better able to understand our redemption as being lifted out of our own shadow. That sin is a shadow we cast ourselves and that without God we have no hope of seeing the light. We look into our own darkness, wilfully and terminally.

But this brings us to the gospel, the good news, the grace of God. If sin is the shadow that we cast, then grace is the great light that comes into the world.

Grace is the stunning reality that whilst we were still sinners God died to save us. That whilst we were staring into our shadow, Jesus came into the world, into our darkness. He lived the life we should have lived, died the death that we deserved, and then rose again to show us the way to God.

Grace is the absurd truth that, whilst we grumbled and complained against God, God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Communion Prayer:

Lord God,
whose blessed Son our Saviour
gave his back to the smiters
and did not hide his face from shame:
give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sunday 21 March 2021

5th Sunday of Lent (Passiontide begins)

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world:
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,
that we may know eternal peace through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings:

Jeremiah 31.31-34, Psalm 51.1-13, Hebrews 5.5-10, John 12.20-33

Thoughts for today:

These weeks of Lent we have been considering and practicing the idea of making space for God in our lives. Looking at the ideas of sin and grace, of God's promises of salvation, but also of suffering, and of the tendency of our hearts towards idolatry.

We have probably all heard the phrase 'practice makes perfect'. But this is not the case with our faith. We don't pretend or aspire to some astral plane or higher state of consciousness where we can commune with God. Of many roads up a mountain that we are all climbing.

Our faith, rooted in the flawed human condition, is in a God who descended to join us in the muck and the filth. Our religion has a high priest who, with flesh and blood, took on our humanity, to redeem us when we could not.

Even the space we make in our hearts is not of our own doing. It is because God has written it on our hearts. It is because we no longer need to be taught to know God, because now, in Christ, we know him. For all our brokenness, for all our

struggle during this period of Lent, we have a high priest who will forgive our iniquity and remember our sins no more.

Therefore let us remember that everything we have comes from God, even the space we make is space he gave us. We don't need to struggle to hold on to our lives. This is a gift God has given us by grace, and we can only try to honour Him by reflecting that grace out into the world.

Communion Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,

you have taught us

that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters

we do also for you:

give us the will to be the servant of others

as you were the servant of all,

and gave up your life and died for us,

but are alive and reign, now and for ever.

Sunday 28 March 2021

Palm Sunday

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

True and humble king, hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know you and love you,
that we may be found beside you on the way of the cross,
which is the path of glory.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings:

Mark 11.1-11, Philippians 2.5-11

Thoughts for today:

Palm Sunday is an opportunity to reflect again on the nature of Jesus' kingship. The procession of Jesus and his followers down from the mount of olives is a moment when many people's hopes for Jesus as the Messiah are projected on to Him.

We all come with our own hopes and dreams for how life is going to work out. Our own ideas of what a hero looks like, what a villain looks like. Our own criteria for success and failure in life that can inform how we see events.

I regularly go through the cycle of trying to explain to my kids how materially fortunate that are compared to my own childhood. That through technology they have access to so much in the world now. But you can't just change their perceptions by talking to them it seems, as what this access to the world brings with it is a shift in perspective where the stakes of success are raised to incredible proportions. The definition of wealth, power and success for them are not set by my childhood, but by youtube.

As we have discussed before, these definitions that describe the world and help make sense of it are called 'worldviews' or 'paradigms'. These are the boundaries of our understanding, the frames through which we see the world, but also the limits of what can make sense to us. The context we are living in, or that our children are growing up in can make it impossible to see that success or peace or freedom can only come through recognition, fame or riches. Maybe not so much has changed really...

At the time when Jesus was entering Jerusalem there was also a view of what freedom and success might look like for a people who had lost their kingdom and were living under oppression. As Jesus rode in on the colt He was greeted and celebrated by the Jewish people as what they understood as 'Messiah'. But their understanding was shaped by human notions of power and success.

The Romans idea of power, the Messiah as 'Caesar' brings with it ideas of conquest, violence and coercion. That Jesus victory would look like the Romans victory, just for them instead.

This is what makes the death on the cross so hard for people to understand. This is the foolishness and the stumbling block.

Jesus shows, through this parody of a victory parade, that not only does He not conform to the paradigms of this world. But in fact He reveals their corruption and injustice as His victory is brought through their persecution.

Let us know who we follow and try to understand that our Messiah is not Caesar, but the suffering servant who gives his life for sinners.

Communion Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant, and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:
give us the mind to follow you and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
to the glory of God the Father.

Thursday 1 April 2021

Holy Week (Maundy Thursday)

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

God our Father, your Son Jesus Christ was obedient to the end and drank the cup prepared for him:
may we who share his table watch with him through the night of suffering and be faithful.

Amen

Readings:

Exodus 12.1-4 [5-10] 11-14, Psalm 116.1, 10-end, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26, John 13.1-17, 31b-35

Thoughts for today:

Tonight I want to talk about the connection between your mind, your body and your soul. Most of us would agree on some variation of these words to describe the various interwoven components of a human, even if we may all differently define their composition, relationship, and which of these we may be in the business of saving. In particular I want to think about Jesus' incarnation. I heard this helpfully described by one preacher as 'Jesus Con Carne' which would translate as 'Jesus with meat', which sounds kind of gross, but gets you to start thinking in a very physical way about Jesus' presence on Earth.

Now I'm not sure if you noticed but it snowed recently. This was a very exciting time for a parent with lots of kids. I have great memories of snow in my childhood, and even when we had snow 5 or 6 years back, I have some lovely videos of me and two of my kids zooming down a hill screaming and laughing. This time, my kids woke at 6.30 am, they were outside by 7am, they were back in by half seven having covered each other and the utility room floor with snow, ending in fighting, tears and very wet gloves.

Anyway, not deterred by this, I resolved to take my eldest two sledging on roundhill before lunch, the next oldest having again soaked all his clothes through before we even managed to leave the house. Taking our vintage sledge, made by my wife's grandfather when she was a child, we made our first run down what is quite a steep, scary hill and managed to crack the wooden foot rest on our way down. Still undeterred, we climbed back to the top and went again, this time managing to rip a long hole in my trousers as we crashed off the sledge on our way down. This was getting distressing now, but I thought, no, this is a rare opportunity, we must enjoy it. As we went to climb again, my daughter who has type 1 diabetes, then has a hypo from all the exertion, which means sitting still for 15 minutes while her blood sugar comes back up. At this I decided to call it a day and head back for lunch, having to drag my daughter on the sledge to get there. At this point, my 12 year old son has the hilarious idea of putting a snowball into the hole in my trousers, where it fell to the bottom of my leg and got stuck. Here I finally snapped, crying out in distinctly un vicar like language, I expressed my extreme displeasure with the whole experience.

The moral of this story, if there is one, is that the physical world is messy. You can have all these ideals in your head about how things should be, but the reality is hard and messy, and sometimes really cold. When you put your grand ideas into meat, things are never as simple as you expect.

So, Incarnation, when you act in the world, when you play out your thoughts and ideas in reality, there is something more that is added. Incarnation is literally more than just an idea - physicality is more than just an accident. Jesus' incarnation was not, I believe, an incidental part of the plan, but something fundamental. God created this whole physical world, rocks and trees, blood and bones, endorphins and dopamine and hormones. These things are part of who you are, part of how you understand and engage with the world. You are an ongoing chemical reaction that is burning and bubbling away as you move through the world. Our intellectual perspective is intertwined with our brain chemistry, which is in turn related to our bodies and their sensory input. All these things are part of the image of God that we are created to be, and part of Jesus incarnated.

But there is a sadness that all of this brings, all of this life and growth and fizzing potential. There is death - there is entropy - there is the running out of life that occurs as, from the very beginning we blossom towards an inevitable decline.

Things fall apart... Death, this thing that so defines life, yet somehow does not fit, it makes nonsense out of our lives, it promotes these crises and absurdity as we rush to do something meaningful because, in the face of death, everything seems so meaningless.

But Jesus incarnation brings hope, - His life gives a sure and certain hope. Because this death that is now so near, this attempt to snuff out hope and render all the miracles and healings meaningless too, this death is followed by His victory, his resurrection, that beyond death there is now new life. There is eternal hope...

And us, gathered here, Christians, we are dealers in hope. Because of this death, this sacrifice that set us free, and this resurrection that gives the hope that we carry to the world. We can claim joy and happiness, meaning in the face of meaningless and destruction, because death does not have the final word.

I think that this is part of what Jesus meant by coming to him as children - children run on hope, on the excitement of their unfolding lives, on being too excited to get to sleep because it's their birthday the next day. This was really brought home to me recently when I saw a child without hope, who was lying on the floor saying that they had nothing to live for. He could not see himself growing up, getting married, having a car or a job or a house. What are you going to be when you grow up? Nothing... And this is not the first child I have heard talking like this recently.

How are we supposed to communicate this hope, how do we communicate to children, and to the children that we are supposed to be...

Through experience. Through acts that express and help to connect words and actions together. This is why Jesus didn't just leave us with a set of rules or useful sayings. He placed at the core of our faith, physical acts, eating bread, drinking wine, baptism, and foot washing. Mysterious experiences that have all

sorts of meanings woven through them, but are fundamentally rooted in the incarnation, Jesus incarnation, and ours too.

The experiences of the things are partly a mystery, but their message is hope, it is about care for one another and bringing life. And our knowledge of this hope, this life with God that Jesus has secured for us, makes every moment of physical experience a profound moment of God's communication to us. So treasure these moments, allow them to connect your mind, body and soul together, understand that God chose these moments in particular to tell you something about life, and about His love for you. That when we are in eternity with Christ, it is these moments that we look back on together, Jesus will give a knowing smile, as we say Ah yes, now I get it... washing feet.

Communion Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,

we thank you that in this wonderful sacrament

you have given us the memorial of your passion:

grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries of your body and blood

that we may know within ourselves

and show forth in our lives

the fruit of your redemption,

for you are alive and reign, now and for ever.

Sunday 4 April 2021

Easter Day

Greeting:

The Lord be with you

Gathering Prayer:

God of glory, by the raising of your Son
you have broken the chains of death and hell:
fill your Church with faith and hope;
for a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

Readings:

Acts 10.34-43, Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24, 1 Corinthians 15.1-11, John 20.1-18

Thoughts for today:

This Sunday we celebrate the culmination of the message of the church. If there is one thing we preach it is the empty cross and the empty grave.

There is much in Christianity about goodness and righteousness. Much about loving your neighbour and loving God. There is much about law and much about sin. But the whole thing hangs on this moment. That Christ died on the cross, taking all that the world could throw at Him, but death could not hold Him.

That Jesus conquered death moves us beyond the moral and the philosophical, into the miraculous. This is no longer about wise sayings or good intentions. This is now about divine intervention, world altering, life changing, God initiated salvation.

This is the heart of Christianity, that God so loved the world that he gave his only son to save us from our sins. We are then told to go and baptize people into this faith, teaching them the truth about the world, that they can be free from sin and death.

Communion Prayer:

God of Life,

who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son

to the death of the cross,

and by his glorious resurrection

have delivered us from the power of our enemy:

grant us so to die daily to sin,

that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.