

**Sunday 20 March 2022**

# The Third Sunday of Lent

Whitby Abbey



**Sermon** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Prayers of intercession** © Katherine Smith (adapted)

**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 All my hope on God is founded**      (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.**

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;

a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.

Let us come to the Lord, who is full of compassion,

and 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.**

*It is usual to omit the Gloria during Lent.*

### **The Collect for the Third Sunday of Lent**

Almighty God,  
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,  
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:  
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,  
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
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 Book of the prophet Isaiah

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. *Isaiah 55:1-13*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All**    **Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

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

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.

I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. *1 Corinthians 10:1-17*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Create in me a clean heart O Lord** ([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.**

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down".' *Luke 13:1-9*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

Lent is a time for reflection and re-assessing. Perhaps we have idea or opinions that are only slightly Christian or not Christian at all. At heart, maybe our view of God Himself is wrong, which could amount to idolatry. We need to adjust our view of God until it complies with Scripture and agrees with the images of Jesus they seek to show.

At the heart of the scriptures that Jesus would have known was The Law. And the centrepiece of that Law was the Ten Commandments. Those commandments are summarised by the first, which says, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord. You shall have no other gods but me.'

Every time I hear the first commandment, I hear an internal contradiction: if there is only one God—our God, the Christian God—then of course we *can't* have any other god because there isn't one. That's why St Paul says in today's epistle, 'My dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.' Isaiah similarly tells us to work for that which is of God rather than wealth and status. Psalm 118:4 says, 'Their idols are merely things of silver and gold.' And St Paul says elsewhere in Colossians 3:5 'Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.'

While it's true that there is only one God, there are also vast numbers of spirits in the spiritual world ... and they are not nice. They are despicable and, through eternity, have dedicated themselves to harming us. And their simplest way of harming us is to pretend that they are God. We follow them if we become convinced that they are God; we follow them and think that we are obeying the first commandment whereas in fact we are flatly contravening it. It's a clever ploy and it works. Today's Gospel story starts with two stories (about Pilate, which seems true to what else we know about him) and about the Tower of Siloam (which is nowhere else mentioned in history). They seem to evoke a view of God being vengeful, capricious, nasty. *But the people seem to believe in this un-Christian God!*

It was a problem then, it's been a problem throughout human history, and it's still a problem today. Just look at the debates over women priests or being gay. Both sides in such debates are convinced they are following God. Both can find portions of Holy Scripture to support their case. And both groups comprise people whose actions by any criterion are utterly un-Christian. Jesus is talking about this same problem in today's Gospel reading: he knew that folk would persecute the Church or its saints while thinking they're obeying God.

The obvious question becomes, ‘if we are to obey the first Commandment and follow the one true God, how do we discern when he is speaking and when other spiritual beings are imitating him?’

I wonder if, like me, you used to watch the artist Tony Hart on children’s TV in the seventies and eighties—first in *Blue Peter*, then *Vision On*, *Take Hart*, and so on. He was clever. He used to do foggy pictures using many layers tracing of paper. He’d draw some tress or a spooky castle in heavy black marker, then place a layer of tracing paper over it. He’d draw more trees on that, then place a third piece over the other two, with more tress and foliage, which became the foreground. After about half a dozen sheets, the picture has real depth. And the black of the original layer had become a grey so pale it’s almost white. That’s much like the way that evil works. By placing successive layers of distraction between itself and us, we perceive white when in fact it’s jet black. Our task is to strip away the layers of subterfuge between us and evil. And that way, we see whether the God we are following is our God or something else trying to draw us away.

To appreciate who God really is, we need to metaphorically strip away those successive layers of tracing paper till we get to the true background image. To change the metaphor, we’re stripping away the successive layers of an onion to reach its core. It’s work of a lifetime and cannot be done in an instant. What do we do?

In today’s Gospel, Jesus starts his response to the people’s incorrect views about God with by talking about repenting. He’s suggesting that a human souls can fail to recognise the ways of God because that soul does not permit God to live full-strength within it. Repentance is more than just saying sorry. It’s a long and laborious process rather than a single act. It’s a change in life that is designed to demonstrate to God and to self that we genuinely desire God. It’s a deliberate amending of our actions and values. We think and pray before we act. We try to move beyond instinct. We assess and then counteract our own lack of Christlikeness.

In all these ways, a human soul seeks to change in ways that enable it to accommodate ever more of God in the form of His Holy Spirit. In the beatitudes, Jesus says, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit for they shall see God’ and the anonymous saint who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews says much the same, ‘Without holiness no one shall see the Lord.’ They both saying that we must strip away from our soul that which is not of God to allow Him to reside there in an ever-increasing extent.

We will desire God more as we grow in holiness. That’s what holiness means. Stated otherwise, the simplest proof positive that we’re genuinely serving God is the way we question our own internal images of God. The Holy Spirit propels us into a mindset of seeking God. Maybe that’s why Jesus calls the Spirit, ‘The Spirit of truth.’

At the heart of the scriptures that Jesus would have known was The Law of Moses. And the centrepiece of that Law was the Ten Commandments. We can summarise those commandments by rephrasing the first: we say, 'Hear [insert your own name here] the Lord my God is one Lord. I shall have no other gods but you.' Which god are we following?

## 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

Holy Father, we pray that you will pour out the living water of your Spirit upon your Church in the world. Give us the humility and courage to seek unity where we are divided. Give us the grace to exclude no-one from fellowship because we disapprove of their way of life or the expression of their faith. Remind us always that it is only through your gracious love that we can find peace with you.

Lord in your mercy

**All hear our prayer.**

Holy Father we pray that you will pour out the living water of your Spirit upon the nations of the world. Help us to find new non-violent ways of seeking peace and



reconciliation. Give grace, wisdom and insight to the powerful that they may surrender some of their power; to the rich that they may surrender some of their wealth; and to those who express hatred and prejudice through violence to learn that there are better ways to be.

Lord in your mercy

**All** hear our prayer.

Holy Father we pray that you will pour out the living water of your Spirit upon our communities and our families. Help us to allow that living water to flow through us enabling us to reach out to those around us. Help us not to be afraid to show kindness to strangers or to stand alongside those on the edges of our society. Give to us the Spirit that was in Jesus, drawing people to him and uniting them in their common experience of his compassion and love.

Lord in your mercy

**All** hear our prayer.

Holy Father we pray that you will pour out the living water of your Spirit on all who are in need. We pray for those who face any pain, fear, loneliness, depression or anxiety. Let them find in you refreshment, hope and comfort for their spirit and the peace of mind that comes with the assurance of your presence alongside them.

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**

Since we are justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has given us access to his grace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All** And also with you.

**HYMN 3** [Amazing love](#)

(please 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  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
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 [Seek ye first](#)**

**([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**

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.

**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.**