

**Sunday 12 February 2023**

# The Second Sunday before Lent



**Sermon** © Lucie Reilly.

**Prayers of intercession and litany** © Let all creation praise.

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

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

**Photograph** © Sue Lindenberg

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 click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1 Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven** ([click here 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 Second Sunday before Lent**

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,  
now and for ever.

**All Amen.**

## **First reading**

A reading from the First Book of Moses called Genesis

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of

every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.



Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

*Genesis 1:1—2:3*

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 consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

*Romans 8:18-25*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Morning has broken**

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

## **Gospel reading**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said, 'I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his

glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today. *Matthew 6:25–end*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

I attended Bible study recently, focusing on Genesis and the Old Testament. We discussed how the people of the time heard about God and the Word. We tend to forget that although scripture was originally written down in some form, for many centuries very few people would have been able to read it. Instead, people encountered the scripture though hearing it, usually within some form of liturgy.

Today’s readings have striking internal themes which demand to be read aloud. They have life and action. The long passage from Genesis has 32 words and phrases which are about action. It would be easy to simply see it as a list of points of action by God. But if we allow the rhythm of the text to become prominent and see the repetition of the word ‘God’ as a repeating note we can have a new sense of the wonderful and extraordinary movement of the process of creation. As we move from the cosmic beginning to the creation of vegetation and animals and eventually humankind, the rhythm is emphasised by the repeated brief expression “God saw that it was good”.

In this passage we are given a stream of reminders that God makes and brings only good things to the world. And we read that ‘God instructed humans to ‘rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground’, and to ‘fill the earth and subdue it’. If we read this in the context of the time in which it was written, when the population of the Israelites were hearing the scriptures, we can see that these were words of hope for those who may have been living in exile. God is promising his people that they will have their own land to care for. But this is not a license to exploit the land for selfish gain. Rather, it is a promise of a healthy and godly relationship with land that they do not yet possess.

Thousands of years later, we live in a time when it is becoming abundantly clear that the good things of God are being mistreated and exploited through human sin and greed. We are beginning to see that there is a **restriction end-limit** to God's provision for us unless we make fundamental changes to the way in which we live and care for God's world. We are in real danger of over-using and abusing the resources of the world to the extent that we can no longer assume that we shall be secure and provided for. Extreme weather in many parts of the world has brought home once again the fact that we are either damaging or exhausting God's provision for us by disregarding the delicate and complex balance that we have with the rest of God's created world.

Although God saw that creation was very good, by the time Paul is writing his Letter to the Romans, something has gone wrong. He refers to creation groaning and yearning for freedom from bondage and decay. His thinking is influenced by the creation story in Genesis 3 (**not idyllic and freshly created as in 1 and 2**) but **polluted** by human sin leading to a distorted human relationship with the earth, which has been cursed. Paul does not see an entirely bleak future, however. He describes this groaning and cursing as something like human labour pains, which he hopes will bring forth new life, after waiting and longing, and without worrying.

However, in today's gospel there are some real worriers. Jesus finds himself telling the disciples **not once but six times** that they should not worry. This seems to indicate that even living with Jesus they live with a degree of fear. They are worried about obtaining the bare necessities of life. We need to read these verses in the light of the five verses which precede today's passage. These in turn refer to Ecclesiasticus 29:8-11 where we read that laying up treasure in heaven involves almsgiving, so the way to **bless** treasure and make it heavenly is to give it to earthly people. **Maybe that's why** Jesus sends the disciples back to look at the glory of the creation, the birds, the lilies, those creations that God pronounced good in Genesis 1. The foundation for not worrying is the goodness of God.

As mentioned earlier, we certainly have cause to worry about damaging creation. Part of the underlying problem is that we fail to notice just how wonderful the created world is, and **thence** neglect to care for it properly. As Christians we must recognise that in our neglect of the created world around us, we neglect no less than God.

Our gospel passage prompts us to look at creation and our use or abuse of it from another viewpoint. In the gospels Jesus asks us a familiar and fundamental question: where is your treasure?

'Wherever your treasure is, there too is your heart'. Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? This sharp quote/question needs to be repeated or asked



regularly. Facing it directly we can start to set aside the relativism, justifications and even deceptions we often use to justify our actions and words. And in doing so, we may come to identify the things we ultimately value. Pondering this quotation honestly can be sobering for most, if not all of us. Our answers to the question of where our treasure is, may include such things as comfort, health, success, a position in the community, material things, being seen favourably by other people, and so on. It may be our family, which is good—But where does God fit in?

The question for us today is: does what we do in pursuing our treasure show that we care for God's creation or not? And, if our treasure is not God, how can we shift our desires god-ward?

May we have the grace to ponder those questions and respond to them openly and honestly. Amen

## 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

As we seek to relax our grip so that the earth, our fragile sister, might rest from our labours, help us to see our world more vividly than we have done in the past.

**All Grant us vision for the challenges of this age and give us hearts full of courage for the future.**

As we seek to be wise stewards of the gifts of the earth in timber and oil, coal, and gas, help us to know your world more humanely than we have in the past.

**All    Make us learn that wisdom which we see among those wise and humble people of the earth, that we might walk with care and reverence so as to caress our fair sister.**

Sharing God, draw us to contemplation and silence so that we might see, in wonder, our lives intertwined with the squirrels and the cardinal, the creatures great and small, the beauty of each season. Help us to see the birth, growth, death, and rebirth so as to give us courage in the ongoing creation of our Creator.

**All    Deepen our faith and enliven our thinking, nourish our bodies and strengthen our souls, that we may be your message in the world, your servants for the common wellness of the earth. Make us weavers of a new order, crafters of a new earth.**

Let us go forth from this sacred ark with steady hand up lifted heart, with clear eye and alert mind, with firm step, and willing hands. May we arrive at fresh springs of renewal through God's holy Word, in our communities of faith, and in deep solidarity with all creation.

**All    Amen. Let all the creation hear and bear witness. Amen**

## **Litany**

To bring new life to the land

To restore the waters

To refresh the air

**All    We join with the earth and with each other.**

To renew the forests

To care for the plants

To protect the creatures

**All    We join with the earth and with each other.**

To celebrate the seas

To rejoice in the sunlight

To sing the song of the stars

**All    We join with the earth and with each other.**

To recall our destiny

To renew our spirits

To reinvigorate our bodies

**All    We join with the earth and with each other.**

To recreate the human community

To promote justice and peace

To remember our children

**All We join with the earth and with each other.**

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 For the beauty of the earth  
For the beauty of the earth**

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

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 the Almighty,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 O my soul arise**

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

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**

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.

**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.**