

Morning Praise @ Home 4 February 2024

Opening prayer

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Confession Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen
cf Psalm 51

Absolution May the Father of all mercies cleanse *us* from *our* sins, and restore *us* in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Bible Reading

Ephesians 1: 3-14

John 1: 1-14

Reflection from John

A few years ago Sue and I visited America and Canada and as a small part of that holiday we went to see the Niagara Falls – that magnificent volume of water that is both impressive, overwhelming and unstoppable.

Well I mention that because today's first reading Ephesians 1: 3-14 is like the Niagara Falls of the New Testament. Verses 3-10 are a single sentence of powerful words about how God SINGLEHANDEDLY draws us into a living relationship with himself through Jesus his son.

In the translation taken **from the Message**:

Verses 3-6. How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.

Verses 7-10. Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly* free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.

All of that is summed up in the most beautiful single word – GRACE which lies at the heart of not just these verses but the whole of Ephesians.....The unconditional love and unwarranted mercy of the One True God who planned to claim us as his own from before the dawn of time.

Grace is not an easy idea for the respectable and the morally upright. It is real for those who know they have fallen short and cannot pick themselves up.....it is balm to the weary and anathema to the self-made, high achieving person.

But grace is not an idea or a dogma, it is the reality which beats in God's heart.....whether you are here today to praise or to weep, to celebrate or confess God's very own grace is the one and only anchor for each of us.

This is the God of the gospel of grace. A God who, out of love for us, sent the only Son He ever had wrapped in our skin. He learned how to walk, stumbled and fell, cried for His milk, sweated blood in the night, was lashed with a whip and showered with spit, was fixed to a cross, and died whispering forgiveness on us all. It is the riches that Christians are called to share with the world. **Amen**

Affirmation of faith

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

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?

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?

We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Prayers of intercession

Dear Lord God, through your Son Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us, you have promised to be faithful to those who seek to serve you, who seek to understand and who choose to follow you.

We pray for Christian unity and for greater understanding amongst all faiths. In particular we pray for tolerance and understanding amongst Jew, Muslim, Christian, Islam and other religions working in support of those affected by war, famine and deprivation. Comfort all victims of intolerance and persecution and those oppressed by their fellow human beings. Remember in your kingdom those who have died in the cause of peace and those who have sought to relieve the suffering of others.

We reflect on the ongoing conflicts in Israel, Gaza and Ukraine and we pray that rationality may soon prevail amongst leaders of the world that bloodshed will cease. Heavenly Father, support those seeking peaceful resolution, lead the aggressors towards compassion and give hope to the suffering. We bring before you in our prayers the innocent people caught up in conflict and on behalf of the broken hearted, the displaced families, the scared, frightened and the confused, we ask for God's mercy and blessing on those who suffer.

Nearer home we pray for those individuals and families who do not have sufficient means to support themselves. We pray for those who are homeless, those who go hungry within a society that is supposed to be caring and compassionate but are our fellow human beings who have to rely on Foodbanks and charities in order to survive.

We also pray for all those facing adversity and having to make difficult choices in their lives and we remember in our own way those whom we know personally who are in need of our thoughts and prayers.

Dear Lord, we pray for one another, for our churches of St Nicholas' and St Michael's and for all who work in your name towards the future of our church communities.

We ask that through your son Jesus Christ you will be with us today and always.

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

The Lord's Prayer As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Closing prayer

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

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