



Heacham Parish Church



3rd Sunday of Lent – 20th March 2022

The Greeting and opening prayer

God in Christ has revealed his glory.

Come let us worship

From the rising of the sun to its setting,

the Lord's name is greatly to be praised.

Give him praise, you servants of the Lord,

O praise the name of the Lord.

Hymn: **Be thou my vision (MP 51)**

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that Thou art -
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee, Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle-shield, sword for the fight,
Be Thou my dignity, Thou my delight.
Thou my soul's shelter, Thou my high tower:
raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, after victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Confession and forgiveness.

St. Paul says, 'Be imitators of God; love as Christ loved, do not grieve the Holy Spirit, put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice.'

So let us confess our sins to God, who forgives in Christ.

Together we say,
Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we confess that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole hearts.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Hymn: Blessed be the name of the Lord (MP 809)

Blessed be the name of the Lord,
blessed be the name of the Lord,
blessed be the name of the Lord Most High!
Blessed be the name of the Lord,
blessed be the name of the Lord,
blessed be the name of the Lord Most High!

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower -
the righteous run into it, and they are saved;
the name of the Lord is a strong tower -
the righteous run into it, and they are saved.*

Glory to the name of the Lord,
glory to the name of the Lord,
glory to the name of the Lord Most High!
Glory to the name of the Lord,
glory to the name of the Lord,
glory to the name of the Lord Most High!

The name of the Lord

Holy is the name of the Lord,
holy is the name of the Lord,
holy is the name of the Lord Most High!
Holy is the name of the Lord,
holy is the name of the Lord,
holy is the name of the Lord Most High!

The name of the Lord

Verses from psalm 34.

Together we say:

O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.
I sought the Lord and he answered me,
He delivered me from all my fears.
O magnify the Lord with me.

In my weakness I cried to the Lord,
He heard me and saved me from my troubles.
Let us exult His name together.
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

O magnify the Lord with me, let us exult His name together.
Amen.

Bible reading – Luke 13: 1-9

A reflection – by Penny

Down through the ages humanity seems to have had a morbid fascination with death and disaster. The Galilean pilgrims in our passage today illustrate just this. Through Chapter 12 Jesus has sometimes been talking only to his disciples, now he is speaking to the crowd. That's when these noisy questioners crash in. They raise the tragedies of the day which were obviously familiar to Jesus and this audience, but Luke's gospel is our only surviving source of information. The reference to Pilate mingling the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices appears to refer to a massacre of Galilean pilgrims in Jerusalem. We do not know why Pilate slaughtered these people, but the deed corresponds with other historical writings which record Pilate's irrational brutality. The tower at Siloam may have been part of the city wall which collapsed spontaneously crushing eighteen inhabitants. Actually, the details do not matter. We have two newsworthy tragedies, one an instance of state-sponsored terror and the other a random accident. Both unexpectedly ended multiple lives and that illustrates the precarious nature of our very existence.

Why did they raise these events with Jesus? Did they want him to comment on the Jewish 'party line' which claimed that God's punishment was proportional to the degree of sin, or did they want him to condemn Pilate's action? Remember, Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and in all probability anything he said about Pilate would get there before him. Both scenarios held political implications, one with the Romans, the other with the

Jews. He could not ignore these issues, or the crowd would accuse him of being pro-Roman, neither could he accuse Pilate as this would bring him in to conflict with the Roman rulers. Furthermore, he states firmly, 'No, these people were not worse sinners or more guilty than other Jews', so we must not equate tragedy with divine punishment. Sin does not make atrocities come; they just occur.

This is not the soft and tender Jesus calling, this is loud and pointed. Never mind them, what about you? He turns away from disasters and victims - why? to address those of us who have to date survived the hazards of the universe and human society. (And that is not because we are specially blessed). He addresses the universal need for repentance. Twice he says, "unless you repent, you too will all perish". This is death of one's soul, not physical, bodily death which we shall all experience. The urgency of repentance is marked by this illustrated fragility of life. God offers us the opportunity to re-orientate ourselves to a new consciousness of our shortcomings and real situation of our lives. Those who had not repented in life will suddenly find they have delayed too long and lost that opportunity. He does not promise protection from disaster, but just as the fragility of our life demands urgency, so that very life gives us the opportunity to seize what God in his graciousness has provided for us. That is what the parable of the fig-tree is all about.

This short parable speaks of imminent judgement using the same images as John the Baptist used in Chapter 3. "every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down". A tree may continue to grow without bearing any fruit because it has been granted additional time to do what it is supposed to do i.e. produce fruit. Just because we have not been 'cut down' we cannot assume we are bearing fruit. Have we prayed about the nature of our call? What fruit is God wanting each one of us to produce? It is God's patience and mercy that temporarily keeps

judgment waiting. Like the gardener in the parable God does everything possible to persuade us to act as his servants and produce fruit. We are not left to our own devices; he encourages us to repent. These words about judgment and repentance are starkly pointed. However, they depict human life as a gift, albeit a fragile one, which we can do little to protect. Our existence is fleeting.

Our generation is typical of humanity down through the ages and we share the fascination with death and disaster from which we insulate ourselves by viewing at a comfortable distance. So far in 2022 we have seen crowds of refugees in Ethiopia, Yemen, and Venezuela. A volcanic eruption in Tonga. A super typhoon hit the Philippines. Mudslides in Brazil. Wildfires in Argentina, South Korea, and USA. Flooding in Australia and this country. All during a pandemic of Covid-19. Now Europe is engulfed in the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Ukraine and the warmongering from which it has resulted. The scale and proximity of this tragedy is vividly imprinted on the minds of each one of us. This should shake us out of our complacency and underline the perils of our existence. There may be lots wrong with the global society in which we live (though there is also much that is good) but God's purpose for us is to work for that which is better. Jesus asks with an urgency fuelled for us by those sights of devastation "What about you? How will you live your life?"

Musical offering

Affirmation of faith

Together we affirm what we believe,
We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in
heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with His love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Hymn: **My Jesus, my Saviour (MP 1003)**

My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord, there is none like You.
All of my days, I want to praise
the wonders of Your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength,
let every breath, all that I am,
never cease to worship You.

*Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing,
power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
at the sound of Your name.
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands,
for ever I'll love You, for ever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the promise I have
In You.*

Prayers of Intercession - Led by Gordon

God of hope, you have told us that when we call on your name you answer. In this season of Lent, we cry to you for the people of Ukraine. We ask that you would bring protection, that you would bring healing, that you would bring justice. By your Spirit, guide the leaders of the nations so they may discern the way to peace. In the name of Jesus, whose kingdom is peace.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Across the world a number of countries have ongoing conflicts. Whether this is due to civil war, territorial disputes, terrorism, political instability or sectarianism, there are many countries where there is violence, and lives being lost. We place before you Afghanistan, Myanmar, Yemen, Ethiopia, Syria, and Libya naming only a few. God of peace, challenge the weapons of war and banish hatred and division, so that all your children may sleep secure.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The World Food Programme has released a report saying that, across the world, over 800 million people go to bed hungry at night. Of those 44 million are facing famine. Whether this is as a result of conflict, climate shock, or even economic consequences of Covid. It is also in part a result of mans greed. Almighty God, it is difficult to see children suffer, especially from hunger. We pray for You to give the hungry daily bread today (Matthew 6:11) and end their persistent hunger. Provide the food they need to grow and thrive. Pour out Your grace on hungry families, especially parents straining to feed their children despite dwindling resources.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for our community. Teach us to be good neighbours, not just to the folk who live nearby but to everyone that we meet, to see the best in, and want the best for all your precious children. Help each of us to be a witness to those around us, through what we say and do, and that they may see Christ in us.

Lord in your mercy, hear a prayer.

Heavenly Father we pray for those who are bereaved both recently and those who still miss loved ones. Bring them your peace and comfort at this time. We pause for a few moments and bring to mind those who we know.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Finally, we pray for ourselves for the Growth of our Church:

God of Mission

Who alone brings growth to your Church

Send your Holy Spirit to give

Vision to our planning

Wisdom to our actions

Joy to our worship

And power to our witness.

Help our church to grow in numbers

In spiritual commitment to you

And in service to our local community

Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen

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

The Lord's Prayer

As our saviour taught us, so we pray, together we say,
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
forever. Amen.

Hymn: Hallelujah, sing to Jesus (MP 207)

Hallelujah! sing to Jesus,
His the sceptre, His the throne;
Hallelujah! His the triumph,
His the victory alone.
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion
thunder like a mighty flood:
Jesus out of every nation
hath redeemed us by His blood.

Hallelujah! not as orphans
are we left in sorrow now;
hallelujah! He is near us,
faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received Him
when the forty days were o'er,
shall our hearts forget His promise,
'I am with you evermore'?

Hallelujah! Bread of heaven!
Thou on earth our food, our stay;
Hallelujah here the sinful
flee to Thee from day to day.
Intercessor, friend of sinners,
earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
where the songs of all the sinless
sweep across the crystal sea.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Glory be to God on high;
to the Father, and the Saviour,
who has gained the victory;
glory to the Holy Spirit,
fount of love and sanctity.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
to the triune Majesty.

Final Prayer

Together we say:

In darkness and in light, in trouble and in joy, help us,
Heavenly Father, to trust your love, to serve your purpose and
to praise your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

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