

## Tarves Parish Church - Sunday 29 March Passion Sunday



**“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”**

Read the following hymn slowly, focussing on the meaning of the words. Are there any words or phrases that speak to you in the circumstances we find ourselves today?

### **CH4 201**

1. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;  
Bow down before him his glory proclaim  
Gold of obedience and incense of lowliness  
Bring and adore him; the Lord is his name!
2. Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness  
High on his heart he will bear it for thee,  
Comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness  
Guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.
3. Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness  
Of the poor wealth, thou canst reckon as thine;  
Truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness,  
These are the offerings to lay on his shrine.

4. These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,  
He will accept for the name that is dear,  
Mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,  
Trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

Reread v.1

## **Bible Reading**

In the following bible reading we find Jesus at prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his arrest.

### **St Luke 22:39-46**

*39 He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. 40 When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' 41 Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 42 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.' 43 Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. 44 In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. 45 When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, 46 and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.'*

## **Reflection**

Now go back and read that passage a second time. Imagine you are with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. What are you doing? Are you sleeping? Or are you kneeling praying along-side Jesus? At the beginning of this season of Lent, I challenged the congregations of Barthol Chapel and Tarves to pray the Lord's Prayer, every day until Easter. At the time coronavirus was a barely visible speck on the far eastern horizon. In the last five weeks it has turned all our lives upside down. As we adjust to new ways of working, "to house arrest" and to being the "Church without walls", the challenge is not to let our grief for what is lost overcome us but to continue to watch and pray with Jesus.

Praying the Lord's Prayer over these weeks has been challenging as we have sought to live out that prayer in our lives. We have been encouraged to pray for our daily bread at a time when the country has been hit by panic-buying. We have been asked to pray for and exercise forgiveness at a time when we are fearful and angry. Today we are reminded of what it means to pray that we will not be led into temptation but that we would be delivered from evil. The Greek word for temptation means testing or trial, literally to experience fierce hardship or difficulty. It includes but is not limited to a spiritual struggle. One modern version of the Lord's Prayer puts it like this "Save us from the time of

trial". Just as the cusp of the coronavirus pandemic threatens to engulf us we are encouraged to pray for God's protection and deliverance.

There is a story of a policewoman who was seeking promotion to sergeant. In her test-paper was the following question. "You are driving along in your patrol car, when suddenly a car coming from the opposite direction veers across the road and smashes into another car. As you approach the first car you notice the wife of the police inspector who is in charge of the station is driving it. You also notice that a very strong smell of alcohol is coming from the car. You look into the other car and see that a well-known criminal and thief, who has just jumped bail and is on the run is driving the car and he is sitting there looking dazed. In the back of his car are boxes of undoubtedly pirated DVDs. Just then a tanker trying to avoid the two cars veers off the road and ploughs into some shop fronts. The tanker driver, distraught, jumps out and comes running towards you, "Fire! Fire! Do something officer". Then you notice the words "toxic waste – high explosive" are marked on the side of the tanker. Just then a gang of twenty five football supporters who happen to be passing, begin looting the shops. *Please list your priorities and decisions.*

The policewoman sitting the test gave this answer. "*Priority and decision number 1. Remove uniform and mingle with the crowd!!*"

Most of us would probably sympathise with that answer. We don't like trouble. There are many situations in life we would rather avoid if we could – the pain of illness, the loss of a loved one, the betrayal of family and friends. Yet these are all part of life. The reality is that there are times when life quite simply hurts. And surely this is one of those times. And we are faced with the question of what we will do. Will we be like those first followers of Jesus? They allowed grief to overwhelm them and fell asleep. Or can we acknowledge our feelings before God and pray as Jesus did in Gethsemane, "Remove this cup from us"... "Save us from this time of trial".

To pray this prayer at this moment in time is to identify with Christ as he identifies with us. Jesus knows the frailty of humanity – our desire to avoid the harsh realities of life. He went through a time of trial. And in that time of testing he asked God to take away the cup of suffering. It is alright to say to God that we do not want to go through this struggle. Don't let this happen to us. Take away this illness. Take away the pain. Take away the grief and the fear. Deliver us from evil.

But we cannot assume that the answer to that prayer for protection will always be a miraculous healing, or the prevention of disaster. The Christian faith is not an escape route. The Christian God offers no immunity from suffering. With hindsight we know that Jesus did not give in to temptation, that he did indeed drink the cup. But equally we believe that God answered Jesus prayer in such a way that sin and evil and death would never again have the last word. And that whatever sufferings we now endure, these bear no comparison to the future God promises. And in the meantime, God has poured out his

Holy Spirit to comfort strengthen and encourage us. We do not face the difficult times alone.

When the dark days do come, as they undoubtedly will, we have the assurance that not even death can separate us from God's love. It was this discovery that prompted the early Church, in the face of persecution and martyrdom, to add their own words as a conclusion to the prayer Jesus taught his disciples – that heartfelt ascription of praise, "For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever". Will we add our Amen to that?

The great Methodist hymnwriter Charles Wesley encourages us to do just that in this familiar hymn.

#### **CH4 515**

1. Soldiers of Christ, arise  
And put your armour on,  
Strong in the strength which God supplies  
Through his eternal Son;  
Strong in the Lord of hosts,  
And in his mighty power;  
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts  
Is more than conqueror.
  
2. Stand then in his great might,  
With all his strength endued;  
And take to arm you for the fight  
The panoply of God.  
To keep your armour bright  
Attend with constant care,  
Still walking in your Captain's sight,  
And watching unto prayer.
  
3. From strength to strength go on Wrestle, and fight, and pray;  
Tread all the powers of darkness down  
And win the well-fought day,  
That, having all things done  
And all your conflicts passed,  
You may o'ercome through Christ alone  
And stand complete at last.

#### **Prayers for Others**

Suggestions for prayer

- The NHS, its staff in hospitals and GP practices as well as the other emergency services and volunteers
- Scientific researchers engaged in the struggle against Covid-19
- The Government and Scottish Parliament as they seek to manage the pandemic
- Those suffering from or bereaved by the coronavirus
- Family, friends and neighbours, those most affected by the lock-down
- Other people and situations who are in your hearts today
- The Church that we might offer a faithful witness to Christ through this time

You might like to close by saying the Lord's Prayer

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 this day our daily bread  
 And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors  
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil  
 For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever,  
 Amen

### **A Blessing**

May God's blessing surround you each day  
 As you love him and walk in his way  
 May his presence within guard and keep you from sin  
 Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.

### **Notices**

Watch out for any of the children's red notices appearing on a window near you. If you see one please let Ruth know Tel 851887

The minister is available to help with any pastoral emergencies. Tel 851295