

All Saints' Church Thornton Hough



A service for Ash Wednesday

Wednesday 17th February 2021

Online

Greeting

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you
and also with you.

Hymn: Forty days and forty nights

- 1 Forty days and forty nights
 thou wast fasting in the wild;
forty days and forty nights
 tempted, and yet undefiled:
- 2 Sunbeams scorching all the day;
 chilly dew-drops nightly shed;
prowling beasts about thy way;
 stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.
- 3 Shall not we thy sorrows share,
 and from earthly joys abstain,
fasting with unceasing prayer,
 glad with thee to suffer pain?
- 4 And if Satan, vexing sore,
 flesh or spirit should assail,
thou, his vanquisher before,
 grant we may not faint nor fail.
- 5 So shall we have peace divine;
 holier gladness ours shall be;
round us too shall angels shine,
 such as ministered to thee.
- 6 Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
 ever constant by thy side;
that with thee we may appear
 at the eternal Eastertide.

George Hunt Smyttan (1822–1870) and Francis Pott (1832–1909)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as we begin this time of Lent let us draw aside and take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord.

Let us pray for grace to keep Lent faithfully.
A period of silence is kept.

The Bright Field – R.S. Thomas

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great price, the one field that had
the treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

Prayers of confession

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 acknowledge our transgressions in penitence and faith.

***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.***

The Absolution

May almighty God,
who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,
bring you his pardon and peace, now and for ever. ***Amen.***

Bible Reading

Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

‘Be careful not to practise your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

‘So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

‘And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

‘When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Reflection – Drawing aside for Lent

Lent gives us the chance of looking differently – at the world, at ourselves, our relationships with one another and with God.

In this time of Covid, we have become fastidious about hand-cleaning: sanitising, removing the invisible signs of dirt, needing to keep clean. Perhaps this Lent more than others, we have a strong sense of things being somehow tainted.

In the imposition of ashes which would have marked the start of our Lenten journey; marking, both physically and metaphorically, the minister says these words: “Remember that you are but dust, and to dust you shall return.

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.”

We are reminded of that mark of sin, the mark of our fallen, mortal selves. It is a painful and sobering moment.

But what if we looked at the mark differently?

God made us in his image, fearfully and wonderfully.

Yet, our sins, our failure to acknowledge the love of God and to follow the ways of Jesus, our lack of love for others, our disregard for our planet and the creatures with whom we share this earth put mucky marks over that image.

Yet, if we acknowledge where we have fallen short, and come back to God, something wonderful can happen.

God creates....

He is lifting off the dirt to show the beauty beneath.

That's what happens as we draw aside and allow Christ to work in us.

The dirt, the ashy, dark smudges don't disappear altogether, but rather become part of a more beautiful picture.

We see God's love transforming us, taking our ashes and turning them into something beautiful.

The Collect for Ash Wednesday

Holy God,
our lives are laid open before you:
rescue us from the chaos of sin
and through the death of your Son
bring us healing and make us whole
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Music: Prelude in E flat (William H Harris)

God's Grandeur – Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all are seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Intercessions

We pray to the Lord for courage to give up other things
and to give ourselves to him this Lent.

Give us the courage to give up our selfishness as we live for others,
to give time, care and comfort to the sick, lonely and suffering.

Give us the courage to give up quarrels, strife and jealousy
in our families, neighbourhoods and communities.

***O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer,
when I call, answer me;***

***O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer,
come and listen to me.***

We pray to the Lord for courage to work for peace in the world;
for justice to provide voices for the voiceless, names and homes for
those whose identities have been taken through persecution and
warfare,

for an equal sharing of the good things which our world affords; for
clean water, for education and opportunities to use that learning, for
the roll-out of the Coronavirus vaccine and other life-saving, life-
enhancing health care.

O Lord hear my prayer...

Give us courage to give up our fear of death
and to rejoice with those who have died in faith.

May those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, who are laid low
by grief,

know the healing touch of the wounded hands of Jesus;
may the light of his presence fill their hearts, minds and homes.

O Lord hear my prayer...

The Lord's Prayer

Trusting in the compassion of God, let us pray as our Saviour taught us:

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is 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.***

Hymn: Lord Jesus, think on me

- 1 Lord Jesus, think on me,
and purge away my sin;
from earthborn passions set me free,
and make me pure within.
- 2 Lord Jesus, think on me
with many a care opprest;
let me thy loving servant be,
and taste thy promised rest.
- 3 Lord Jesus, think on me,
nor let me go astray;
through darkness and perplexity
point thou the heavenly way.
- 4 Lord Jesus, think on me,
that, when the flood is past,
I may the eternal brightness see,
and share thy joy at last.

The Blessing

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow him;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

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