

All Saints' Church Thornton Hough



**A service for
Passion Sunday
(Fifth Sunday of Lent)
Sunday 21st March 2021
Online**

The hymns are sung by St Martin's Voices.

[These have been produced by Church of England, working with St Martin-in-the-Fields and the Royal School of Church Music, for use on streamed / recorded services.]

The Gathering

Let us worship God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord be with you

and also with you.

Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

(Matthew 16: 24-5)

Hymn: My song is love unknown

- 1 My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me;
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O who am I,
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?
- 2 He came from His blest throne
salvation to bestow;
but men made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know:
But O! my Friend,
my Friend indeed,
who at my need
His life did spend.
- 3 Sometimes they strew His way,
and His sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King:
Then "Crucify!"
is all their breath,
and for His death
they thirst and cry.

4 They rise and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of life they slay,
Yet cheerful He
to suffering goes,
that He His foes
from thence might free.

5 Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine;
never was love, dear King!
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend,
in Whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

Samuel Crossman (1623-1683)

Bible reading: John 12: 20-33

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus.’ Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

‘Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour”? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’

Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

Jesus said, ‘This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Reflection: We would like to see Jesus!

It's wonderful to look out of the window and see so many glorious signs of spring. The daffodils nodding in the garden, blossom of blackthorn and early cherry frothing in the hedges, the birds noisily singing and fresh grass coming up in the fields which looked like a thick, muddy soup only a few weeks ago.

These things are signs of hope, of new life, a reminder of the joy of living in a place where we can appreciate the passing seasons. We want to see it. We rejoice in the fresh immediacy of spring, the "now", but we also anticipate what is to come: the long, hot summer (we hope), the ripening fruit which we will enjoy, the harvest of grain from those delicate green shoots.

The Greeks who came to speak to Philip wanted to see Jesus. The fact that these visitors are so named makes it clear that they weren't Jews, but we can detect their curiosity and desire to meet Jesus face-to-face. They point to the existence of the growth of new groups of non-Jews, people from different cultures and languages who were taking their first steps of faith.

Interestingly, we don't know what happened about their meeting with Jesus. Indeed, the account takes a rather strange shift in focus. Rather than getting caught up with the "now" of the visit of these Greek-speaking strangers, Jesus recognises something else is happening. He knows that the really important thing is that their visit signals a new sort of timing.

Jesus is no longer called just to the Jewish people, but to all people. And with that fresh call, he knows that he is about to face his death on the cross. "Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'" (v. 23)

Jesus presents his disciples with the picture of a little seed. It may appear as if nothing is happening when the seed is buried underground, yet it has to be buried and go through a process of being broken down in order to become the flourishing plant it was destined to be.

It is a strange and poignant image. It points to great pain, but also to a future which is far greater than that which is found if the seed is not set to its work of growing.

On this Passion Sunday, when we move into this period of "Deep Lent", perhaps doubly wearied by the rigours imposed by lockdown, where we have had to fast from gathering for public worship, sharing family time, a cup of coffee or meals with friends, and a haircut, it can seem as if the joy of resurrection is far away.

Jesus shows us that this is not the case.

The seed dies, but the resurrection is at work in it as it grows into a new plant, ensuring that it produces a wonderful harvest and goes on to create even more seeds. It's a picture of mysterious abundance and hope.

“We would like to see Jesus” – how can we see Jesus alive and flourishing in the world today? And how can we, through our behaviour and actions, enable others to see Jesus for themselves?

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray to the Father through his Son
who suffered on the cross for the world's redemption.

Fill with your Spirit Christ's broken body, the Church.
Give to Christian people everywhere a deep longing
to take up the cross and to understand its mysterious glory.

We pray for your persecuted people across the world,
remembering the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Bless those who lead the Church's worship at this time;
may they draw your people close to you.

Be with those who are selecting the new Bishops of Birkenhead and
Stockport.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Look in your loving mercy in the world you loved so much
that you send your Son to suffer and to die.

Strengthen those who work to share
the reconciliation won at such a cost upon the cross.

Give the leaders of nations your wisdom and humility and raise up people
of goodwill.

We pray for all charities working to bring peace out of division;
we remember especially those in the Holy Land.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Bring healing by the wounds of Christ
to all who are weighed down by pain and injustice.

We pray for the people of Mozambique,
and for those in our own country who are struggling.

We pause to remember those known to us:

Help the lonely, the betrayed, the suffering and the dying,

those whose pains are known only to you,
to find their strength and hope in the presence of Jesus.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Enable us all to see in your Son the meaning of life and death.
Give hope and comfort to the dying and the bereaved,
and gentleness to those who minister to them at home, in residential care,
hospices and hospitals.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

Gracious Father,
you gave up your Son
out of love for the world:
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,
that we may know eternal peace
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

***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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory
for ever and ever.
Amen.***

The Blessing

Christ crucified draw you to himself,
to find in him a sure ground for faith,
a firm support for hope,
and the assurance of sins forgiven;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you, and remain with you always.

Amen.

Hymn: Lift high the cross

*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.*

- 1 Come, let us follow where our Captain trod,
our King victorious, Christ the Son of God.
- 2 O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
as thou hast promised, draw us unto thee.
- 3 Let every race and every language tell
of him who saves our souls from death and hell.
- 4 Set up thy throne, that earth's despair may cease
beneath the shadow of its healing peace.
- 5 For thy blest cross which doth for all atone
creation's praises rise before thy throne.

Michael Robert Newbolt (1874-1956), George William Kitchin (1827-1912)

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