



Birstall and Rothley Methodist Churches



A Service for March 7th, 2021

This service has been prepared for use at home.

Call to Worship

Loving God, we have come to worship you.
Help us to remember that you are here with us.
May we pray to you in faith,
sing your praise with gratitude
and listen to your word with eagerness
through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Hymn

StF 334

1. Praise to the holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways!
2. O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came.
3. O wisest love! That flesh and blood,
which did in Adam fail,
should strive afresh against the foe,
should strive, and should prevail;
4. And that a higher gift than grace
should flesh and blood refine:
God's presence and his very self,
and essence all-divine.
5. O generous love! That he who came
as man to smite the foe,
the double agony for us
as man should undergo:
6. And in the garden secretly,
and on the cross on high,
should teach his followers, and inspire
to suffer and to die.
7. Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways!

words: John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

Prayer

Gracious God, we, your people, rejoice to be able to worship you.
How can we begin to express our praise, adoration and gratitude?
Your greatness, your glory, your goodness are beyond words.
You are the source of all that is and all that shall be, God from beginning to end.

Here and now you are at work in us by your Spirit, glorifying your Son, bringing your perfect purposes to fulfilment.

Your might and majesty, power and dominion, glory and grace are beyond our limited understanding.

Yet you have made yourself known to us in Jesus your Son, who dwelt among us, sharing our experiences, living the life of humanity, then out of boundless love, suffered sorrow, pain and degradation, so that we might be reconciled to you.

Thank you too, for the gift of the Holy Spirit, bringing us to freedom, enabling us to discern your will and purposes for us and your church.

You are a great hearted, generous God, generous in love and self giving, but we know how much we fail you.

You know when we have thought of our own needs rather than the needs of others, followed the values of this world and not those of your Kingdom.

In a time of silence, we lay our burdens at your feet and claim your forgiveness,

Silence

Out of love Christ died for us;
out of love Christ forgives us;
out of love Christ says "Follow me."
Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Our Father

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

A letter from Paul to the Church at Corinth; a church in which there was conflict and disagreements. Paul urges them to heal their differences and turn to Christ crucified, the one who reveals God in all his saving grace. Nothing should cloak the power of God's message.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Hymn

StF 244

1. Blest are the pure in heart,
for they shall see our God;
the secret of the Lord is theirs,
their soul is Christ's abode.
2. The Lord, who left the heavens
our life and peace to bring,
to dwell on earth in lowliness,
our pattern and our King.

3. Still to the lowly soul
he does himself impart,
and for his dwelling and his throne
chooses the pure in heart.

4. Lord, we your presence seek;
a vision of your face;
give us a pure and lowly heart,
a temple of your grace.

v. 1, 3 John Keble (1792-1866)
v. 2, 4 William John Hall

Reading: John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Hymn

STF 501

1. Help us, O Lord, to learn
the truths your word imparts;
to study, that your laws may be
inscribed upon our hearts.

2. Help us, O Lord, to live
the faith which we proclaim,
that all our thoughts and words and deeds
may glorify your name.

3. Help us, O Lord, to teach
the beauty of your ways,
that all who seek may find the Christ
and make a life of praise.

words: William Watkins Reid (1923-2009)

Reflection

What's Jesus doing in Jerusalem? He never stayed long in one place & now we follow him as he joins thousands of other Jews to celebrate Passover, that great feast remembering the time when God led his people out of slavery into the promised land. Jews from everywhere gathering in Jerusalem to celebrate & remember that momentous event in their history.

As he approached the city what a sight met his eyes! The temple complex shining in splendour for all to see and marvel at. Not a place for congregational worship but earthly dwelling place of God! At its very centre, the holiest place only the priests could enter, but all kinds of activities going on in the outer precincts.

IMAGINE the hustle and bustle of perhaps 5000 people and animals ! Caged birds, frightened creatures, smells, dirt, shouting, money changing hands, arguments. Like any market place magnified a hundred times.

Watch Jesus striding in, fury all over his face as he snatches up some rope and set about the traders. How dare they make his Father's house into a place of cheating, corruption, injustice! How does one person quell that mob?

But he does and the authorities are not happy. "Prove your authority?"
Jesus does with his response "Destroy the temple and I will rebuild in 3 days".

We understand this as symbolic of Jesus death and resurrection & all four gospels tell this story. What is its importance?

It reminds us that God does not dwell in buildings however beautiful, the church is built of people who love and serve him. We are God's dwelling place.

As Jesus cleared the temple of those things that dishonoured God, so Lent gives us a chance to spring clean our lives. What is hindering our growth as individuals, also as worshipping, serving communities?

Still today many sacred places are being destroyed through war, intolerance, dictatorships. People still suffer from religious persecution. The cost of following Jesus can be massive and out of love for the world Jesus followed a path of suffering and death.

This suffering Jesus calls us to follow him, to bring our lives as a daily offering to the Servant King.
May his grace enable us to do just that.
Amen

Reading: StF 253 *read by Mary Downs*

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|---|--|
| 1. Love inspired the anger
that cleared a temple court,
overturned the wisdom
which their greed had wrought. | 4. Love inspires the anger
that curses poverty,
preaches life's enrichment
seeks equality. |
| 2. Love inspired the anger
that set the leper free
from the legal strictures
that brought misery. | 5. Love inspires the anger
that still can set us free
from the world's conventions,
bringing liberty. |
| 3. Love inspired the anger
that cursed a viper's brood:
set on domination,
self with God confused. | <i>words by Andrew Pratt (b.1948)</i> |

Prayers of Concern

At the moment we are rejoicing in the success of the vaccine roll-out and the prospect of the gradual return to normality, but let us not forget the ongoing situations that are still very prevalent for our friends and families, our community, our country and throughout the world.

So let us pray.....

LORD, we pray for all countries throughout the world, especially where there is conflict, corruption and injustice. Let your spirit of peace and love influence those that have power and authority. We pray that all countries can be honest and transparent with each other, and willing to share wealth and resources.

God of justice, peace and love,

Hear our prayer

LORD, we pray for the Christian Church around the world:-
in area where Christians are still persecuted for their faith;
in areas where the Church is growing;
in areas where the Church is declining.
We pray for the Leicester Trinity Circuit, for our ministers and preachers who are continuing to serve the churches during the pandemic.

God of justice, peace and love,

Hear our prayer

LORD, we pray for our own country.
At this difficult time we pray especially for:-
the Royal Family, the government, local authorities,
the NHS, key workers and endless volunteers who support our everyday lives.
We pray especially for those that have been hit hardest by COVID19
and are suffering due to hospital cancellations, benefit cuts, unemployment,
home-schooling and poverty.

God of justice, peace and love.

Hear our prayer

LORD, we pray for our own community,
thanking you for the way the residents of Birstall
have supported one another during the past year.
We thank you for the way our own Church family
has kept in touch with friends and colleagues.
We pray especially for those that have been shielding, have been sick,
have lost loved ones, and those that are finding life difficult.
Be close to us all.

God of justice, peace and love

Hear our prayer

Amen

Hymn

STF 686

1. Jesus, Lord, we look to thee;
let us in thy name agree;
show thyself the Prince of Peace,
bid our jarring conflicts cease.
2. By thy reconciling love
every stumbling block remove;
each to each unite, endear;
come, and spread thy banner here.
3. Make us of one heart and mind,
courteous, merciful, and kind,
lowly, meek in thought and word,
altogether like our Lord.
4. Let us for each other care,
each the other's burden bear;
to thy Church the pattern give,
show how true believers live.
5. Free from anger, and from pride;
let us thus in God abide;
all the depth of love express,
all the height of holiness.

words: Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Closing prayer and blessing,

***We came together to worship God.
We have read and pondered on His word,
prayed in word and song.
Now we go into God's world;
to be God's people wherever we are called to go.
Let us go in Christ's name.
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the blessing of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore.
Amen.***

