



Birstall and Rothley Methodist Churches



A Service for March 21st, 2021: Passion Sunday

[This service has been prepared for use at home.](#)

Opening Sentence:

Christ died for all
so that those who live might no longer live for themselves
but for him who died and was raised for them.

Prayer of Approach and Adoration:

We come to you, eternal and gracious God and offer you our praise.
Unsurpassed in majesty, matchless in your holiness,
you have shown us in Jesus unconquerable love.
As we contemplate his Passion, may your Spirit guide our prayers
that we may worship you in sincerity and truth;
for Jesus' sake. **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; J.H. Newman (1801-90)

Saviour of the World (*Salvator Mundi*)

Jesus, Saviour of the world, come to us in your mercy:

we look to you to save and help us.

By your cross and your life laid down you set your people free:

we look to you and save and help us.

When they were ready to perish you saved your disciples:

we look to you to come to our help.

In the greatness of your mercy loose us from our chains:

forgive the sins of all your people.

Make yourself known as our saviour and mighty deliverer:

save and help us that we may praise you.

Come now and dwell with us, Lord Christ Jesus:

hear our prayer and be with us always.

And when you come in your glory:

Make us to be one with you and to share the life of your kingdom.

The Collect of the Day:

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross,
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 31: 31-34 (*The Promise of a New Covenant*)

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt - a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The Gospel: John 12.20-33 (*Jesus speaks about his death*)

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”
 Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”
 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder.
 Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”
 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler 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 indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Hymn

StF 273

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| <p>1. Here hangs a man discarded,
 a scarecrow hoisted high,
 a nonsense pointing nowhere
 to all who hurry by.</p> | <p>4. Life, emptied of all meaning,
 drained out in bleak distress,
 can share in broken silence
 our deepest emptiness;</p> |
| <p>2. Can such a clown of sorrows
 still bring a useful word,
 when faith and love seem phantoms
 and every hope absurd?</p> | <p>5. And love that freely entered
 the pit of life's despair,
 can name our hidden darkness
 and suffer with us there.</p> |
| <p>3. Yet here is help and comfort
 for lives by comfort bound,
 when drums of dazzling progress
 give strangely hollow sound:</p> | <p>6. Christ, in our darkness risen,
 help all who long for light
 to hold the hand of promise,
 till faith receives its sight.</p> |

words: Brian Wren (b.1936)

Reflection for Passion Sunday:

Passion Sunday signals a change of gear in the progress of Lent, as we begin to make the suffering and death of our Redeemer the chief thought and the primary focus of our worship. Traditionally statues and crucifixes in churches which possess such objects are veiled from this day onwards when the season we call Passiontide begins. Now we draw ever closer to the mystery of Holy Week and Easter.

This season has a ‘bitter-sweet’ quality about it. ‘Bitter’ because in our hymns and readings we must now dwell on the pain and suffering which Jesus endured during his last earthly days, and which culminated in the agony and dereliction of the Cross. ‘Sweet’ because, even today, we are encouraged to look beyond the shame and suffering of Good Friday and the emptiness of Holy Saturday when Jesus lay in the tomb. Even on Passion Sunday we can already sense something of the joy and victory of Easter morning when we will be able to say: *Christ is alive!... His cross stands empty to the sky.*

Some of the prayers we use during Lent reinforce this ambivalence. The collect which we used earlier specifically mentions the resurrection as well as the death of Jesus. It refers not only to his suffering on the cross but also to the power of his victory. The Gospel reading for today has references both to Jesus’ coming suffering and to his ultimate victory.

Today we remember that the Cross was a great tragedy: it was a moment of sadness, sorrow, and suffering, but we also know that it was followed by God’s victory over death.

As the writer to The Hebrews boldly asserts, through Christ's obedience and suffering "*he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him*".

Thanks be to God.

A Collect for Passiontide:

God of all-redeeming grace,
in your great love you gave your only Son
to die for the sins of the whole world.
Help us by your Holy Spirit
to worship you with reverence,
and to enter with joy into the celebration of those mighty acts
whereby you bring us life and immortality;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Music for Reflection: Passion Chorale (*Hans Leo Hassler; harmonised by J. S. Bach*)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

God of power and might and grace,
you created the universe out of nothing
and formed the human race for yourself,
that we might declare your praise.
Perverse and foolish though we have strayed,
you sought us in your love and gave your Son to be our Saviour.
We give thanks for his passion and death;
for his resurrection from the dead.
He is the Resurrection and the Life,
and all who believe in him will never die.
All praise and thanks be given to you,
God of power and might and grace,
with your Son, our Saviour, and the life-giving Spirit;
now and throughout eternity.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession:

Let us pray for the Church of God throughout the world, for...
Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for those who have power and influence
and for all who govern the nations, for...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for the powerless,
for all victims of famine and war,
and for all who strive for justice and peace, for...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for the afflicted and sorrowful
and for all who need our prayers, for...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us remember before God
those who have passed from this life in faith and obedience, giving thanks for...
Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Eternal God, through the self-offering of your Son
you have filled our lives with your presence.

Help us in our sufferings and trials
and strengthen us in our weakness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Prayer of Dedication:

Gracious God,
you gave your Son
to live and die for the world.
We offer our gifts as signs of our love
and we pray that our lives
may be used to your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn

StF 276

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

1. Follow the path on which our Captain trod,
our King victorious, Christ the Son of God:
2. Each newborn servant of the Crucified
bears on their brow the seal of him who died:
3. Led on their way by this triumphant sign,
the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine:
4. From farthest regions let them homage bring,
and on his cross adore their Saviour King:
5. O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
as thou hast promised, draw the world to thee:
6. Set up thy throne, that's earth's despair may cease
beneath the shadow of its healing peace:

words: Michael Robert Newbolt (1875-1956) and George William Kitchin (1827-1912)

The Blessing:

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

Amen.

Prayers from 'Companion to the Lectionary, Vol 10, Praying with the Scriptures': Neil Dixon © and 'The Methodist Worship Book' ©