

Hailsham Methodist Church
Worship at Home
Sunday 28th February 2021
2nd Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
To declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night (Psalm 92)

Hymn: The God Of Abraham Praise (StF 91)

Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Gracious God, once more we meet together during this season of Lent, we come in the name of Christ remembering again those lonely and testing days he endured in the wilderness.
We come recalling how deliberately he spent time there alone, reflecting on who he was and what you wanted of him.

We come reminded of the courage, the faith, and the commitment he showed during that time – qualities that were to characterise the rest of his ministry.

Gracious God, help us to use this time given to us.

May we draw closer to you through it, understanding more of your nature and our own.

May it deepen our faith, strengthen our commitment, and confirm our sense of calling as disciples.

May we learn what it means to follow Christ and what it means to serve you.

May we recognise more clearly the true cost of discipleship but equally the rewards.

May we understand more fully why you have put us here.

What you would have us do, who you would have us be, how you would have us live, and where you would have us go.

Gracious God, prepare us through this time of worship, this day, and this season, to understand and celebrate more fully all you have done for us in Christ.

And so may we love you more truly and serve you more faithfully, to the glory of your name.

Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 17:1-7,15-16

Hymn: O God Of Bethel (StF 475)

Gospel Reading: Mark 8:31-38

Reflection:

I wonder whether there could be a more apt Scripture reading for Lent? In today's passage Jesus speaks very frankly with his disciples about what the coming days will hold for him personally – suffering, rejection, death ... but also resurrection. For some of them – Peter in particular – it is too much to bear. Peter seems to be of the view that Jesus is wrong – that events cannot and must not turn out the way he describes. Perhaps Peter is simply scared and worried, and does not want Jesus to face these terrible things. Perhaps he has a different view of the role the Messiah will play – one of glory and victory, not shame and death. Whatever his reasons, Peter begins to argue with Jesus, to "rebuke" him (v. 32).

Peter's rebuke is met in kind as Jesus cries out "Get behind me, Satan!" (v. 33). It seems that Jesus will not suffer this nonsense. Whatever Peter's motivation, however well-intentioned he may be, his rebuke of Jesus amounts to nothing less than a denial of the reality that lies ahead. And to deny such a reality is to undermine it, to work against this path and what might be achieved through it. This is perhaps why Jesus' response seems so extreme.

Up to this point, Jesus has been speaking alone with his disciples, but now he widens the circle, calling the crowd to join them as he speaks about the true cost of discipleship – and what a cost! Jesus paints a picture of an all-or-nothing commitment, a challenge that will lead not only to the cross, but also to life: one cannot be gained without the other. And I find myself echoing the words of Jesus' disciples from John's Gospel: "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" (John

6:60). With his words, Jesus challenges any kind of concept of a 'comfortable Christianity' – the choice to follow Christ has real and challenging consequences, and he wants people to go in with their eyes open.

But we must be careful not to take this requirement of suffering out of context. For Mark's Gospel, the suffering experienced by Jesus' followers is caused by those who work against Jesus' mission – religious and political leaders who oppress those seeking truth. And their suffering is limited – by the imminent return of the Son of Man. Mark's emphasis on suffering does not provide a basis for Christian masochism, but instead a hope for future liberation.

To Ponder:

What do you think a 'messiah' should look like? How does Jesus compare?

What do you find most challenging about Jesus' teaching on discipleship? Why?

During Lent, is there something you should 'lose' that you might follow Christ more closely? What is it?

Hymn: And Can It Be (StF 345)

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray to our God in faith, knowing that he understands what is best for us.

Loving God, increase our faith, that everyone in your Church may be more ready to trust you and move forward with you wherever you lead us.

You speak what is true: **And the truth can set us free.**

Loving God, give to all leaders and their advisers the courage to be honest, the will to be just, the greatness to be humble and the openness to learn.

You speak what is true: **And the truth can set us free.**

Loving God, at the door of each home place your welcome; in the rooms of each home, your love; in the eyes of each person, your truth; and in all our companionship, yourself.

You speak what is true: **And the truth can set us free.**

Loving God, give comfort and healing to those who are ill, peace to the anxious and reassurance to the afraid; may we know your love for us through both the good and the agonising times.

You speak what is true: **And the truth can set us free.**

Loving God, may the dying be prepared to meet you; and those left behind be comforted by your love.

Loving God, give us thankful hearts to bless your name in sadness and in joy, knowing that you are always there beside us.

You speak what is true:

And the truth can set us free. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

We pray together as Jesus taught us: Our Father

Hymn: All My Hope On God Is Founded (StF 455)

Blessing:

May we know the faithfulness of God in our lives; may we live with the assurance we are children of God and know ourselves to be loved. And the blessing of God the three in one reside with us always. Amen.

Reflection by Anna Drew, taken from 'A Word In Time', Methodist Church website

Prayers by Nick Fawcett, Susan Sayers, compiled by Rev Barbara