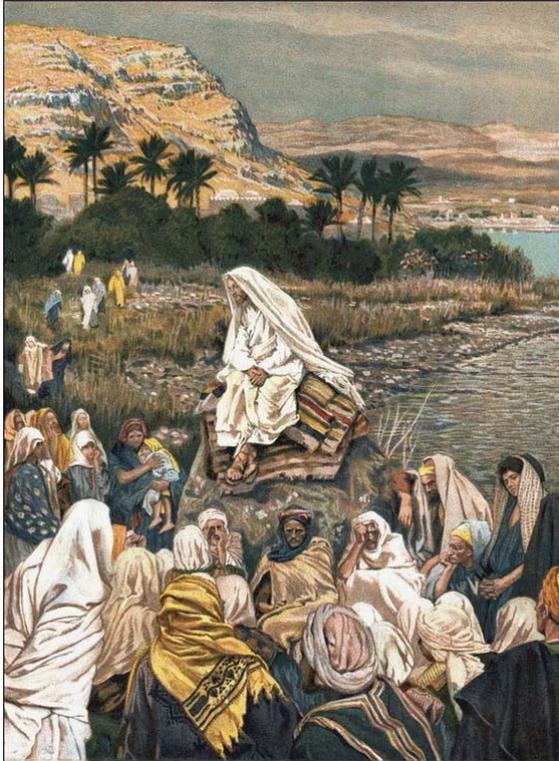


LENT BOOKLET



2021

Lent Booklet 2021

Introduction

Welcome to the Lent Booklet 2021.

Journeying through Lent with the words of Jesus

There is a page for each day throughout Lent including Sundays. Each day consists of a verse or two from scripture, the words of which are ascribed to Jesus.

The verses from scripture are followed by a short reflection and a topic for prayer.

Each day also has a challenge which is intended to encourage you to think more deeply as you travel through Lent with the words of Jesus. It is by no means imperative to attempt all the challenges, though it would be good if you did, but simply choose the ones that you think would be most beneficial for you. The challenges are for your own personal journey and it is not intended that you share any of the results to the challenges unless you think it would be helpful to do so.

It is intended that this booklet will provide food for thought and enrichment for your Lenten journey. I pray that you will enjoy the time spent reading, praying and attempting the challenges

May I wish you a blessed and Spirit filled Lent.

Revd. Michael, Editor.

Ash Wednesday 17/02/21

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Jesus Christ, John 3:16-17

Reflection

We might find it hard to believe but God loves the world. God loves what God has made, even though the world has in so many ways rejected him. This for many people poses something of a problem as they find it hard to believe in a compassionate God, who goes on loving despite the world being far from the perfection God imagined when he first created it. In giving us his Son God was not only demonstrating the depth of his love for us, which is beyond our understanding, he was also giving us a way back to the perfection he created us for. We can choose to accept his gracious offer or not. But, know this, our decision does not determine whether or not God loves us, only how we experience that love. God is saving the world. Because God loves the world.

Prayer: Pray for a peaceful and spiritual Lent.

Challenge: Find a palm cross from a previous year and safely burn part of it to provide enough ash to be able to mark an ash cross on your forehead.

Thursday 18/02/21

“Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:43-47

Reflection

As I get to thinking about these few verses of scripture I am forced to consider what sort of challenge they pose for me? Is it even possible for me to love my enemies?

Jesus even loved those who were crucifying him. Am I really called to be like him? How easy will I find it to actually pray for whoever has hurt me, to wish them well, wish them peace and healing?

Prayer: Pray for those you consider your enemies.

Challenge: Using the space below make a list of those who you feel have harmed you and prayerfully forgive each of them in turn.

Friday 19/02/21

“And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Jesus Christ, Luke 11:9-10

Reflection

Jesus said this, to encourage persistence in prayer, whilst promising that all those who ask in Christ's name, with faith, will be rewarded with positive answers to their prayers. Not because they deserve, or have earned them, but according to the riches of the grace of God; who is rich unto all that call upon him, in sincerity and truth.

Prayer: Pray for an answer to your prayers.

Challenge: Using the space below make a list of the prayers you are waiting for an answer to and determine to be persistent in praying for them.

Saturday 20/02/21

"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Jesus Christ, Matthew 19:26

Reflection

This statement comes after Jesus had explained that it was hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God and was asked by the disciples "who then can be saved?" (Mt 19:25) Jesus gave them one of those looks and said, '**With man this is impossible,**' The reality is that it is particularly difficult for a wealthy person to give up the trappings of this world, money, position and status and follow Jesus. This is one of the reasons, I believe, that Christianity continues to grow in third world countries where people have less to give up, and declines in the more wealthy western world. Difficult but not impossible for **with God, all things are possible.**" With God even the well off can have a change of heart because if something is his will, nothing can stop it from happening.

Prayer: Pray for those who are faced with a seemingly impossible situation.

Challenge: Write a short prayer for God's help when facing an impossible situation.

Sunday 21/02/21

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:10

Reflection

At first glance this seems to be a strange saying: the idea that the righteous should suffer, merely because they are such, and that they are blessed by their Father. This is an idea that is completely alien to how we think things should be. But such is human nature that every thing of God and the Christian faith is mocked and ridiculed by many in today’s world and throughout history Christians have had to suffer persecution in one form or other, many suffering torture and death. The blessing comes from the fact that those who suffer because of their loyalty to the kingdom of heaven are rewarded by being bound more closely to that kingdom for which they suffer and to where their future lies.

Prayer: Pray for those Christians who are being persecuted.

Challenge: In the space below write about one blessing you have received so far this Lent.

Monday 22/02/21

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Jesus Christ, John 10:27-30

Reflection

We *know* that God is always with us, but there are certain times when it is easier to accept this than others. Let's face it, when we feel hurt, rejected, unloved, or lost it can be very difficult to hear God's voice. Likewise, when we are subject to various temptations or we fail to come to God in times of need, we may end up feeling distanced from him. The truth is we all make mistakes, but absolutely nothing we may confess could make God love us less. Truly, we are His children and no person, no temptation, no sin, can ever take that away from us. God doesn't expect us to be perfect, but he does expect us to try. And so, as long we get up and try. And try. And try once more to be mindful of this presence throughout the course of our lives, we will be rewarded by the Father with everlasting life.

Prayer: Pray for those who are feeling lost and alone.

Challenge: On one of the blank pages at the back of this booklet draw a depiction of the above bible verses.

Tuesday 23/02/21

“Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus Christ, Mark 10:42-45**Reflection**

The Church on earth is called by Jesus to share his life, his values and live as he does, not to have top places, even if there were such things in his service. People may look at the church with its hierarchy of Vicars, Archdeacons, Bishops and Archbishops etc. and wonder about how that fits with our Lord’s teaching. Let me explain, the above titles refer to the job a priest does not to the position of the priest in the sight of God. For all priests are equal in his sight, from the lowliest NSM to the Archbishop of Canterbury, a priest is a priest. To lead as Jesus did is not to exercise power and control, as the world understands it, but to appeal to the heart, to uncover where God is to be found. I thank God for those who have been leaders for me. My prayer is that I may be the same to others.

Prayer: Pray for those called to the ordained ministry.

Challenge: Perform an act of service and record it below.

Wednesday 24/02/21

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Jesus Christ, John 3:3

Reflection

There used to be a habit amongst certain evangelical groups to challenge other Christians by asking them if they had been born again, inferring that a ‘yes’ to that question put them on a higher level to other followers of Christ. If the truth be told, however, every Christian who is serious about being a disciple of Jesus Christ is born again. Every time we come together as a community to hear the word of God, to offer our prayers and thanksgiving, to share Holy Communion and then to be sent in to the world, we can be born again. To be born again is to have a renewed sense of our place in God’s scheme of things and our role in bringing others closer to our Lord. May we all find each shared Holy Communion be an experience of being born again as Christ’s disciples.

Prayer: Pray for those preparing for baptism or confirmation.

Challenge: In the space below write the names of your Godparents, those who you are a Godparent to and those who are Godparents to your children. Remember them all in prayer, including those you can’t bring to mind.

Thursday 25/02/21

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus Christ, John 14:6**Reflection**

This particular verse of scripture comes at the end of one of the most popular readings used at funerals (John 14:1-6). And it is easy to see why. In one short verse we not only have a summary of who Jesus is but also his purpose. When we get lost in the uncertainty brought about by bereavement he offers us a sure pathway to guide us through our time of grief, for He truly is the way the truth and the life. His gentle voice speaks to us in many ways: through friends and strangers, and through the voice of conscience within ourselves, encouraging us and leading us on to bring us to a place of certainty and peace.

Prayer: Pray for the recently bereaved.

Challenge: Remember those who you have loved and lost and write below the line from a hymn or from scripture that brings you comfort.

Friday 26/02/21

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 6:33

Reflection

What does it mean to seek God’s kingdom? First of all ‘seeking’ suggests an eager search for something you desire, it is trying to find something that means a lot to you. In this case it’s what we pray for every time we say in the Lord’s Prayer “Thy Kingdom come” when we are in fact asking that God’s rule would be present on Earth as it is in Heaven. Seeking His righteousness means we must look to search out His Divine will in everything we do. We shouldn’t conform to earthly standards of righteousness, as they are bound to fall well short of those required by God. If, however, we do all that we can to seek His Kingdom and His Righteousness before all else then God’s word to us is that “All these things will be added unto you” which refers to the blessings that we will receive if we make seeking His Kingdom and His Righteousness our priority. God will reward us for our faithfulness.

Prayer: Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Challenge: Think of someone you would like to invite into God’s Kingdom. Write their name below and pray for them.

Saturday 27/02/21

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:16

Reflection

The purpose of light is to break into the darkness and enable us to see those things that would otherwise be hidden in the shadows. That is why Jesus includes this teaching in his Sermon on the Mount, to encourage his followers to let their good deeds shine like bright lights in a dark and selfish world drawing into sharp contrast the generosity of the kingdom with the priorities of the world. In the same sermon, Jesus directs his disciples to give, pray, and fast in secret, so as not to flaunt their good deeds before others in order to be seen. The key here is credit. Who gets the glory when our righteousness is noticed by others? Sometimes we may be praised by men for what we do for God. Fine. But it's what is in our hearts in doing the deed that matters. Everything Jesus did and taught pointed to the Father, everything we do and say should do the same.

Prayer: Ask God to help you shine in his service.

Challenge: Light a candle and place it in a window (don't forget to put it out).

Sunday 28/02/21

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 12:50

Reflection

This is one of those moments in Jesus' ministry that is full of drama and meaning. Think how you would feel if your son, daughter or sibling said this. It would be hurtful I am sure. Likewise Jesus' words would no doubt have hurt his earthly family that was already having difficulty coming to terms with his ministry. On the other hand, his words would be liberating to those on the fringe of accepted society, those ignored by the religious elite, and disenfranchised by the social structure of their day. Jesus was promising that his family would be determined not by blood, or genealogy, or politics, or power, and certainly not by wealth, but by obedience to the Father. That offer still stands today and the promise is just as true for us as it was for those who first heard Jesus' words.

Prayer: Bring before God those times you have hurt or been hurt by your family. Ask God to help reconcile those times.

Challenge: Reach out to those on the fringe of society by making a pledge to one of the many charities set up to help the poor. Write the name of the charity you are going to support below.

Monday 01/03/21

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Jesus Christ, John 10:10-11

Reflection

One of the titles claimed by Jesus was "The Good Shepherd". Now a good shepherd knows his own flock and is willing to lay down his life for them. We who claim the name of Christ in calling ourselves Christians are called to follow his example in serving our flocks, our communities and our parishes. It is through a willingness to sacrifice our time and talent, patience and understanding for another. God knows us and he calls us by name. As we may look to various Godly people to learn from them, others look at us and learn from us. We may sometimes forget this, but we are each leaders in our own way. The church that will emerge following the pandemic will be forged by those with the courage to be true to "The Good Shepherd." There will be crisis and there will be need, but there will always be good people standing behind us.

Prayer: Give thanks for those who have been a 'good shepherd' for you on your Christian journey.

Challenge: Read Psalm 23 and pick out a few of the words that you find most helpful. Write them below.

Tuesday 02/03/21

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Jesus Christ, John 16:33

Reflection

Jesus had just been talking to the disciples about His forthcoming suffering and death and the fact that at that crucial time they would all desert him. This can't have been easy listening for them. Perhaps that is why Jesus immediately followed this shocking news with the words of comfort recorded in John 16:33. In this verse, we see the two great truths of the Christian faith. Firstly, following Jesus isn't always going to be easy, we will all have our own crosses to bear, discipleship often includes sacrifice. Secondly, that being said, we shouldn't be overly concerned because Jesus has already won the victory. Following Jesus is never going to be an easy ride. There will be opposition. Yet, the reality of Christ's victory over sin and death via his own death and resurrection provides peace and courage in the midst of that opposition.

Prayer: Pray for peace in your life and the life of others.

Challenge: Complete the acrostic below

Prayer

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Wednesday 03/03/21

“For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 23:12

Reflection

It is common in this day and age for people to chase after prosperity, position and power. The Christian identity however is that of humility and servanthood. True greatness is not to be found in these earthly symbols of success, but in the heavenly ones of love, kindness, grace and serving the needs of others, as Jesus did. Jesus exemplified this for the disciples, and for us, when at the Last Supper, he tied a towel around his waist and taking a bowl of water, knelt to wash the disciples feet. Many people and cultures honour the earthly idea of success, wealth, and the pretence of self-importance. Sadly I fear their journey through life will only end in disappointment. Let us pray, not for earthly success, but for humility and a willingness to serve. May we be assured that in being least, God will raise us up – the only promotion that matters!

Prayer: Pray for generosity and grace in dealing with others.

Challenge: Find a definition of ‘Humility’ that reflects your understanding of the term and write it below.

Thursday 04/03/21

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Jesus Christ, Matthew 22:36-40

Reflection

Jesus gave the above answer to a question put to him by a lawyer in order to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" In giving this answer Jesus is saying that these two commandments are complementary and inseparable. In other words, it is not possible to love God and not love your neighbour and vice versa. Jesus is also saying that as long as one truly loves God and neighbour, the rest of the Law will take care of itself. And there may even be times when such love will transcend and override the requirements of some laws. No truly loving act can ever be sinful. Where do we stand when it comes to loving ourselves, loving our neighbour?

Prayer: Thank God for his love and ours.

Challenge: Find the following statement in the Bible: "We love because he first loved us". Note the chapter and verse below.

Friday 05/03/21

“Don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 6:34

Reflection

Jesus tells us not to worry, but that is easier said than done. Especially at the present time beset as we are by the Covid-19 pandemic, the related economic crisis and the resulting unemployment and mental illness. Anxiety, worry, distress, agitation, tension, irritability. These are common feelings at the present time and they can affect our outward look on life, our decision making, and ultimately the direction of our lives. Jesus, however, does not want us to be anxious and full of worry. He wants us to live life in a different manner. He does not want us making decisions based on a fear of the future. He wants the direction of our lives established on eternal truths rather than the things of this world. The truth that we are precious to God, he loves us and nothing can snatch us from his hand. The truth that in Jesus Christ sin and death have been defeated. All this means we have absolutely nothing to worry about!

Prayer: Pray for those who are anxious about the future.

Challenge: Find out how many times we are told not to fear/worry in the bible. Choose one and write it below.

Saturday 06/03/21

"You have said it. And in the future, you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jesus Christ, Matthew 26:64

Reflection

You have said it. That is, you have spoken the truth in asking that question. Our Lord only breaks his silence to affirm his divinity under oath. It ensured his death at their hands, for he was immediately condemned for the declaration. At the very crisis point of his life on earth, when denial would have saved him from terrible suffering and death, he asserts his claim to the Divine Sonship and to a Godlike power. Sitting at the right hand of God, is claiming the greatest power: for the right hand signifies among the Hebrews that which is mighty and of great power. What courage, what determination? How ashamed should we be for denying our calling?

Prayer: Pray for discernment in hearing God's call on your life.

Challenge: Look back to when you first heard God's call and in a few words describe below how you first heard it.

Sunday 07/03/21

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Jesus Christ, Mark 8:34

Reflection

Jesus doesn't want his disciples, or us, to be mistaken about the cost of following him which will involve self denial and self sacrifice. To deny oneself, in this context has nothing to do with the kind of 'self-denial', where we might give up this or that, now and again, as many people do during Lent for example. No, in this case it is a shedding of all selfishness, it is nothing less than total surrender of our own wishes and personal desires. It is offering our entire life as a living sacrifice, which is set apart for God and remains holy to the Lord. It is disassociating ourselves from our own wishes and personal desires, and living life with a divine perspective, where we are willing to say, not my will but Thine be done.

Prayer: Pray for the courage to pick up and carry your cross.

Challenge: In the space below draw a cross and write on it a word that expresses how you feel about the cross.

Monday 08/03/21

“Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

Jesus Christ, Mark 11:24-25

Reflection

The challenge of forgiveness affects us all, firstly in our willingness to forgive others and secondly in being able to accept forgiveness when it is offered to us. God’s forgiveness of all our transgressions is the root of all other blessings. Our failure to forgive means that we can remain unreconciled to God and our prayers may go unheard. How can we expect the forgiveness of God, against whom we have all surely sinned multiple times, if we refuse to forgive our fellow human beings who have offended us far less. In the case of human beings forgiveness often benefits the forgiver more than the forgiven.

Prayer: Ask God to help you to be more forgiving of others.

Challenge: Make a list of people you need to forgive and then ask God to help you do it.

Tuesday 09/03/21

“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way, your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 18:12-14

Reflection

We should never grow accustomed to this parable. It is the most astonishing suggestion you could imagine. Modern business and to a certain extent the church too, would focus on the 99, seeing that as being the best use of their time and efforts. Jesus, however, changes our focus away from the 99 to the one possibly ourselves or at least that part of us that wants to do our own thing, go our own way, even when it is self-destructive. Many a parent has learned the hard way that it is only love that will save the lost sheep. What do you think? Let us cling to that last assurance: “It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should be lost.”

Prayer: Pray for those who may be feeling lost and distanced from God.

Challenge: Find out the name of a breed of sheep that are most at risk and in danger of being lost.

Wednesday 10/ 03/21

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Jesus Christ, John 4:13-14

Reflection

Our Saviour in his reply justifies the excellency of that living water, which he had already declared to be in his power to give, and his readiness to have given it to this woman, if only she had asked him for it. The point Jesus was making is that no person could permanently satisfy their thirst by drinking of the water of Jacob's well, for they would be subject to thirst again. In the case of this Samaritan woman it would seem that she had a thirst for men having had five husbands and a partner she was now living with. Such a thirst could only be assuaged by the Living Water that Jesus has to offer. Recognising her need through Jesus' gentle coaxing she asked and received the "Water of Life". What is it that we thirst for?

Prayer: Pray for those areas of our world that suffer due to a lack of clean water.

Challenge: Fill a glass with water and use it as a focus for your prayers. Try to imagine what it must be like to have insufficient water to quench your thirst. Now imagine your life without Jesus.

Thursday 11/03/21

"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

Jesus Christ, John 20:21

Reflection

Jesus knowing that His coming departure from this life would cause consternation and even fear amongst the disciples, says to them once again, 'Peace be with you;' and then 'as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' In the same way that Jesus was sent by His Father to preach the gospel to a lost and dying world and example for us what it means to truly serve God. So each of his followers are also sent by Jesus to preach the Good News of Christ to a lost and broken world - that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life - but never forget that for all who take up this challenge it is first the CROSS and then the CROWN.

Prayer: Pray that God will give you the words to tell others about the kingdom of God.

Challenge: Below make two lists one of what you would consider are the crosses of your life and the other the crowns.

Crosses

Crowns

Friday 12/03/21

“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.”

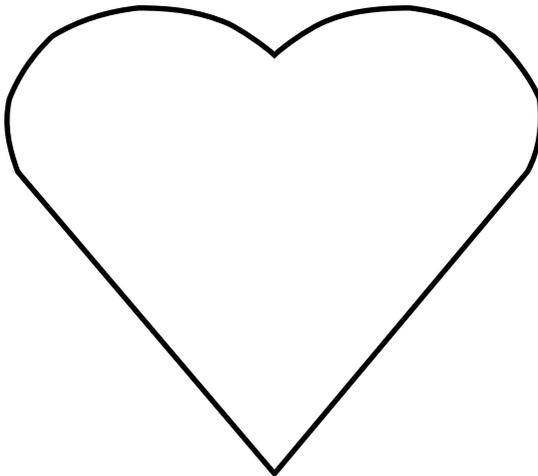
Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:12

Reflection

In many ways, the idea of doing for others what you would have them do to you along with love your neighbour as yourself summarizes Jesus' teaching to his disciples about how to live for others. It also captures the spirit of the Old Testament Law and the teaching of the prophets. In other words, living to bless others is God's will for us in all of our relationships. We are not here to live for ourselves, but to bless others in the name of Jesus. This kind of life is transformational. God can use it in ways we would never anticipate to touch the lives of others.

Prayer: Thank God for his love and ask him to help you love your neighbour.

Challenge: Decorate the heart below in a way that shows your character.



Saturday 13/03/21

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:11-12

Reflection

Jesus doesn't want his disciples to be mistaken, if they choose to follow him there will be times of trial. But having said that there is no comparison between what the followers of Jesus may suffer in his name, and the glory that shall be revealed to them; not on earth, but in heaven. Disciples of Christ must not expect their reward to be in the here and now, but in the hereafter, when God himself will be their reward; he will be their all in all. Christ and all his glory will be the reward. This has been a comfort and encouragement to Christians throughout the ages enabling them to suffer persecution of varying kinds. And it should also be a comfort and encouragement to us.

Prayer: Pray for those who are suffering because of their faith in Christ.

Challenge: Finish the acrostic below using words that reflect the above verses from scripture.

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Sunday 14/03/21

“They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Jesus Christ, Luke 5:31-32

Reflection

Jesus was the perfect Son of God who came to us in the form of a human, yet he was without sin. Jesus came to call us **all** to repent for contrary to what the Pharisees and Sadducees thought about themselves, there were no righteous people - not one, for all have sinned and all have fallen short of the glory of God. We are all sinners and we all need a Saviour.

To repent is to turn away from the things we have said and done wrong, and turn towards Jesus the only one who can forgive us our sins, our Saviour and the only mediator between us and God. However good we think we may be in comparison with other people - we are all sinners for we have fallen short of God's standard and need a saviour. On the other hand however bad we think we are in comparison to other people - Christ paid the price for all sin and for every sinner.

Prayer: Give thanks for all those who work in the NHS and ask that they will be strengthened in all they do.

Challenge: Write a short prayer for healing (four lines).

Monday 15/03/21

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."

Jesus Christ, Matthew 9:37

Reflection

Looking out over the massive crowds that have come to see Him, Jesus is filled with compassion for the people. In response to this compassion, Jesus turns to His followers and says "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."

Jesus seems to be saying that many people are ready to believe in the Good News and be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus, ever concerned for those who gathered to see him, understood that this was their greatest need. This is how they will be rescued from their harassed and helpless condition and given peace, joy and the hope of an eternal home with the Father. Everything is ready all that is needed is those willing to guide them into the kingdom.

Prayer: Pray for all those who work on the land growing, rearing and harvesting our food.

Challenge: Write below the name of five people you wish you could guide into God's Kingdom. Pray for them.

Tuesday 16/03/21

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Jesus Christ,

Matthew 11:29-30

Reflection

We all have things that weigh heavy on our hearts and minds from time to time, and when we do Jesus promises to be there for us. Jesus says the yoke that he offers us is easy. It is easy because Jesus does not leave us to carry it on our own, he promises that when we are troubled, when we are weighed down with the cares of this world, if we turn to him he will help us. The point is that a yoke is usually carried by two beasts of burden, more often than not oxen. The reason Christ's yoke is easy for us to carry is because he is carrying it with us, and taking most of the weight. Sometimes we carry heavy burdens needlessly because we feel we should be able to work things out ourselves, or perhaps because we think there is no one to help us. There is! I pray that people who are weighed down may hear the voice of Jesus. Let us take him at his word

Prayer: Pray for all those feeling weighed down by problems.

Challenge: Spend fifteen minutes in silent contemplation.

Below write one word that says something about your experience.

Wednesday 17/03/21

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Jesus Christ, Mark 10:45

Reflection

In today's world the idea of being a servant is an anathema to most people. It does not fit in with the image we have of ourselves. It is seen as being demeaning in some way. To watch, however, someone serve who does so out of love and with a sense of pride in doing it to the best of their ability is a beautiful thing. One of the most remarkable things about Jesus was that He could speak like this in true humility. He said it because it was true. Never once do we get the idea of self-conceit. Always He wanted only to please His Father and do what was right by him. He did it because of his love for his Father and for us. Are we able to follow our Lord's example?

Prayer: Ask God for the heart of a servant.

Challenge: List below the attributes you think are needed to be a true servant of the Lord.

Thursday 18/03/21

“What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Jesus Christ, Mark 8:36-38**Reflection**

Our Lord and Saviour in this passage confirms that Almighty God has entrusted each and every one of us with a soul of inestimable value and preciousness, capable of being saved or lost, and that to all eternity. That the gain of the whole world, which so many hunger for, is not comparable with the loss of one precious soul; the loss of one's soul is an inconceivable, incomprehensible, and irrecoverable loss. Our Lord's question is this, is anything worth having or clinging on to if it means losing our hope of eternal life?

Prayer: Pray for all those chasing after the false gods of this world.

Challenge: Make a list of the top ten things you would find it hard to give up and ask yourself why.

Friday 19/03/21

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 19:14

Reflection

The disciples try to prevent children coming to Jesus. Jesus' however, who always puts great store in the faith and value of children tells them to allow the little ones to come to him and not to stop them. Jesus, ever the teacher, no doubt also sees this as an opportunity to get his message across. The point is that they are always to be ready to receive those who come with a humble and childlike mind. Indeed he points out, it is to those who come to him with the humility and openness of little children that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs. Too many people come to Jesus their hearts and minds befogged by the prejudices experienced in this world. But all those who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven must come in humble submission like a little child.

Prayer: Bring before God the children of Killamarsh and Renishaw .

Challenge: Can you think back to your childhood and recall your favourite toy and then in a few words say why it was a favourite.

Saturday 20/03/21

"My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

Jesus Christ, John 18:36

Reflection

A common argument put forward against faith by those who claim to be agnostics or atheists, is that religion is the cause of violence, war and death. Historically, this is not true: in actual fact few wars in history have been caused by religious differences. With the possible exception of Islam, few religions have a history of engaging in active warfare. Further, Christ's answer to Pilate's interrogation, given here, makes it clear that violence is not part of the Christian mandate for growing or defending faith. The reason for our Lord's incarnation was not to establish a government, an empire or a political group. His role was to build a spiritual kingdom, measured not by population or geographical size, but by the love rooted in the hearts of those who believe, that is not grown by violence, but is spread throughout the world by loving example and evangelism.

Prayer: Pray for those who are imprisoned for their faith.

Challenge: Find an object (e.g. stone, shell, leaf) that says something about your faith and describe it below.

Sunday 21/03/21

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:16

Reflection

These words of Jesus suggests that his followers should let their faith be seen and known, by the things they say and do in all and every situation. The reason is that their example may influence others and encourage them to join the Kingdom of God, but first and foremost it should be that their heavenly Father may be glorified. Contrary to this the Pharisees did everything to impress people. True Christians act to glorify God, and care little what people may think of them except as by their conduct others may be brought to honour God. They should so live that people may see from their conduct what is the true nature of their faith.

Prayer: Give thanks for those in whom you first saw the light of Christ.

Challenge: Light a candle and put it in a window, let it burn for as many minutes as years you have been a Christian. (Don't forget to put it out)

Monday 22/03/21

“Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:42

Reflection

This verse is part of our Lord’s gospel of grace. It’s about giving generously, whether food, money or our time. We are to give freely, readily and cheerfully, according to our abilities, and as the necessity of the situation requires. It’s about giving and expecting nothing in return. This is not an option for the followers of Jesus. Jesus does not say give to those you think deserve it, he says “Give to everyone”. He does not say lend only to those you think will pay you back, he says “do not refuse anyone.” How do we measure up?

Prayer: Ask God to give you the gift of Grace.

Challenge: Search your heart and see what you can give to those less fortunate than yourself. List them below.

Tuesday 23/03/21

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,"

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5: 43-44

Reflection

Tax collectors were amongst the most hated and despised people in our Lord's time. They were seen as being traitors who had thrown their lot in with the Romans. They were also suspected of lining their own pockets with money gained from overtaxing their own people. But Jesus here tells them that they are to love their enemies, and if they don't they will be considered no better than those whom they despise. It was tough a lesson then, and it is now. But why does Jesus say we should love our enemies and pray for our persecutors? We are to do this because God does it, and we are called to be God's children. As God's children we are not expected to be perfect but we are expected to try and that involves loving as God loves, without exceptions or conditions.

Prayer: Thank God for his unconditional love.

Challenge: Write a short prayer thanking God for his unconditional love.

Wednesday 24/03/21

‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

Jesus Christ, Matthew 25:40

Reflection

The principle in this verse is the basis of the Christian life. The prominence given to it shows that real faith in Christ must manifest itself in Christian charity being offered to everyone. As we treat others, so we treat him. Therefore all people are to be viewed as being imbued with a spark of Christ and as such should be treated with Christian charity, for all are God’s children and as such all are precious to him. Neither should we set ourselves to judge others, for all we know they may have unconsciously been ‘blessed by the Father,’ with love in their hearts, feeling their way to Him who is Love, through acts of charity to others, even while Christ has not been made known to them. Should we not then be careful to treat everyone likewise?

Prayer: Pray for the work of Christian Aid.

Challenge: Research charities that are offering support to those living in poverty. List the top five below.

Thursday 25/03/21

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:10

Reflection

Righteousness can sometimes get lost in the plethora of churchy words that are often bandied around by Christians. It has however an important meaning. Righteousness is an essential attribute to the character of God, quite literally the one who is right. To be persecuted for righteousness sake then, is to suffer persecution for defending the very character of God.

We are not to seek persecution or deliberately provoke it by the things we say and do that may be unnecessarily offensive to others. But if, in the honest effort to try and follow in the footsteps of our Lord, others persecute and revile us, we are to consider this as a blessing. It is also evidence that we are on the right road to becoming citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Prayer: Pray for those who are being persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Challenge: Find out countries where Christians are being persecuted for their faith and list them below.

Friday 26/03/21

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Jesus Christ, John 16:33

Reflection

Jesus could see by the look on his disciples faces, that what he was telling them was hard for them to hear. There would be challenges ahead that they would not be able to cope with, not the least being his arrest, torture and crucifixion, an event that would have them running for the hills. Jesus tells them not to be discouraged, to remain strong. He reassures them that God would be there for them and for him, he encourages them to be at peace, that He will overcome the world and in time they would overcome the world too.

Do we let our failures get us down? Do we let them rob us of our peace or do we trust that with God we can overcome the obstacles and challenges that might beset us, and be an example of faith in God’s love in the world?

Prayer: Ask God to help you be a better evangelist.

Challenge: Write a mission statement for yourself.

Saturday 27/03/21

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Jesus Christ, John 8:31b-32

Reflection

"It is something of a paradox, but when we search our souls and seek out those things that we know we have done wrong, and Lent is an excellent time to do that, it really can be a freeing experience. You see, sin/guilt keeps eating away at us and deep inside we know that something is wrong. It's kind of like when you arrive at church on a Sunday morning and feel that you have forgotten something but you just don't know what it is. Did you switch the iron off, did you remember to lock the door did you set the timer on the oven? You know something is wrong, but often you just can't put your finger on it, and you won't have any peace of mind until you get home and do a thorough check. At that moment you are free from the worry of what you might have or not done. Likewise the moment we become aware of, and accept, our sin it really is a moment of grace and a wonderful sense of being set free.

Prayer: Pray for those who are captive to sin and guilt that they may be set free.

Challenge: On a separate piece of paper make a list of those things you feel guilty about. Shred or burn the list and as you do so let go of any feelings of guilt that you might have and let God set you free.

Palm Sunday 28/03/21

"If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'"

Jesus Christ, Mark 11:3

Reflection

Our Lord's words show how He can make use of all of creation, even of the lowest and the least. It was about the humble colt at Bethphage that he himself said, 'The Lord needs it.' The colt, insignificant in itself, had become necessary to our Lord at one of the great turning-points of His life; it was needed for a service unique and incomparable, which has given it a place in sacred history to the very end of time. The colt was to be part of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He would walk on cloaks and palm branches cast before him, to cheers and shouts of "Hosanna to the son of David." As our Lord moved forward surely and deliberately to give himself to those, who to-day would shout 'Hosannah!' and who to-morrow would cry 'Crucify!' 'The Lord needs it.' What might we have that the Lord needs?

Prayer: Ask God for help in discerning what you have to offer in the service of the Lord.

Challenge: On a page at the back of the book produce a drawing of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Holy Monday 29/03/21

“Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”

Jesus Christ, John 12:7-8

Reflection

Scripture couldn't be clearer: We are to help the poor, feed the hungry, and care for widows, orphans, and aliens among us. But how and to whom should we give? Generously and with grace comes the answer. But what should we give specifically and graciously to help the poor among us? And do we do so to the detriment of supporting other facets of the Lord's work? Each is important. Each can honour God. So let's not be critical of those who are able to give extravagantly to any of God's work? God knows what is in our hearts when we give, and we need to be thankful for those who give generously to honour him. Even more, we all need to be generous with the Lord and those in need! After all, Jesus himself reminds us that when we care for those less fortunate, we are actually caring for him.

Prayer: Pray for all those called to a life of prayer and contemplation.

Challenge: Light a scented candle and let the perfume fill the room and feel the embrace of God's love.

Holy Tuesday 30/03/21

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.

Jesus Christ, John 12:24

Reflection

We cannot understand the person of Jesus unless we are able to grasp the purpose and meaning of his death and resurrection. In order for it to be fruitful, a grain of wheat has to fall into the ground and die so that it will be transformed into a new plant which in time will reproduce itself many times over. This is exactly what Jesus will do. He will surrender his life through his suffering and death on the cross only to rise again in new life. Not every grain that falls to earth will bear fruit, without the tender loving care of the Saviour we will produce nothing of any worth. But fear not, he will send his Holy Spirit to nourish our hearts and souls, that we too may leave a legacy of those whose hearts and lives we have touched.

Prayer: Give thanks for the new life that arrives with Spring.

Challenge: Find some flower seeds and sow them somewhere so that you can watch them grow.

Holy Wednesday 31/03/21

“Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me”

Jesus Christ. John 13:21b

Reflection

The drama of the Passion is underway! It is a well known story of betrayal and frailty. Judas would betray his Lord and Peter would desert his friend and Saviour in his hour of need. Jesus is aware of all that is going on; he sees into the hearts of his two companions, who he himself had chosen and trusted. He sees into our hearts too.

But who are we? Surely we cannot passively stand by, a mere spectator, in the earth shattering events that will change the history of the world. Alone with Jesus for a few moments as he waits for dramatic events to unfold. What do we say to him? Do we promise, like Peter, that we will remain with him. Knowing that without him our lives will be worth nothing. But, and it's a big but, are we willing to lay down our lives for him?

Instead let us spend time thanking him for being so good as to lay down his life for us despite our smallness of heart. Gratitude is a great gift.

Prayer: Ask God's forgiveness for the times you might have let him down.

Challenge: Make a list of the things God has done for you in the past week.

Maundy Thursday 01/04/21

“You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

Jesus Christ, John 13:7

Reflection

“You do not know now what I am doing.” Peter knew that Jesus was about to wash his feet and those of the rest of his disciples. At first Peter refused to let Jesus do it because he did not understand the meaning and mystery of it, what Christ intended by it, and what instruction they were to receive from it. Later he would when Jesus explained it to him. This may teach us, that when we too find ourselves in situations that it is hard to understand, to trust the Lord, to make things clear and plain to us, in his own good time, and in the mean time patiently submit to the divine will.

Prayer: Prayer for patience and faith when waiting on the Lord.

Challenge: Write down those things you find it hard to understand and ask God to bring clarity to each situation.

Good Friday 02/04/21

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Luke 23:34:

Verily, I say unto you today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.

Luke 23:43:

Woman, behold thy son. Behold thy mother

John 19:26–27:

My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34:

I thirst.

John 19:28:

It is finished

John 19:30

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit

Luke 23:46:

The final words of Jesus Christ from the Cross.

Challenge: Spend five minutes contemplating each of these words from the Cross

Holy Saturday 03/04/21

“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

Jesus Christ: John 20:15

Reflection.

As we listen to the Easter Story, we can't help but wonder how Mary Magdalene and the others who went to the Tomb had forgotten what Jesus had said about being put to death and rising from the dead, on the third day. Not only words but the many signs that pointed to this day, Jesus had performed his first miracle on the third day of the wedding at Cana, for example.

The great gifts of Easter are hope and faith. Hope: which makes us have that confidence in God, in his ultimate triumph, and in his goodness and love, which nothing can shake. Faith: the belief that Christ has triumphed over evil despite appearances and that the Resurrection is the definitive act in human history.

So, we celebrate the mystery of the Resurrection, proclaim our faith and hope, and give thanks for these gifts

Prayer: Thank God for the Joy of Easter.

Challenge: Look back over the challenges set in this booklet and choose one to attempt again.

Blank pages for notes and drawings.

