



The Fourth Sunday before Lent 9th February 2025

In the name of the + Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

HYMN

Come, let us join our cheerful songs
with angels round the throne.
ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
but all their joys are one.

"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,
"to be exalted thus!"
"Worthy the Lamb," our hearts reply,
"for he was slain for us!"

Jesus is worthy to receive
honor and power divine;
and blessings more than we can give,
be, Lord, forever thine.

Let all that dwell above the sky,
and air, and earth, and seas,
conspire to lift thy glories high,
and speak thine endless praise!

The whole creation join in one,
to bless the sacred Name
of him who sits upon the throne,
and to adore the Lamb.

Introduction to confession

God of compassion,
you have willed that the gate of mercy
should always stand open for your people.
Look upon us with your mercy
that we who are following the path of your will
may continue in it to the end of our lives.

Hear our confession and heal us.

Lord God,
we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us
and restore us to the joy of your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Absolution

May God of mercy cleanse you from your sins,
and restore you in his image + to the praise and glory of his name,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect

Lord of the hosts of heaven,
our salvation and our strength,
without you we are lost:
guard us from all that harms or hurts
and raise us when we fall;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

A Reading from The Old Testament Isaiah 6. 1-8

⁶ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Psalm 138

¹ I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.

² I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,
for you have so exalted your solemn decree
that it surpasses your fame.

³ When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me.

⁴ May all the kings of the earth praise you, LORD,
when they hear what you have decreed.

⁵ May they sing of the ways of the LORD,
for the glory of the LORD is great.



The LORD
will perfect
that which
concerneth
me: thy
mercy, O
LORD,
endureth for
ever: forsake
not the works
of thine own
hands.
- Psalm 138:8 (KJV) -

⁶Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly; though lofty, he sees them from afar.

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.

You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.

⁸The LORD will vindicate me;
your love, LORD, endures forever—
do not abandon the works of your hands.

**A reading from the New Testament
1 Corinthians 15. 1-11**

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ²By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance¹: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

⁹For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown?
Will you let my name be known
Will you let my life be grown in you
And you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
If I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
And never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you
And you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
If I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
And never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean
And do such as this unseen
And admit to what I mean in you
And you in me?

Alleluia, alleluia.

Through the Good News God called us to share
in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke
Glory be to thee O Lord

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

5 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. **2** He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. **3** He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. **7** So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" **9** For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, **10** and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." **11** So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Reflection

Isaiah, faced with God's glory should have died. Recall the number of instances where God warns the people to stay apart; his glory will overwhelm. "Holy, holy, holy" is what Isaiah hears, there is something about holiness we barely understand. Recall how God warns the people not to go near the mountain as Moses receives the Law lest they die, and the restrictions on the High Priest who could enter the most holy place in the Temple only in a manner prescribed by God, lest he die.

Is God some sort of brutal power? No, but something so 'other' that in the presence of which we might cease to be. Indeed, this is what Isaiah says of himself, "Woe is me for I am undone." In the King James version this is most correctly translated, the root meaning being - I cease, am completely cut off, destroyed, silenced. 'Undone' indeed, a much better translation than the NIV 'ruined' and the rather tame NRSV "I am lost." If you are lost there is the hope of being found but undone? There is none.

One minute Isaiah is a man of unclean lips and undone, the next he is someone whose guilt is taken away, whose sin is forgiven and who presses to offer himself for God's purposes.

Scripture has many of these instances. A person meets with some sort of 'event' that is shattering and life changing, deep enough for Isaiah's words to have resonance, "I am undone." A significant change occurs that shifts them from one place, one self-understanding, to another. It can seem like a death.

In the Lord of the Rings, there is a scene where the Wizard, Gandalf, in fighting a great demon in order to save the others, is swept into an abyss by the last shreds of the demon's life. He falls into this deep darkness. Later in the story he reappears; Gandalf, but greatly changed.

Death and rebirth are repeated themes in our lives. There is an 'event', the ending of one way of being. It can be sudden and traumatic or prolonged like the adjustment to retirement after work that defined us, or adjustment to disability, or the breakdown of a relationship. At its very worst it can be a rapid descent into darkness or if better, a gradual loosening, we let go, as we can no longer hold on.

We fall. We think it is awful, terrible, but it is also a new and sometimes a necessary, beginning. People of faith sometimes speak of finding that 'underneath are the everlasting arms of God'. We are always held.

Generally, the ups and downs of life are never quite that extreme, but they do happen. We speak of mountain-top experiences and valley experiences, but most of the time we live between the two.

In nature, nothing much if anything, grows on a mountain. The verdant growth takes place in the valley. But of course, whilst hacking our way through the thick growth of 'trouble and distress' we don't see it like that; indeed, we don't see very far at all. It is with hindsight and when we have regained some 'higher ground' that we can see how we have changed. Most often the valley experiences are where we make the most growth. Jesus understood that *"What you learn in the darkness, proclaim from the housetop."*

Some people can speak of their lives as being divided into distinct stages. Most often the first is the one we build – the ego mountain, defining ourselves. Then there is the descent into the depth of the valley from which we then ascend or rather allow ourselves to be recreated having gained insight and wisdom and beginning to see differently.

What Isaiah saw was a shattering moment, "Woe is me for I am undone." But it was where God needed him to be. The vision brought not fear and death, but devotion and service.

Paul writes of the dramatic change that occurred to him when he encountered the risen Christ. In a moment he is turned from a persecutor to a follower. *'Last of all...he appeared also to me. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain.'*

Peter in the gospel reading has a similar experience to Isaiah, but also receives similar comfort, *"Do not be afraid."* And a similar commissioning; he and the others will leave their boats and step into the unknown.

I am sure Isaiah, Paul and Peter each felt inadequacy for the task before them. But where God calls, he also equips and history bears witness. However, none of them was unprepared. In each there was the seed of what might be. Isaiah the prophet alert to God at a time of national drama; Paul, steeped in the scriptures awaiting the Christ; local fishermen to whom Jesus was no stranger and who had begun to wonder if he was the Christ.

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Intercessions

Let us pray to God the Father,
who has reconciled all things to himself in Christ:

For peace among the nations,
that God may rid the world of violence
and let peoples grow in justice and harmony

For those who serve in public office,
that they may work for the common good

For Christian people everywhere,
that we may joyfully proclaim and live our faith in Jesus Christ

For those who suffer from hunger, sickness or loneliness,
that the presence of Christ may bring them health and wholeness

Go before us, Lord, in all we do
with your most gracious favour,
and guide us with your continual help,
that in all our works, begun, continued and ended in you,
we may glorify your holy name,
and finally, by your mercy receive everlasting life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Amen

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty, +
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMN

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me

He left His Father's throne above—
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!

'Tis mystery all: the' Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.