

21st March 2021 6 pm Lifted up, Jesus will draw all to Himself

Led by Andrew Attwood. Talk by Andrew Attwood, Readings by Gill Palmer and John Wild, Prayers by Gill Heath

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Introduction and Notices

[Andrew:] Hello, everybody. Good evening.

[John W:] Good Evening, Andrew [Gill:] Evening, Andrew.

[Andrew:] Good to see you. It's great to have you here, good to have everybody watching for our evening service, lovely to have these faces here to help me lead the serving so thank you to the two Gills and to John. So, I will see you later for readings and intercessions. Okay? So we'll see you in a while.

[Gill:] Bye!

[Andrew:] Bye for now. So just to continue with the service outline I just wanted to describe the shape of what is going to be happening this evening. We will be following the usual words that are used for Evening Prayer. Some of you will have printed those off. If you haven't, you can find them on our website under 'Resources'. The shape of the service will include the usual words, including confession, we will be having a notice in a minute, which I'll introduce, a video notice, but we're going to have two songs, and then another interview with Simone and myself, that seemed to fit in with the theme of today's service. Following that, we'll have two readings from Gill and from John, then I'll be speaking this evening. After the Creed, Gill will be leading us in intercessions, and we'll have the Collect, the Blessing and the final song. So that's the shape of where we're going. But what I'd like to share with you now is a notice that we're sharing with all the different congregations. It's an idea from Sue Pollard as we think about Easter, so let's see this message from Sue.

An Idea for Easter from Sue Pollard

[See the 10 am service on 21st March for the text of this section: her idea of putting a simple cross out, maybe a simple message inviting people into the joy of Easter, and possibly putting some small chocolate eggs out at a sensible height.]

[Andrew:] Yeah, that's a great idea that Sue is bringing to us now, so thank you for that, Sue, and I would encourage everyone to have a think about whether you can join in with that or not. It seems easy enough to do, and it would be a good public witness as we approach Easter.

Preparation

So now we're going to begin our service properly and we'll follow the words as usual. I'll be saying the initial words, and if you can join in with the words in bold, so let's pray.

The light and peace of Jesus Christ be with you

All **and also with you.**

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

All **Let us rejoice and sing God's praise for ever.**

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Confession

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All **Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

Absolution

So now receive the forgiveness of God.

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from our sins,
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

1st Hymn: There is a Redeemer

1. There is a redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One

Chorus:

Thank you, O my Father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving Your Spirit
'Til the work on Earth is done.

2. Jesus my redeemer,
Name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Oh, for sinners slain.

Chorus

3. When I stand in Glory
I will see His face
And there I'll serve my King forever
In that Holy Place.

Chorus x 2

2nd Hymn: The Servant King

1. From Heaven you came, helpless Babe;
Entered our world, Your glory veiled,
Not to be served but to serve,
And give Your life that we might live.

Chorus:

This is our God, The Servant King;
He calls us now to follow Him,
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King.

2. There in the garden of tears
My heavy load He chose to bear;
His heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not My will but Yours,' He said.

Chorus

3. Come see His hands and His feet,
The scars that speak of sacrifice,
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered.

Chorus

4. So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him,
Each other's needs to prefer,
For it is Christ we're serving.

Chorus x 2

Interview with Simone: Listening to God in Lockdown

[See the 10 am service on 21st March for the text of this section: to remind you, she talks about being more open to the Holy Spirit's prompting, being obedient, and the benefits of switching off the TV.]

Prayer of thanksgiving

Blessed are you, sovereign God, our light and our salvation;
to you be glory and praise for ever.

You led your people to freedom
by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

May we who walk in the light of your presence
acclaim your Christ, rising victorious,
as he banishes all darkness from our hearts and minds.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

Opening prayer

The day is almost over, and the evening has come;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your Spirit come down upon us to set us free to sing your praise
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

1st Reading: Hebrews 5:5-10

5 In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

‘You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.’

6 And he says in another place,

‘You are a priest for ever,
in the order of Melchizedek.’

7 During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

2nd Reading: John 12:20-33

20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus.’ 22 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

23 Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

27 ‘Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour”? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!’

Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

30 Jesus said, ‘This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ 33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Sermon

[Andrew:] Thank you, John. Thank you, Gill, thank you for the readings. These are very poignant readings as we head into this season of nearly at Holy Week, heading towards the most serious, if you like, the most intense phase of the church's calendar. This is a window, I find, into how Jesus was feeling about what God had called Him to do. In that passage that Gill read, we get a glimpse from the author to the Hebrews of Jesus' prayer life which included crying and tears. It's an interesting thought: I don't know what pictures you have in your mind when you're thinking Jesus on prayer life, but according to this passage in

Hebrews, there is an aspect in His practice of fervent praying, and it says, "to the God who could save Him from death."

It's intriguing to tease out what that might be referring to. It sounds in my mind as though He was pointing perhaps to a sequence of things that happened through Jesus' earthly ministry. We know right at the beginning of His three-year public ministry, He began it in the wilderness, which was clearly a stressful and challenging testing time. And that must have yielded intense praying from Jesus Christ, but it also gives us a clue towards the end of His ministry. We will be thinking of the conflicts He had during those three years with different kinds of parties, often religious leaders, but also the intensity of Gethsemane. As we think towards Holy Week and as we think towards the evening after the Last Supper, we know that they headed, Jesus and the Twelve, headed to Gethsemane, and Jesus is emotional, broken to the point of sweating blood, praying alone at a distance, crying out to His Father. It does say in the Hebrews passage that this was to do with His reverent submission. There is an element there that we picked up in Simone's story to do with obedience, hearing God and doing what God was saying, and something about reverently submitting to what God the Father was asking Jesus to do. It also talks about the idea of this suffering experience having an effect of perfecting Him in some way, through His obedience. These are challenging words to understand when we're talking about the Son of God, but there is something profound and mysterious about Jesus engaging in prayer and wrestling in prayer, like we do, like ordinary humans do, when faced with challenges.

I wonder what your response to that is. It made me remember something from maybe about a year ago, some of you will remember, way before lockdown, how our good friend Robert McGregor, who was the guy who was homeless, he stayed behind the church for quite a period of time. We got to know him and he became a friend to us and we spent time working on helping him with doctors, and just trying to work out getting him some kind of accommodation, and then to all of our surprise, just at the point of him having somewhere to stay, he went downhill, and was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I can remember, along with a few others who were close to him, feeling that strange sense of imminent loss, because, you know, we were the ones who were going to have to agree with the doctors that Robert would need to have his life support switched off. And we visited him, we held his hand, and we talked and we prayed, and we said our goodbyes. There was something extremely moving about the privilege of knowing him for a short time, knowing also that he'd explored faith and kind of had a renewal of faith, even coming to new faith, and him being like a brother that we had just met, and now we were going to have to say goodbye. This passage in Hebrews gives me a remembrance of the kind of the tearing feeling that you get when someone is going, and you're not going to see them any more. There's something agonising about that.

So when I move now to the Gospel reading, we find Jesus now, explicitly anticipating what God is going to ask of Him. You have this intriguing dynamic at the start of the passage in John 12, where it talks about the Festival, and some Greeks coming to have a conversation with Jesus. They first of all talk to Philip and Philip talks to Andrew and they organise, if you like, a little bit of an exchange with Jesus. There's a bit of confusion over who these Greeks are: some people think they're Hellenistic Jews, some people think no, they're actually pure Gentile Greeks, who were wanting to find out about Jesus, because they've heard about Him via reputation. We're unclear, we're not sure, but their coming to Jesus appears to be a trigger for Him to think soberly about what is about to happen very soon. As soon as they come anywhere near Him, He shares that famous line¹,

24 "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."

1 John 12:24-25 [NRSV]

And He goes on to say,

25 "Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

So there's something triggered by this visit of people who were beyond the nation of Judaism. There's something, I think, that awakens up in Jesus' mind saying, "Now is the time when I do the thing that is going to be for Israel, but actually for the whole wide world, the great world and beyond." And He talks in terms of death.

This sharp phrase that He says at the end of that little passage I read about hating your own life in this world, so that you might gain eternal life, is in such sharp contrast to the spirit of our age. The spirit of our age says, "Seek your heart's desire, hear your own voice, do what pleases you, do what feels natural to you, be authentically you and live it out." And yet here we have the Son of God saying the very opposite: He's saying, "The call of God is to empty yourself, to lay down your life." It's fascinating to think that this was not just theory, some academic conversation: it had emotional import on Jesus. It says in verse 27, "Now my soul is troubled." If you look carefully at the Greek wording for the word 'troubled', it is a word to do with being terrified or agonised; deeply, deeply disturbed, and Jesus the man is saying, "I am absolutely fraught with this and disturbed by this." And He goes on to say, "But what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this very reason that I have come to this hour." And He says, "Father, glorify Yourself." Jesus knew from the outset that the destiny of His ministry was going to be the Cross. We get glimpses of this all the way through the Gospel accounts, where Jesus knows that the destination is not going to be a throne with a golden crown; it's going to be a cross with a crown of thorns, and He is resolute about that. He's fixed in His mind that this is necessary, but here in this passage in John, we do get a glimpse that's parallel to that sense of feeling you get in the Hebrews passage that Jesus feels the weight of it, like any ordinary human being would.

Let me just tease out a few thoughts that have to do with that. Some people have wondered why would someone of the character of Jesus, why would the Son of God be so fragile, compared to other people in history who seemed to face death bravely and without even the smallest bleating noise? Why would Jesus be so upset, when we think of the kind of things that He said, and prayed when He was in Gethsemane and sweating blood and saying, "Father, take this hour from Me. Can't you pass this cup away from Me?" Why would the Son of God, who was obviously the strongest, most courageous person in the world, why would He be so fragile at this particular point in His earthly life and ministry? We already know from earlier messages in Jesus' teaching that He was not afraid of what human beings can do to you. His wonderful piece of teaching in Matthew where He says, "Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body." He says, "Rather be afraid of the one who after the body is dead, can throw your body and soul into hell." Jesus was courageous over the whole idea of what anyone could do to His body, so something else must be behind His fears, something else must be behind His agonising.

Can we just skim forward for a moment and remember some of the words that Jesus said when He was on the Cross. Perhaps most poignantly, perhaps most painfully, He quotes one of the Psalms², and He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" All the way through Jesus' ministry, particularly in John's gospel, you hear Jesus talk to God, and call Him 'Father'. There is something profoundly intimate about the way Jesus relates to Father God, it's a daddy-child relationship, there's intimacy there, there's friendship there, there's care, there's mutual trust there. And yet when Jesus was on the Cross, He doesn't say Father in quite the same way, not until

2 Psalm 22

the very end. He quotes this psalm verbatim and He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" I think that's the clue. Jesus was anticipating the Cross, knowing that on the Cross, He would feel separation from God, He would feel distanced from His Heavenly Father for the first time in all eternity. Now I'm here, talking about this as though it's an interesting subject, but we cannot ever plumb the depths of what this would have really meant for the Son of God. The intimacy and connection between the Son of God and God the Father is the most precious relationship in the cosmos. Forever from eternity: it is what all relationships are modelled on. And so when Jesus was contemplating death on a cross, it wasn't simply to do with nails or lashes or piercing. It was to do with separation. And it agonised His soul, because He loved His Father so much. I want you to think for a moment: Jesus contemplated the great loss of what He was heading to, and yet, He chose to do it anyway. What could possibly be His motivation? What could possibly deserve the separation of the Son of God? What could be more valuable than that? The only thing that could be higher than that in Jesus' mind, in the Father's heart, is the possibility of being reconciled with human beings, the possibility of bringing true forgiveness to human beings who turn to Jesus Christ. This is the price tag of our forgiveness. This is the value that God puts on us having a relationship with Him. It cost the intimacy between Father and Son.

And so we are introduced to this concept in John's Gospel of glorification. Jesus says³,

"... I have come to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

The crowd there thought it was thundering. But this was God speaking. And it's to do with the subject of glory. I don't know what comes to mind when you hear the word 'glory'. And we think of shining lights, we think of something spectacular and wonderful. We think of something beyond imagining. And yet, ironically, Jesus says, "Father, glorify Your name, through what I'm going to do," which in human terms is an extraordinarily inglorious, even disgusting thing. The true glory of God, to our amazement, is the death of the Son of God. The true glorification of Jesus and the true revelation of the Father is the death of the Son for the sake of those who are out of relationship with God. This is so profound, it's almost impossible to truly get our heads round. How does this work? How does this come about? Why is it so glorious? 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21⁴ says this:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Let me read that again. "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." This is the glorious transaction. This is the glorious substitution, where the innocent one, the Lamb of God, the innocent lamb, who 'sinned never', becomes the 'sin bearer', becomes the one who on the Cross, because He is the representative of human beings, is separate from God, because God can't be in the presence of sinfulness. And so He cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Jesus becomes the kind of the repository of sin on our behalf. This is what it means to glorify God, to absorb wickedness on behalf of others.

Interestingly, Jesus also knew that the manner of His death would be the means by which people will be drawn to Him. It is so contradictory. Anyone who knows anything about crucifixions would find themselves repelled by it and want to turn their face away. And yet Jesus said, "When I am lifted up, when the Son of Man is lifted up, I will draw all people to myself." It's the opposite way around, because of the purity and the love and the self-sacrifice of this death

3 John 12:27-28 [NRSV]

4 [NIVUK]

on the Cross, it becomes like a magnet, the means of drawing people to discover that God truly is love, love beyond anything that we could ever, ever imagine.

So as we contemplate the story of Jesus, heading now towards Holy Week, heading towards the climax of His whole ministry, I just wanted to encourage us this evening to try and get alongside Jesus, anticipating things. Jesus was a man made of flesh like we are. He felt things like we feel. What about you, what is it that you wrestle with? What is it that you struggle to let go of? What might it be that grieves you or makes you afraid? Jesus has been there. In fact He's been further than that. And because of that, He can sympathise. And He can lead us through all the different wrestlings and struggles that we will ever know. How might it be that we can join in in glorifying God? Jesus gives us the invitation. He says we need to also lay down our lives, lay down our preferences: that is what it means to be a follower of Christ, to forget ourselves and to focus on Him and follow Him wherever He leads us. We know, quite literally, for the vast majority of the disciples, the apostles, they followed Him to a painful end. They literally embodied following Jesus and dying like He did. To what extent is there room in your heart to be prepared to follow wherever He leads you?

I'm just going to pause now for a moment and pray. And I just want us to have a moment of quiet to reflect first, so let's be still.

Father God, we thank You for this window into the life of Jesus Christ, we thank You that we get to hear and see and even feel something of what He was going through. Lord, we will never fully understand or comprehend what He was troubled by as He anticipated the Cross. But we praise You, Father, for Him. We thank You that there is no one like Him. Father God, would you give us a heart to worship and love and know Jesus Christ. He reveals what You're like, Father. He shows us Your love. So open our hearts and our eyes, and help us to fix our whole lives on Him. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Creed

In a moment we're going to have our intercessions, but before then I can encourage you now to join with me in the words of the Creed, you'll find these on the sheets, or on the website. So we say the words of the Creed together.

All **I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

Intercessions

I'm going to hand over now to Gill, who will lead us in prayer.

[Gill Heath:]

Loving Heavenly Father, we thank You that You loved us so much that You sent Your Son to save us, and He allowed Himself to be lifted up for us. We come before You this evening, rejoicing that we can say⁵, "This is the day You have made," and that because You know each and every one of us by name, we can see our way through difficulties and happy times. We offer You ourselves in a life of service to You. Thank You for revealing Yourself through the Bible, through the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and the close personal experience that the Holy Spirit brings us. We trust in You. Human discipline always includes suffering. So thank You for the great example Jesus showed us, and we know He understands us and is with us, praying for us in any of our suffering. After all, His was the greatest suffering possible. His example of being lifted high up on the Cross for all those present to see demonstrated His great love for us.

Lockdowns in the UK have brought many difficulties and the tragedy of COVID can't be underrated, but it's also given us an opportunity to manage our time differently. Have we taken off our 'busy' badges? Taken time to appreciate the beauty of nature around us, especially at Spring, to listen to birdsong, to witness the slower pace of life walking instead of driving, to take time to speak and smile to passers-by instead of rushing along? Maybe it's a bit of a positive side.

We pray now for Your worldwide Church, especially our local churches and their hard-working clergy, their associated staff, and our young people's leaders, office staff, and those working hard to spread the Good News. We pray for those who through the use of technology make it possible for us to meet together. And so we thank You for the different gifts you give them to your people.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We think about how news spreads and its positive and negative challenges in regulating its truths, and we pray our protection over the use and abuse of social media. It's possible that we should be spending more time thinking and working out how we can make positive impacts on Your creation, acknowledging that more recently we've messed things up. We watch programmes about climate change and the way it will impact on the world's poorest communities, probably while eating our tea, but maybe don't think so much about buying local produce, or the disposal of single-use plastics. So thank You for those people who nudge at our consciences, or work hard with eco-church making us think twice about these issues. After all, in the beginning when you created the world, you looked at it and thought it was good. Perhaps we can try the no-mowing of grass that's being publicised as our small efforts for bees. We pray for our world leaders to deal with climate change well. And thank You for the impact that people like David Attenborough have had in highlighting our bad husbandry of the Earth.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We pray for all those people working and volunteering on the frontline for our benefit: the local council and councillors, those employed in the NHS, thinking about the elderly in care homes. We're so pleased that at last they can have some family and friendship contact again. We understand the impact that being locked up for so long has taken on the elderly. We pray for caregivers, for their continued loving support that has upheld that needy sector of our community. We also pray for those unmentioned sectors, the undertakers swamped with more work than usual. We pray Your protection on our police force, and commend to You those who gather in groups, that they take heed of the instructions getting by government.

5 with Psalm 118:24 [NRSV]

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We praise and thank you for all the different scientists who work tirelessly on vaccines to free us from the dangers of COVID and are indeed working on vaccines for the next pandemic. How do we say thank You?

We commend to your love those suffering from long COVID, loneliness and mental health issues, and those people stuck in poverty in all countries, including our own, as a result of COVID. And we pray for the continued success of the rollout of the British vaccination programme, and that Europe doesn't experience another huge surge of COVID infection.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We consciously bring before you our government leaders, knowing they've had to face more difficult decisions than any peacetime government. We would ask that You continue to help them make good, wise decisions and to work positively with each other, lessen their arguments for the common good in all things.

Lord, you are ever-watchful and bless us with Your gifts and provide for all our needs. So help us to build only on what pleases You.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We pray now for families, for those who've lost members during the pandemic, those who mourn alone; those who are bereft because they couldn't say goodbye, or think their family member wasn't cared for sufficiently, by having a DNR order placed on them; those whose family member is still very ill or recovering from this illness. We pray especially for people who are saddened by loneliness, those shielding and those with depression. We pray for those families having to stay in during pandemic with no outdoor spaces. We pray for the family of Sarah Everard.

Psalm 57 says⁶, "Have mercy on us, O God, have mercy, we look to You for protection. We will hide beneath the shadow of your wings, until the danger passes."

So now we pray for peace everywhere. How badly mankind treats each other instead of working in harmony. And that's throughout the world. We pray for the innocents, the families and children who have ended up in refugee camps, those who've been damaged mentally and physically, and pray that we all try to become more tolerant.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

We thank You we have come safely through this winter, however hard it's been for any of us. We acknowledge we're the lucky ones. We see the signs of spring all around us flowers shrubs and trees or shooting and look forward to our own planting. It's amazing that one bean, pea, carrot or flower seed can produce so many veg or flowers. What a miracle! What a harvest! A true sign of Your work amongst us.

And we pray for missionaries, that they also have a good harvest field.

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

6 Psalm 57:1, similar to [NLT]

We offer prayers for those who are suffering in any way: those known to us, and those only known to You. We pray for our Queen and her family during their difficult times. And we pray for ourselves during this latest lockdown and look forward to meeting up again. We pray and thank You for our continued safety and say, "Is this the time when we put aside all unnecessary worldly things, and fall down on our knees, acknowledging You as our Saviour"?

Lord, in Your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

I'm just sharing a prayer from Mother Teresa.

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Your Spirit and life, penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that my life may only be a radiance of Yours. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come into contact with may feel Your presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ
Amen.**

Collect for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

[Andrew:] Amen. Thank you, Gill. So we just continue with our final prayers, towards the end of this service. The words of the collect for today:

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 your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Can we just again have another 30 seconds or so of silence to let the message, the power of today's service, rest on our souls. 30 seconds of quiet.

And now gathering all our prayers and praises into one, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray.

**All 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.**

Blessing

So we come towards the end of our service. We will finish with a song in a moment and I'll say words of blessing, but thank you first of all, to Charlie for the tech, for the two Gills and for John, helping with the different elements of the service, and I really do pray that God would bless all who are

watching or watch later, and that they would enter into the life of Jesus, particularly as we head towards Easter time. So some words of blessing.

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

All **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

God bless you all.

3rd Hymn: And Can It Be

1. And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour'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? } x 2

2. '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. } x 2

3. 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. } x 2

4. 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. } x 2

5. No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own. } x 2

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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