**21st March 2021** **Lent 5**  **10.30 am** **Andrew**

**Call to worship**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. You desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit with in me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

**Hymn No. M.P. 495 O for a heart to praise my God**

O for a heart to praise my God,

a heart from sin set free,

a heart that always feels Thy blood

so freely shed for me;

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,

my great Redeemer's throne,

where only Christ is heard to speak,

where Jesus reigns alone;

a humble, lowly, contrite heart,

believing, true and clean;

which neither life nor death can part

from Him that dwells within;

a heart in every thought renewed,

and full of love divine;

perfect, and right, and pure, and good,

a copy, Lord, of Thine!

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart,

come quickly from above,

write Thy new name upon my heart,

Thy new, best name of love.

CHARLES WESLEY (1707-88) CCLI 150801

**Prayer and Lord’s Prayer – Kath**

Loving God

We remember today how much Christ loved us.

How much he was willing to sacrifice

and endure for our sakes.

You set before him the need to choose

between the way of self and the way of the cross,

the way of the world and the way of love,

the way of life that leads to death

and the way of death that leads to life everlasting.

We ask for more faith, more, humility more grace,

to follow where you lead us,

to trust in you always, come what may.

To offer you our praise and thankfulness

through all we do and all we are.

Lead us as you led Jesus.

When we are faced with the need to choose the right path

teach us to follow in the name of Christ.

Amen.

**Notices, Mission Prayer & Dedication of Offering**

**Reading** Jeremiah 31:31-34

**Reading** John 12:20-33

**Hymn No. M.P. 272 I have decided to follow Jesus**

I have decided to follow Jesus

I have decided to follow Jesus

I have decided to follow Jesus

no turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me,

The world behind me, the cross before me,

The world behind me, the cross before me,

no turning back, no turning back.

Though none go with me, I still will follow,

Though none go with me, I still will follow,

Though none go with me, I still will follow,

no turning back, no turning back.

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?

no turning back, no turning back.

Anon Copyright control CCLI 150801

**Sermon To serve we must follow**

There was nothing wrong with the old Covenant just that the Israelites understood it in human terms rather than God’s terms and so kept breaking it through their disobedience to God’s word. The basis of the Covenant was set out very clearly for them in the 10 Commandments so that they could understand what God expected of his chosen people yet it seemed they could not live the way God wanted them to do.

One way to perhaps understand that is to look at one of the later Laws as they developed as a nation, a rule about prayer where they were instructed to wear the words of God’s Law in little boxes fixed to their heads and their doorposts in order to always try and keep the laws in mind. It was supposed to be a good way of reminding them that their whole lives should reflect the fact that they were God’s chosen people and that prayer was central to their relationship with him. However, what God wanted them to do was not to wear them just so that they and others could see them but to hold those Laws in their hearts with a deep desire to live them out in love rather than just keep them in strict obedience to an order.

Jeremiah was looking forward to that time when the spirituality of the people would, in a sense, render the Law unnecessary because living as God required would be the natural way to behave for all the people. It was with the coming of Jesus that the vision could be fulfilled, that would be when the new covenant would come into being and it is in the last days before the Passover, he week leading up to his arrest, trial and crucifixion that we read about Jesus speaking to his disciples.

The passage began with some Greeks asking if they could see Jesus and it seems that this was the stimulus for Jesus to remind the disciples about what would happen. The message was passed from Philip to Andrew and together they approached Jesus knowing that he had a lot on his mind. John does not tell us whether or not Jesus spoke to the Greeks but uses the phrase ‘Jesus answered them’ which could mean the Greeks or just the two disciples. Who Jesus spoke to is not important but what he said is vitally important. Having constantly said that the events which were to happen in Jerusalem were some time in the future by using phrases such as ‘My hour has not yet come’ or ‘The time is not yet right’, here Jesus simply said ‘The hour has come’,

it is now, the events I told you about are about to happen. However, he did not go into detail about actual events but tried to explain the principle of what would happen with a picture those listening would be able to understand.

Unless a grain of wheat is dropped into the ground, is buried, then it cannot grow and produce many more grains and burial is a sign of something or someone having died. Death then, must come before new life and in this way Jesus death must come before his resurrection but the message to his disciples was also about their how they lived their lives too. Just as he was about to give his life for all mankind so each person is called to follow him by giving their whole lives to God through him. These are the two halves of the new covenant Jeremiah was talking about. God promising the gift of forgiveness and new life to those who in following Jesus commit themselves to him.

As we approach Easter with just Palm Sunday left as part of our Easter preparation

we know that God has kept his part of the agreement because anyone can come to him in repentance and receive forgiveness.

However, there are those who want to have control over their own lives, to do things their way, to live as they want to live, but, as Jesus pointed out, when they hang on to their worldly lives in a spiritual sense they will lose them at the end whereas those who give themselves to him will gain eternal life that will never end. In that way we have the wonderful reassurance that in following him in faith and living out that faith by serving the world in which he has set us his reward for us is to spend eternity with him. Jesus was quite clear about the commitment he was asking from the disciples

because he was absolutely clear about the commitment he was about to make himself. He was to give everything so could ask nothing less of his followers. He knew he could not ask his Father to delay or even change what was going to happen because it had to be, to defeat evil, to save mankind and bring God the glory that is rightfully his. God’s voice of approval, John tells us, was like thunder to some of those who heard it and like the voice of an angel to others and perhaps that is John’s way of symbolising the difference between those who are ready and open to listen to God’s voice and those who are not.

At this point it seems like the audience, John calls them a crowd, probably includes the disciples and the Greeks too for the message was for all people then just as it is today. But, the last verse reminds us why some doubted who he was and so were not prepared to follow him because despite his wonderful teaching and the amazing miracles that he did orthodox Jewish teaching told of a Messiah who would live forever so Jesus telling about his death and resurrection went directly against that. Even the disciples, who had no doubts he was the Messiah, struggled with what was happening and that is probably why Judas did what he did. But that was seeing things through traditional Jewish thinking based on the old covenant that Jeremiah spoke of and Jesus was about to establish the new one through his death and resurrection which is why he said ‘If anyone tries to hold on to their own life they will lose it’ because the consequences of turning their back on God, are spiritual death and separation from Him.

But for all who are prepared to follow him and his example of service then the rewards are literally out of this world and we will spend eternity with him.

**Hymn No. M.P. 346 It is a thing most wonderful**

It is a thing most wonderful,

almost too wonderful to be,

that God's own Son should come from heaven

and die to save a child like me.

And yet I know that it is true;

He chose a poor and humble lot,

and wept, and toiled, and mourned, and died,

for love of those who loved Him not.

I sometimes think about the cross

and shut my eyes, and try to see

the cruel nails and crown of thorns,

and Jesus crucified for me:

But even could I see Him die,

I could but see a little part

of that great love, which, like a fire,

is always burning in His heart.

I cannot tell how He could love

a child so weak and full of sin;

His love must be most wonderful,

if He could die my love to win.

It is most wonderful to know

His love for me so free and sure;

but ‘tis more wonderful to see

my love for Him so faint and poor;

And yet I want to love Thee, Lord;

O light the flame within my heart,

and I will love Thee more and more,

until I see Thee as Thou art.

W. W. How (1823-97) CCLI 150801

**Prayers of Intercession – Kath**

All seeing God

guide all the nations of your world

in all their plans and actions,

conflicts and disasters.

Protect the children & young people,

guide all leaders.

Help all those with responsibility for others

to share your wisdom, love and grace.

God of unconditional love

be especially present in every heart and home

in our country and community.

Help your people to cherish each other,

to challenge when justice is lacking,

to reassure when uncertainty is uppermost

and to comfort those who grieve.

Gracious God

you give us so much more

than we offer back to you.

Help each one of us to walk your way,

follow your example

and learn to open our hearts and minds

more each day

to truly walk your unconditional path of love.

We ask our prayers

through the precious name of

our Saviour, Jesus Christ

Amen.

**Hymn No. M.P. 400 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us**

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

o'er the world's tempestuous sea;

guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us -

for we have no help but Thee,

yet possessing every blessing

if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us:

all our weakness Thou dost know:

Thou didst tread this earth before us,

Thou didst feel its keenest woe;

lone and dreary, faint and weary,

through the desert Thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,

fill our hearts with heavenly joy,

love with every passion blending,

pleasure that can never cloy:

thus provided, pardoned, guided,

nothing can our peace destroy.

James Edmeston (1791-1867) CCLI 150801

**Blessing**

Go in the peace of God.

Go in the love of Christ.

Go in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

And the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

be among you and remain with you always. Amen.