**Morning Praise @ Home 18th February 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts 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** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Luke 13: 31 – end

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**Reflection from John**

When was the last time you went to bed thankful and amazed by what the day had given you, something you had not planned or foreseen?

* Maybe it was a conversation,
* a chance meeting with someone else, a moment of hope or beauty,
* a truth or insight that changed you, an experience when you felt really alive.
* Life felt larger and more real than when you got out of bed that morning.

When has life taken you completely by surprise, given you something you hadn’t expected, and you were glad for it?

I am asking about a welcoming of life, an expectancy, an attitude of wonder, an openness to come what may, the new day held something for you and you couldn’t wait to see what it was.

Life is always coming to us in unknown, unexpected, and unplanned-for ways. It’s the promise that life is breaking in on us in big ways and little ways.

In those moments we were open and available to the promise and the coming life.

That openness to life is the call of Jesus in each of our lives and what the gospel is about. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), he said.

It’s why “he set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). It’s why there are so many stories of Jesus healing the blind and deaf.

He is always opening eyes and ears to the promise, to the future, to the coming of life and life abundant. It’s why, so many times, he tells us to stay awake, to be watchful, and to not fall asleep.

He’s telling us to keep open to our future, to our coming life. And that’s what Jerusalem in today’s New Testament reading in Luke 13 has failed to do.

Jerusalem, is historically the key location for all three Abrahamic faiths. In the Old Testament it represented the presence of God with his people.

How strange that feels in 2024 - as Jew and Muslim fight to the death and Christians in the Holy Land squabble over which key sites belong to whom.

***Jerusalem has killed the prophets, the ones who were calling it into a future. It has stoned those sent to bring it life and more life.***

Jerusalem here is a metaphor for the ways in which we are blind and deaf to the promise, the ways in which we do not keep open to our future. ***“How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”*** Jesus says of Jerusalem (Luke 13:34).

***“And you were not willing!” Jerusalem has closed to the future. The door of their house is locked and the windows are boarded up. “See, your house is left to you,”*** Jesus says in verse 35.

And sometimes you and I are Jerusalem. Sometimes we are blind and deaf to God’s promise, closed to the future. It happens when life is on auto-pilot and we are just going through the motions.

* It happens when we hold grudges and resentments, withhold forgiveness, or refuse to accept forgiveness from another.
* It happens when fear overwhelms us and power, security, and control become our primary values.
* It’s what lies behind our illusions of self-sufficiency, our refusal to listen to another, and our belief that there is only one way, our way.
* It’s what happens when we cling to and become defined by past guilts, hurts, or losses.

**When this happens we settle for mere life rather than more life. We stagnate.**

We are no longer growing and maturing. We can no longer see or hear the promise of new life. We close to our future.

Jesus is not accusing Jerusalem. He is lamenting Jerusalem. When he finally sees Jerusalem, Luke tells us, “He wept over it” (Luke 19:41). He is sorrowing and protesting the end, the death, the narrowness and shortsightedness, of Jerusalem.

And yet, he continues coming to Jerusalem. He is always coming to the Jerusalem of our lives, always calling us to life, to more life, to new life.

The promise remains. Life never gives up on us. Life will be waiting for us when we reopen, when we are ready and willing to say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Those are not just words to be spoken. They describe one whose eyes, ears, and heart are open to what is coming; a promise, a future, a life.

Blessed is the promise that comes to us in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the future that comes to us in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the life that comes to us in the name of the Lord.

As we enter Lent - In what ways are your eyes, ears, or heart closed today? What needs to happen, to change, to be let go of, for them to begin opening?

Lent is a chance for life, more life, a new life. And that’s a risk I want to take, don’t you? **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

**Prayers for peace from Archbishop Justin Welby**

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of The Holy Land
Israeli and Palestinian, Jew, Christian and Muslim.
We pray for an end to acts of violence and terror.
We lift to you all who are fearful and hurting.
We ask for wisdom and compassion for those in leadership.
Above all, we ask that Jesus the Prince of Peace,
would bring lasting reconciliation and justice for all. **Amen**

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed:
kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen**

Prayer for the church to be a light in the world.

*“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*  Matthew 5:16

Almighty God, you have called us to follow and obey you. We want all local church to be a channel of hope and life for others. We pray that our faith bears fruits that will give you glory and praise. Please help us to live in your truth and wisdom. May our lives embody the Gospel that other people need to know you. Teach us, constantly O God, how to be channels of your grace and love. In your mighty name. **Amen**

A prayer for spiritual renewal during Lent.

God of Grace, lead us from self-centred living to the fullness of life in Christ beyond our current horizons. Inspire our hearts and minds to rise above the daily trifles to join with you in love and concern for the world and its peoples. Bless our Lent groups and Services during Lent this year. May your Holy Spirit restore and renew your life within us that we may live as salt and light in our everyday lives. For Christ’s sake. **Amen**

Prayer for those who struggle with mental health

O Living God, Creator of body, mind and spirit, bless all those who at this time struggle with their mental health. Help them to lean on you on the darkest of days and to know you in their deepest need. In your mercy, release them from the bonds of their illness that they may know you and serve you with all their strength, with all their heart and with all their mind. At the same time give us compassion for all who suffer and raise up in our communities more effective services to support those who struggle with their own mental health or the health of those they love, through Christ our redeemer.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**