

**ST CUTHBERT'S
SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COLINTON**

**Fourth Sunday of Lent
Mothering Sunday
14 March 2021**



**COVID-19
Services Online on our YouTube Channel**

HYMN 194 – For Mary, mother of our Lord

For Mary, mother of our Lord,
God's holy name be praised,
who first the Son of God adored,
as on her child she gazed.

She gave her body for God's shrine,
her heart to piercing pain,
and knew the cost of love divine
when Jesus Christ was slain.

Dear Mary, from your lowliness
and home in Galilee,
there comes a joy and holiness
to every family.

Hail, Mary, you are full of grace,
above all women blest;
and blest your Son, whom your embrace
in birth and death confessed.

*John Raphael Peacey (1896-1971) ©By kind permission of the Revd M J Hancock
©Copyright 2008 Kevin Mayhew Ltd, Anglican Hymns Old & New*

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

COLLECT FOR PURITY

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil. For the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

God, who is both power and love, forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by the Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world, evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Numbers 21.4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.' Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, 'Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and

live.’ So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Ephesians 2.1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GRADUAL HYMN 205 – From heaven you came

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.

*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.*

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.

Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space,
to cruel nails surrendered.

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.

Graham Kendrick (b.1950)

©Copyright 2008 Kevin Mayhew Ltd, Anglican Hymns Old & New

GOSPEL: John 3.14-21

Hear the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John. **Glory to Christ our Saviour.**

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. '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. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

SERMON

May the words of my lips and the meditations of my heart be acceptable, Lord.

Amen.

Looking around my garden and others nearby, despite the gloomy wintry weather we've been having this year, there are signs of new life, buds on trees and bushes and spring bulbs either in flower or peeping through the earth. Also, perhaps this year more than ever, as we're spending more time at home, we're noticing how the light is increasing and the darkness growing less. The theme of new life runs through all our readings today, coupled in our Gospel reading with the notion of light out of darkness, the light of belief and salvation as opposed to the darkness of sin and disbelief. So, how may our readings be seen to mirror our own feelings in the current world situation of pandemic and uncertainty?

I'll start with our reading from Numbers. We find the Israelites grumbling like spoilt children, cross and complaining, despite many signs of God's presence being with them all the time. They're sick of the wilderness, sick of not getting what they want. Doesn't that in some ways resonate with how **we** might be feeling just now in this pandemic? I'm sure we often do feel ourselves in a wilderness type of situation, forlorn and uncertain of where we're heading, when it's all going to end. And I'm sure, like the Israelites in the desert, we often complain about not getting what we want, not being able to see family members or stroll on the beach. But what is really significant is how we respond to these hopefully fleeting moments of discontent, despite the fact that extensions of lockdown may occasionally feel similar to the serpents that God sent to bite the disbelieving and mutinous Israelites.

But the Israelites recognised the parallel between the serpents biting them, and the serpent which led Adam and Eve into sin, and realised that they too had succumbed to temptation. So, following God's instructions, Moses raised a bronze serpent up on a stick, its bite leading to new life. For us new life comes from another lifting up, the lifting up of Jesus on the cross, as Jane Williams observes, a new life in the Spirit, curing the evil that came from the serpent in the garden.

This notion of new life, of its richness and eternal joy, runs right through our reading from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Yes, Paul does refer to their former sins and 'passions of the flesh' before enthusiastically talking of the new life, given freely by the loving and gracious God who is rich in mercy, through his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This encouragement to the new life, addressed to the Ephesians who've become believers at a time when Christians were so often persecuted, applies equally to ourselves, many centuries later, in circumstances which are also difficult and often distressing. To quote Paul, 'For by grace you have been saved through faith,.....it is the gift of God.'

Whatever else we may feel is being denied us during this pandemic, this gift of salvation and eternal joy from the loving God is there in all its richness and grace, available all the time. This key verse from our Gospel encapsulates the wonders of this gift beautifully: '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.’ But the choice is left to us. Forgive me for offering a misquotation of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, but might I say: to believe or not to believe, that is the question!

God offers us new life through his Son, but the picture that John in his Gospel paints is also full of the notion of light, light out of darkness. His language in our reading takes us back to the beginning of his Gospel, where we learn that the Word, the Word which became flesh in our Lord Jesus Christ, is the light of the world, the light that is life, the light shining in the darkness. And by believing in this light, following the path of truth, we may have the joy of eternal life.

But, as I sum up, I acknowledge that we’re human and however much the prospect of eternal life with our Lord can bring us both comfort and joy, nonetheless during these days of isolation and restriction, we often feel the need for some more immediate comfort and joy in our pandemic wilderness. However, although I believe it’s important to acknowledge our feelings of despair, of complaint, of challenged belief, I feel it even more important to move on in our Lent journey. May we find ourselves able, in parallel with the budding of plants in nature, to sense the joy of new life, and as we see increasing hours of light each day, pushing away darkness, may we also feel able to sense the wonder of the light out of darkness brought us by the loving God’s amazing gift of grace, the life, death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And today, Mothering Sunday, as we remember with gratitude all mothers, who bring new life into being, may we remember with especial gratitude Mary, the young woman centuries ago who said 'yes' to bearing God's incarnate Son Jesus, the bringer of light out of darkness.
Happy Mothering Sunday. **Amen.**

Revd. Dr. Margaret Dineley

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high. We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS

Loving God, you are the stillness at the heart of all things, and it is our comfort that we trust, enjoy and delight in you. Let your peace surround us and the hurry and worry of our lives fall away. Guide us during this period of Lent, remembering the time that Jesus prepared himself for the difficult work that lay ahead of him, his struggle with the temptation of easy options. Inspire us with the image of Christ transfigured.

Grant us wise hearts and understanding.

Life giving God, on this Mothering Sunday we thank you for the important women in our lives, and for women of courage everywhere. We pray for women labouring to give birth this day, and that we all play our parts in supporting them and their families as they nourish the children given into their care, into all our care. We remember parents struggling to nurture their children in the barren soil of war; in the bleakness of unemployment or ill health; poverty of heart or circumstance, and for those feeling judged and their best efforts unnoticed or valued.

Where our treasure is there may our hearts be also.

Liberating God, guide us in our ministry to one another, to recognise when you give us the moment to speak, to act or to change, and to trust that you will be there when we are lost, to renew our confidence. We pray for our community of St Cuthbert's, for John our bishop, for Nicki, Margaret, Caroline, and all of us in our ministry to one another.

Grant us wise hearts and understanding.

Gracious God, as we come to share the richness of your table, we remember the shared blessings of the earth. We cannot take bread and forget those who are hungry... we cannot take wine and forget those who are thirsty... guide us and strengthen us by your gift and challenge of stewardship.

Where our treasure is there may our hearts be also.

Compassionate God We thank you for your presence with those who cannot be here to-day and for those wearied by hurt, illness, and loss. We know you are by our sides always, to inspire us until we return to you at our life's end. In a moment of silence, we offer our own prayers to you Your constancy is our sanctuary, and when we falter, we trust that your unfailing love will be with us a home to dwell in for ever.

Accept these and all our prayers in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Margaret Temple

OFFERTORY HYMN 340 – I will sing the wondrous story

I will sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
how he left the realms of glory
for the cross on Calvary.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me –
sing it with his saints in glory,
gathered by the crystal sea.

I was lost but Jesus found me,
found the sheep that went astray,
raised me up and gently led me
back into the narrow way.
Days of darkness still may meet me,
sorrow's path I oft may tread;
but his presence still is with me,
by his guiding hand I'm led.

He will keep me till the river
rolls its waters at my feet:
then he'll bear me safely over,
made by grace for glory meet.
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me –
sing it with his saints in glory,
gathered by the crystal sea.

Francis Harold Rowley (1854-1952)

©Copyright 2008 Kevin Mayhew Ltd, Anglican Hymns Old & New

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation;
through your goodness we have this bread to offer,
which earth has given and human hands have made;
it will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation;
through your goodness we have this wine to offer,
fruit of the vine and work of human hands;
it will become the cup of our salvation.

Blessed be God for ever.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, maker of light and darkness. Your wisdom draws beauty from chaos, brings a harvest out of sorrow and leads the exiles home.

In Christ your Son enemies are reconciled, debts forgiven and strangers made welcome.

Your Spirit frees us to live as sons and daughters in our Father's house.

We who by Christ's power follow the way of the Cross, sharing the joy of his obedience, now offer you our praise, with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven singing the hymn of your unending glory:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you, most loving Father, for Christ in whom the world is reconciled. Lifted on the Cross, his suffering and forgiveness spanned the gulf our sins had made. Through that dark struggle death was swallowed up in victory, that life and light might reign.

Before he was given up to suffering and death, recalling the night of Israel's release, the night in which the sons of Egypt died, your Chosen One, himself the First-Born, freely offered his life.

At supper with his disciples he took bread and offered you thanks.

He broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying:

"Take, eat. This is my Body: it is broken for you."

After supper, he took the cup, he offered you thanks, and gave it to them saying:

"Drink this, all of you. This is my Blood of the new covenant; it is poured out for you, and for all, that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me."

We now obey your Son's command. We recall his blessed passion and death, his glorious resurrection and ascension; and we look for the coming of his Kingdom. Made one with him, we offer you these gifts and with them ourselves, a single, holy, living sacrifice.

Hear us, most merciful Father, and send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this bread and this wine, that, overshadowed by his life-giving power, they may be the Body and Blood of your Son, and we may be kindled with the fire of your love and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body to live and work to your praise and glory; may we grow together in unity and love until at last, in your new creation, we enter into our heritage in the company of the Virgin Mary, the apostles and prophets, St Cuthbert, and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory be to you, Lord of all ages, world without end. **Amen.**

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

LORD'S PRAYER

As our Saviour Christ has commanded and taught us, we are bold to say:

**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 this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

COMMUNION

**Lamb of God; you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God; you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God; you take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.**

A PRAYER FOR US TO PRAY AT HOME:

**God of infinite mercy, we thank you for Jesus our Saviour,
who feeds his people and gives them eternal life.**

**Though we cannot consume the gifts of bread and wine,
we thank you that we do receive Christ's saving presence,
the forgiveness of sins, and all other benefits of his
passion. Grant that we may continue for ever in the Risen
Life of our Saviour.**

Amen.

THANKSGIVING AND SENDING OUT

Give thanks to our gracious God
Whose mercy endures for ever.

POST COMMUNION

Father, your steadfast purpose is the completion of all things in your Son. May we who have received the pledges of the kingdom, live by faith, walk in hope and be renewed in love, until the world reflects your glory and you are all in all; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

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