

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

Worship at Home - 26th February 2023 Lent 1

prepared by the Revd Ruth Fry

Opening Prayer

As we prepare to meet with you O God,
Creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all life,
help us to be aware of your presence this day.
As we bring you our worship and offer you our
praise draw near to us now s we draw near to you
Amen

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/FLsGGPFSufQ>

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee ;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail
not ;
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be :

Great is thy faithfulness !

Great is thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see ;

all I have needed thy hand hath provided.

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love :

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide ;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside !

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition,
number 51

Words and Music: © 1923, renewed 1951, Hope Publishing
Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188, USA. All rights reserved.

Used by permission.

Prayer of Thanks and Praise

Gracious God,
we thank you that you are always with us, that
you are to be found even within our wildernesses,
deep in the centre of our harshest places.
Thank you for placing a caring hand under all our
questions and for your great faithfulness and love.

Prayer of Confession

Eternal God,
as we worship you today and throughout this
season of Lent, help us to recognise all that is
wrong in our lives, all that separates us from you
and others, all that obstructs your purpose, leads
us into temptation and causes us to fall.

Help us prayerfully and humbly, to examine
ourselves and honestly acknowledge our faults,
not so that we might wallow in self-pity or indulge
in false piety, but so that we may receive
cleansing, healing and forgiveness - renewal in
body, mind, and spirit, through Jesus Christ our
Lord. **Amen.**

Read Romans 5 v 12-19

Read Matthew 4 v 1-11

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/IlkRwnnSdzo>

Jesus, tempted in the desert,
lonely, hungry, filled with dread :
'Use your power,' the tempter tells him ;
'turn these barren rocks to bread !'
'Not alone by bread,' he answers,
'can the human heart be filled.
Only by the Word that calls us
is our deepest hunger stilled !'

Jesus, tempted at the temple,
high above its ancient wall :
'Throw yourself from lofty turret ;
angels wait to break your fall !'
Jesus shuns such empty marvels,
feats that fickle crowds request :
'God, whose grace protects, preserves us,
we must never vainly test.'

Jesus, tempted on the mountain
by the lure of vast domain :
'Fall before me! Be my servant!
Glory, fame, you're sure to gain !'
Jesus sees the dazzling vision,
turns his eyes another way :
'God alone deserves our homage !
God alone will I obey !'

When we face temptation's power,
lonely, struggling, filled with dread,
Christ, who knew the tempter's hour,
come and be our living bread.
By your grace, protect, preserve us
lest we fall, your trust betray.
Yours, above all other voices,
be the Word we hear, obey.

Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr (1923–2007)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition,
number 237

Words: © GIA Publications Inc., 7404 S. Mason Avenue, Chicago, IL
60638, USA. www.giamusic.com All rights reserved.
Used by permission.

Reflection

At the beginning of Lent, what are we to make of this passage from Paul's letter to the Romans which compares and contrasts Adam and Christ?

Firstly, I think we need to recognise the relationship between sin and grace, which comes to the foreground during the season of Lent, is being explained here by Paul using the typology of Adam and Christ. Paul asserts both the universality of human sinfulness in the actions of Adam and the universality of grace through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The profound similarity and the profound difference between Adam and Christ is given full consideration here. Both act in ways that impact each and every human being, yet with very different results. Through Adam sin and death entered the world, through Christ sin and death are overcome. The contrast is very clear. What is also very clear is that both Adam and Christ set the course for all of humankind. All of humanity finds itself under the dominion of sin (separation from God) because of Adam and all of humanity finds itself under the dominion of grace (reconciled to a full relationship with God) because of Christ. The power of grace however is immeasurably greater and more extensive than the power of sin.

I must confess I struggle with the idea of original sin in the sense that it is in some way a physical transmission inherited by children from their parents. In truth I think this idea has a lot to answer for in terms of the Church's unhealthy obsession with sex over the centuries. Human

beings are created in the image of God and what God created, God saw as good. So how do we account for evil, for sin in the world? Well, what I interpret Paul to be saying here is that sin (meaning humanity's separation from God) is universal having first entered the world in Adam. God is love. Borne out of the depth of this love for the whole creation, and most especially for the human race, God takes the initiative and finds a way to restore the severed relationship by taking on flesh and being born to live and die as one of us. Charles Wesley puts it like this, '*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*'

Christ emptied himself of all but love. That is the absolute crux of it. That's what Paul is attempting to explain here to the Christians in Rome - God's self-emptying love for the entire human race made known to us through Christ is nothing other than pure and utterly immeasurable grace.

It seems to me that is exactly what we see displayed in the story of Christ's temptations - self-emptying love, pure grace.

At the heart of this passage is the issue of power, of the responsibility that comes from holding power, and of the accountability that comes from holding power. Here we see how Jesus deals with the very human temptation to abuse that power, the temptation to use it to his own advantage.

How often, these days, we seem to be seeing the uncovering of examples of the abuse of power in the world don't we. We've seen it in many of our institutions in recent times including in the Church. It seems to me that what's been missing has been the importance of ensuring both responsibility and accountability when dealing with power.

Jesus has clearly already begun to realise that the power he holds carries with it an enormous responsibility. He knows the power he has comes from God. Only a few verses before Matthew has given us the account of Jesus' baptism telling us '*and when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And*

a voice from heaven said, 'this is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'.

My goodness, that's responsibility all right. It must have felt quite overwhelming for a young, unmarried, Jewish man of about 30 years of age from a very ordinary place and family. And yet, this was an extraordinary man, the temptation to use his power for personal gain must have been almost unbearable. Desperate hunger having fasted for forty days and nights, being offered all the kingdoms of the world - it must have been agonising. All I can say is it's a good job Jesus knew his scriptures; he knew them inside out. Thirty years of life had been spent not simply working in a carpenter's workshop, but also in prayer, in reading the Scriptures, in attending the Synagogue, visiting the Temple, in other words in practising and living out his faith as a member of God's chosen people. Each time he is tempted Jesus replies by quoting from Scripture *'it is written, 'One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God', 'Again it is written 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test', 'for it is written 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him'.*

Jesus resists the temptation to abuse his power by trusting in the God who is love and by emptying himself of all but pure, deep, self-giving love.

Traditionally Lent is the season when Christians set aside time and space for self-reflection. It's a time to revisit what it means for us to embrace that self-giving love that is shown to us in Christ Jesus. Let us pray for one another, let us support and encourage one another as we begin our Lenten journey in 2023.

Amen

Intercessions

Loving, living God,
we bring you our prayers for the world, for our nation, for others and for ourselves trusting in your faithfulness and mercy.

We pray for all whose daily work gives them power over others:

for those who serve in government,
for those in charge of companies,
for the leaders of trade unions,

for those who influence how we think.

We pray that they would serve not simply their own interests but those of others, with wisdom, honesty, fairness, and kindness.

Gracious God, in your faithfulness and mercy -
hear our prayer.

We pray for those who work for the public services in our society:

for those who look after our health,
for those who look after our safety,
for those who teach and train,
for those who give us advice and support,
for those who provide the essentials for life.

We pray that they may find satisfaction and joy in their work and may serve those they seek to help with patience, courage and understanding.

Gracious God, in your faithfulness and mercy -
hear our prayer.

We pray for the needs of the world and for those unable to go about their daily lives and work because of war, famine, and natural disaster -

for the people of Turkey and Syria following the devastating earthquake in that region and for the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

We pray for all whose lives are affected by these situations and ask that they might know peace, healing, comfort, and hope for the future.

Gracious God, in your faithfulness and mercy -
hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are unwell at home or in hospital. May they know your strength and receive your peace in their hour of need.

Gracious God, in your faithfulness and mercy -
hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

If you give your weekly offering through an envelope scheme or in cash, please set it aside, and pray with those who give using Standing Orders.

Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/x3jtklzbApA>

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art ;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord ;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be ;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight ;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might ;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong
tower :
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my
power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise :
be thou mine inheritance now and always ;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart :
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won ;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8th century

translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)

versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860–1935) (*alt.*)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition,
number 545

Closing Prayer

Whatever wilderness the Spirit has brought you
to:
walk in boldness, as a beloved child of God
walk in peace, under the shelter of the Holy One
walk in faith, knowing Christ walks with you.

Amen.

* * * * *

Church Copyright Licence No 30794

Resources Used:

Liturgies for high days – Dorothy McRae-McMahon SPCK 2006

Prayers for occasions – KM Publishing 2013