

The United Benefice of St Michael on Greenhill, Lichfield
with St John, Wall

COLLECT AND READINGS
5th April
Palm Sunday

Collect Contemporary

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
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**

Old Testament Reading **Isaiah 50.4-9a**

⁴The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backwards.

⁶I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

⁷The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

⁸ he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

⁹It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
All of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 21.1-11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.'⁴This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵ 'Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' ¹¹The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹³He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you are making it a den of robbers.'

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David', they became angry ¹⁶and said to him, 'Do you hear what these are saying?' Jesus said to them, 'Yes; have you never read,

"Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise for yourself"?'¹⁷

¹⁷He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

Palm Sunday Sermon

The link for the Palm Sunday sermon is

<https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/sunday-sermons.html>

Palm crosses will be blessed and kept for distribution at a later date.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Colin Eastwood, Yvonne Harper, Jeyan Anketell, Ian and Judith Watson, Alison Cox-Toplis
Caroline Green

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Julian & Wendy, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb,
Dottie Collins, Robert Harris, Bill Hill, James Knight, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter,
John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Renee Wellings, Felicity Woodfield

Those who have died

Jean King, Beryl Russell, Paul Clarke

ST JOHN

Those who are ill and their carers:

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Christine Gilbert, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Prayer Resources

We have produced a booklet of resources for prayer at home which contains a short act of worship that you can use. This can be found here along with other resources for prayer:

<https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/resources-for-prayer-at-home.html>

In preparation for each Sunday we will email out and post on the website the Collect and Readings for the day. If possible, please join us in using the short act of worship and the readings at 10.00am which is our usual service time on a Sunday. There will also be a short sermon video available on the website on the 'Resources for Prayer at Home' page.

The Royal School of Church Music are putting a *Hymn of the Day* on their website as well as a service with readings and hymns. There is a link on our website on our resources for prayer page.

You can text prayer requests to 07388 529020

Here is a link to the Diocese of Lichfield facebook page where videos of daily prayers from the cathedral will be posted <https://www.facebook.com/LichfieldCofE/>

Holy Week and Easter

During next week there will be a number of emails sent out with resources for prayer and reflection during Holy Week and Easter.

On Monday we will send out the evening service of Compline which we traditionally offer in church each evening during Holy Week. With this will be the Psalms and Readings for Monday and Tuesday. There will also be a link to addresses given by Revd Mel Clark who has prepared these for each evening.

On Wednesday there will be an email with resources for Compline on Wednesday and Thursday. A further email will have the collect and Readings for Good Friday and Easter Day. There will be links to a Good Friday sermon given by Revd Chris Baker and also an Easter sermon from the Rector.

The Rector, Simon Baker

01543 253010

The following pages are a short article on prayer written by Revd Stephen Barton. It can also be found on our prayer resources page on the website.

<https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/resources-for-prayer-at-home.html>

Thoughts on Prayer

In this short piece, I'd like to say four things about the practice of prayer. As people of faith, nothing could be more important than prayer, especially at times like these.

Prayer as an act of alignment

The first thing I want to say is that *prayer is an act of alignment*. Above all, it's an action that shows who we belong to, who we are oriented towards. In our Christian faith we discover that we belong to God. We show that by responding to God's call in the love and obedience of prayer. We align ourselves *to* God and *with* God and *in* God.

How do we align ourselves to God in prayer? For a start, we do it *with our bodies*. I used to think that spiritual concerns like faith and prayer were matters to do with the mind and the heart: but I've come to recognize that faith and prayer are about the whole person, soul *and* body.

One way we embody prayer is by small gestures. We bow our heads: that way, we acknowledge God's greatness and our dependence on Him. We stand up or go down on bended knee. We clasp our hands in front of our chests or we hold them out face upwards. We close our eyes in a turning inwards, away from distractions, or we raise our eyes in a turning upwards and heavenwards. We sign ourselves with the sign of the cross. All of these are external, bodily actions, and they correspond with matters of the soul. For these are actions that signify the bearings of our life. They express and reinforce our ongoing *alignment* towards God.

And we repeat these actions over and over: Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Prayer Cycles, prayer at meals The repetition is not redundant. It is the way we order our lives in a rhythm of *holy timeliness*. For we are creatures in time, and what we do in prayer is, not just give time to God, but acknowledge that *our time is not ours anyway, but God's*, the One who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

Prayer as paying attention

A second aspect of prayer is that *prayer is an act of paying attention*. It's a way of *making connection* with what is most real. Here we need the language of *the senses*. Prayer is how we learn *to see* at a deeper level, beneath the surface of things. Prayer is how we *hear* God's word of forgiveness and call to holy living. Prayer is how we *taste* the sweetness of God's nourishing word when other conversations have turned stale. Prayer is how we *smell* the incense of God's presence. Prayer is how we *touch* the hem of God's glory and find healing, find ourselves transfigured from one degree of glory to another. *All our senses are involved*, because prayer is about becoming truly attentive and therefore becoming truly alive.

Prayer as protest

Prayer as a practice of alignment. Prayer as a practice of paying attention. Now, prayer as *an act of protest*. Think of Psalm 22: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry

by day, but thou dost not answer; and by night, but find no rest.' If prayer is about attending to what matters, then what matters will include pain and suffering, and feelings of abandonment, and fear of the prospect of death. These are part of life: and they are part of Christian life too. They are part of our life in Christ who himself suffered and was abandoned. They are part of our life in God who loves us and cares for us. But God in Godself is wholly Other, supreme Mystery. Our relationship with God must therefore be one where prayer is a way of *discerning the mystery*. And one way of discerning the mystery is to *ask questions*—profound questions, searching questions, questions with no holds barred. That's why the Bible is full of people arguing with God, questioning God, lamenting their perilous situation, and calling on God to make his presence known. Think of Job, suffering appalling loss and calling on God to justify himself. Think of Jesus in Gethsemane, beseeching God to take the cup of suffering from him; and, from the cross, his cry of God-forsakenness! Think of Paul, asking God three times to take away his 'thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan' (2 Cor 12.7-9)! We have to be clear about this. To argue with God, to protest about what is going on in our lives or in the world around us, is a proper thing to do. It shows that we care; and it shows that we believe that *God* cares, that God is present to save, whether we feel his presence or not. The prayer of protest is not an act of betrayal, nor is it a sign of unbelief. Rather, it arises out of the strongest faith and the deepest trust.

Growing in prayer

But there is one other aspect of prayer I'd like to talk about. It's *how to grow in prayer*. Here, the most important thing to remember is what Saint Paul says in Romans 8.26: 'we do not know to pray as we ought'! That someone of Paul's spiritual stature can say that is an enormous encouragement to those of us who are only making a start or trying to start again. It's as if Paul is saying that there is a real sense in which *all of us are ever only making a start when it comes to true prayer*. But he's also saying something very important—*that our weakness, our poverty, is God's opportunity*: 'Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.' And so we are bound to say: 'Thanks be to God!'

Stephen C. Barton.