

The United Benefice of St Michael
Lichfield and St John, Wall

**First Sunday of Lent
21st February**

Canticle - A Song of God's Compassion

**The Lord is full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and of great kindness.**

**He will not always accuse us,
neither will he keep his anger for ever.**

**He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.**

**For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.**

**As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he set our sins from us.**

**As a father has compassion on his children,
so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him.**

**For he knows of what we are made;
he remembers that we are but dust.**

**Our days are but as grass;
we flourish as a flower of the field;**

**For as soon as the wind goes over it, it is gone,
and its place shall know it no more.**

**But the merciful goodness of the Lord is from of old
and endures for ever on those who fear him,
and his righteousness on children's children;**

**On those who keep his covenant
and remember his commandments to do them.**

Psalm 103.8-18

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;
and, as you know our weakness,
so may we know your power to save;
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

Genesis 9.8-17

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' ¹²God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' ¹⁷God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

Psalms 25.1-9

¹ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

**² O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.**

³ Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

**⁴ Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.**

⁵ Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.

⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

⁸ Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading

Mark 1.9-15

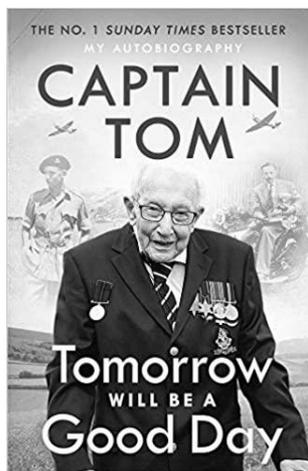
⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. ¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Sermon

Where Do We Find Hope?

What things come to mind for you in this pandemic now in its second year?



For me it includes the optimism and resilience of Sir Captain Tom Moore, and his message of hope that '*tomorrow will be a good day*'. We continue to see the fragility of life in the face of COVID 19 here and around the world. There is the determination to keep going despite exhaustion and death, and the incredible science that has given us vaccines so quickly. The pandemic is affecting all of us, including for many fear, as jobs and valuable education are lost, and there continues to be uncertainty of what the future might hold. Yet not everyone seems to be on the same side. Often the news gives us examples of the selfishness of those intent on breaking the law, putting themselves and others at risk, or the bitter ongoing battles between governments of who gets the vaccines and when.

Whatever comes to mind for you, there is one over riding symbol, that we will all have seen. A sign of trust in and thanks for our NHS and all key workers, based on their skill and commitment - the rainbow. A sign too of our promise to play our part. We hope things will get better, we hope we will come out the other side, we hope that we can return not to normal life, but to a new life, changed for the better by the pandemic.



Where does that hope come from?

The morning after the UK reached the heart-breaking total of 100,000 deaths, for any reason within 28 days of a positive COVID test, BBC Breakfast asked the question, where do we find hope in this pandemic? They interviewed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. His answer to the question, where do we find hope? Was '*I find **my** hope in Jesus Christ*'. He went on to say, '*death does not have the final word, God has the final word. God is with us in the anger and the pain*'.

I find **my** hope in Jesus Christ.

On this first Sunday in Lent, our readings show us that we can all have that same enduring, concrete, certain hope.

God knows us as we are, God knows that there is suffering, injustice, and evil in this world. Our solution if asked, might often be, why doesn't God just wipe out those things that are wrong? The pandemic, violence, selfishness... but that doesn't solve the problem. Not one of us is perfect, including me. So where would God draw the line?

The reading today from Genesis 9 begins to point us to a very different solution. Genesis tells of God's promise *for all generations to come, God said to Noah that all life will never be destroyed again – I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant (the promise) between me and the earth.*

The stunning beauty seen in the rainbow is a reminder of God's promise not to destroy all life; something God would have to do to wipe out all that is wrong in this world. But God's promises don't end there. God promises to save us.



In possibly the most well-known verses in the Bible, John Chapter 3: 16-17, we read *¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

God doesn't abandon us to battle on in our own strength, fearful of the future, fearful in the present, we are offered life that not even death itself can take away. We can't buy eternal life; we can't work for it; we can't inherit it as we would a family heirloom. Only God can give us life, saving us through Jesus Christ.



As Jesus' disciple Peter wrote in his first letter, that we've read today, 1 Peter 3:21 reads, *we are saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Christ, a young man in his thirties, went through horrific suffering, to save us, bearing all that is wrong in our lives, bearing the sins of the world. Christ died on the cross for you and for me. Christ was buried and on the third day **was raised to life** by the Holy Spirit. The tomb is empty.

God is not distant, leaving us to get on with life having promised not to destroy us. In our reading from Mark's Gospel, Chapter 1, God the Father declared that Christ is the Son of God. ¹¹ *And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* Led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days, Christ overcame the temptations of Satan. On his return he begins his adult ministry announcing the good news to the people – *"The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

Jesus Christ is as alive today, as he was that first Easter following his resurrection. He conquered sin and all its consequences including death and destroyed the power of Satan. Christ smashed through all that separates us from God and each other.

"The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

God is with us and offers us the gift of living life in the presence of God, knowing the love, power and hope found in Christ. *The kingdom of God has come near.*

Knowing that God is close to us, how do we respond?

Christ calls us to *Repent and believe the good news!*

Repent, *to turn away from* living life our way, and *turn to* Christ. And to believe – to believe in Him, trust Him in every part of your life, receive all He longs to give you.

Find hope in the face of suffering and death, faith to see God at work in you and the world and know the love your heavenly Father has for you, his precious child.

During this pandemic, with a long way still to go, it may feel that it is too much to face the reality of your need of God and do something about it. Even if that something, turning to Christ and trusting in Him, will give you true and lasting hope. Yet in this season of Lent, knowing all is not OK, take the opportunity to stop, be open and honest with God. Turn to Christ and know the forgiveness of God. Take the opportunity thorough Lent to read or listen to the Gospel of Mark, either for the first time, or having done so many times before. Turn to God and believe in Him.

Be embraced by the God who loves you in this life, as well as the life to come, find hope in Jesus Christ, that today, as well as tomorrow, despite suffering, fear and uncertainty, will be a good day.

Gracious God,
as we remember before you the thousands who have died,
surround us and all who mourn with your strong compassion.
Be gentle with us in our grief,
protect us from despair,
and give us grace to persevere and face the future
with hope in Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

Amen.

Ven Sue Weller

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Chris Kirk, Matthew Martel, Norah and Arthur Palin and Alison Knight

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Elizabeth Chapman, Chris Clayton, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Alison Cox-Toplis, Martin Dewes, Chris Dickerson, Colin Eastwood, Robert Harris, Robert McAllester-Jones, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter, Anthony Staples aged 7, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Judith Watson, Renee Wellings, Peter and Anne Whatson, Felicity Woodfield, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Julian & Wendy,

Those who have died

Alan Thompson, Dave Edge, John Stuart and Josephine Wilkes

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST JOHN

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Post Communion Prayer

Lord God,

you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven;

by it you nourish our faith,

increase our hope,

and strengthen our love:

teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread,

and enable us to live by every word

that proceeds from out of your mouth;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

CHURCH NOTICES

LEAVING GIFT FOR SIMON AND DIANA

We are starting a collection to buy Simon and Diana a leaving gift from everyone here at St Michael's church. This is obviously trickier than usual as we are not currently in church to receive donations and need to minimise the handling of cash.

If you would like to contribute you can pay your donation straight into the church bank account which would be very helpful.

Lloyds Bank

Account Name – PCC of St Michael and St Mary Lichfield

Account Number – 00114488

Sort Code – 30-95-04

Reference – **RETIREMENT**

(This is really important as we need to distinguish between this and other donations)

If you would prefer to post your donations somewhere, please deliver them to:-

Sue Jones

or

Lyn Shiel

38 Bracken Close

1 Aspen Close

Lichfield WS14 9RU

Lichfield WS 13 6FE

Angie is currently working from home with the exception of Thursday's when she is in the church office, so if you prefer to use the church post box, please ensure that you drop your donation off by 11am on a Thursday.

Many thanks,

Sue and Lyn

Churchwardens

“Love – Our World”

All Age Churchyard Trail for Lent and Easter

Suitable for all ages, in the churchyard there are five “stations” - laminated A4 sheets. They offer a simple framework for your own reflections, and offer a set prayer on each theme. They are located in the Easter Garden by the Cross, and by the empty tomb; on the compost bins; on a bench outside church; on a bench in the lower churchyard. If able, you may wish to use them as an opportunity for reflection and prayer on your daily walk. If you're not able to get there for any reason they are available on the website, and you may be able to imagine the setting! *Linda*

BIBLE STUDY IN LENT

We will be starting a new series of Bible Studies on the Wednesdays of Lent starting on **Wednesday 24 February until Wednesday 31st March.**

Each session will be on Zoom at 10.30am.

This year the gospel that we are mainly reading at our Sunday services is the Gospel of Mark. Our Lent Bible Study will focus on **The Passion of Jesus in Mark's Gospel.**

Jesus's death and resurrection lies at the very heart of our Christian faith and has done so from the very beginning. These sessions will give us an opportunity to focus on the passion story and its meaning for us in a way that we are not often able to do.

The zoom link will be sent out each week with the links for our services. There will also be a sheet with the Bible text and questions to think about available to download from our website.

Everyone is invited to join these sessions.

THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER (WDP) is on **Friday 5th March** and will be a Zoom Service. If you would like a Service booklet please get in touch with Lesley Allen (lesley.allen21@googlemail.com)

MU Members.

Our MU subs are due, this year they are £ 26. Could you pay by cheque please, made payable to St. Michael's MU. Thank you *Lynn*

THE FOODBANK is always happy to receive gifts of

- Tinned meat and fish
- Tinned fruit and vegetables, soup and beans
- Rice pudding and custard
- Instant coffee, tea, sugar, long life milk and fruit juice
- Packets of cereals, biscuits and snacks
- Pasta, rice and pasta sauce
- Jam

Items should be **at least 3 months in date** or the Foodbank is not allowed to issue them.

Donations of food can be left at **51, Lime Grove, Lichfield WS13 6ER**

Maggie and David_01543 255308

COUNSELLING One result of this 3rd lockdown starting will be increased pressures on all of us, and many people are feeling anxious and depressed and are coping with a lot of extra stress and loss.

Phoenix Counselling Service is a small charity which for 5 years, has been providing counselling to adults living in Burntwood, Lichfield and the surrounding areas, who are not able to access counselling via the NHS and who cannot afford private counselling. Professionally trained counsellors provide a safe, confidential space to talk about your thoughts and feelings, and work through problems that you might be facing in your life. At present all the counselling is online or by telephone although we will offer face to face sessions when restrictions permit.

Contact details: www.phoenixcounselling-service.co.uk

email: phoenixcounselling2@gmail.com

Mobile: 07415517663

Best wishes, Rhoda Wharton

ST MICHAEL'S & ST JOHN'S LENT BAKE AND DELIVER SCHEME

After the success of the Advent Bake & Deliver we are hoping to provide this opportunity for community outreach once again this Lent. As we continue to live with Covid regulations and the consequences of the pandemic, it seems right to find another opportunity to let people know we are thinking of them and praying for them. **Would you be willing to help by baking or delivering?** You can volunteer to do as little or as much as you feel able to do - we would be very grateful to have your help! Our plan is to deliver during Holy Week, with the nomination form going live on our website in mid March. For further details please speak to Revd Mel (revdr.melclark@gmail.com)

CHURCHES TOGETHER www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 21st February: Lent 1

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Sunday Service	Zoom

Monday 22nd February

All day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Tuesday 23rd February

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
11:00am	Funeral: Josephine Wilkes	St Michael's
5.30pm	St Michael's PCC Meeting	Zoom

Wednesday 24th February

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Thursday 25th February

All day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
5.30pm	St Michael's PCC Meeting	Zoom

Friday 26th February

All Day	OFFICE CLOSED	
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom

Saturday 27th February

Sunday 28th February: Lent 2

8:00am	Holy Communion	Zoom
10:00am	Sunday Service	Zoom