

# **St Swithun's Church Family**

## **Lent 3**

**Sharing together in Spirit**



**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Faith, Hope and Love**

*Please use this booklet to **worship with us** on zoom at 10am – or read through this service knowing that we are joining our prayers together in Spirit.*

*Create a sacred space – if possible gather a candle and a cross if you can find them. The children might like to use the Sunday school resources provided by Izzy.*

*In addition we will be audio recording today's sermon which will be uploaded to the website [www.saintswithuns.org.uk](http://www.saintswithuns.org.uk)*

*There are various prayer resources and other things to look at on the website – if you have any feedback or anything to share please let me know.*

***Giving - if you usually give your collection on a Sunday morning in cash, and you are able to, please put this aside each week to bring to church when you are next able to. Even better would be to set up your giving online ('Saint Swithun's PCC' ; 60-05-11 ; 16126718 ; NatWest Bank) if you haven't already done this.***

*You might like to enhance your worship by singing or listening to a hymn or a song at various points – I have a few suggestions below – you tube is a great resource...*

**Praise my Soul**

[https://youtu.be/iuLmDye\\_5ys](https://youtu.be/iuLmDye_5ys)

**My song is love unknown**

<https://youtu.be/lv7OZSoA22w>

**When I survey the wondrous cross**

[https://youtu.be/4\\_fvFfPqjO4](https://youtu.be/4_fvFfPqjO4)

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## Introduction

Today is the third Sunday of Lent and we hear about Jesus showing strong angry feelings towards the money lenders in the temple and physically responding to change things.

Today we will think about strong feelings and changes in our worship and about the importance of our church building.

## The Gathering

### The Greeting

In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.  
**and also with you**

### Prayer of preparation

Our Lenten journey continues.  
Often in life the paths we tread feel stony and hard.  
Sometimes we stumble or fall.

**God is our friend and our guide.**

**God is faithful to us, even when we struggle.**

Today as we rejoice in God's faithful love,  
Let us not look away from those things  
which are unjust  
Let us feel anger and so be inspired to  
make change

**We come together to worship**

**To sow seeds of God's love**



## Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

As we say sorry to God today let us reflect for ourselves where we could do better and how we could turn our tables to make positive and loving changes for ourselves and others

Perhaps...

Our appetites and desires,  
our time and how we use it,  
our secret issues we need to address,  
the things we watch or read,  
our gifts, skills and talents and how we do or do not use them,  
our relationships

Lord, have mercy;

**Lord, have mercy**

Christ, have mercy;

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, have mercy;

**Lord, have mercy.**

## We are forgiven

God forgives me/you.

Forgive others.

Forgive yourself.

Be at peace.

**Amen.**



## The Collect

Eternal God, give us insight  
to discern your will for us,  
to give up what harms us,  
and to seek the perfection we are promised  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

# The Liturgy of the Word

## The Gospel Reading *John 2: 13-22*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John  
**Glory to you, O Lord**

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**



## **Sermon** *Rev Ann and Leon Clarke*

It's our 10 year wedding anniversary and our first joint sermon, so here goes!

### **Leon writes:**

Something that jumped out at me in the gospel passage, that seemed especially interesting for us this week, was that these events apparently happened because of Jesus's zeal for the temple. And that got me thinking about the importance of places, the importance of doing particular things in particular places, and what might that mean to us now, this week, as for the last time, we're meeting not in our particular place, but online.

So, do we have zeal for the building of St Swithun's? Or maybe there is some other phrase you would use to describe your feelings for our church.



It is interesting that although Jesus had zeal for the temple, he certainly wasn't uncritical of what was going on in the temple, and in fact his actions were really disruptive to people who were trying to perform the usual ceremonies at the temple.

So I wonder, if we do have zeal for St Swithun's, is our zeal for the memory we have of St Swithun's in normal times, or of the rather different, covid safe service we will have next week, or is it zeal for some idealised version of the service, as we think it might have been in the distant past or could be in the future.

So as we prepare to return I'd invite everyone to think about what it is they feel is essential about our services. Is there something essential now missing? Maybe communion. Alternatively, it is possible that someone here has found some deep meaning in the



zoom services that won't be there next week and will miss it when we're back in church.

But if we have zeal for our church building, we seem to express it with English reserve. In the last year we have been through dramatic changes to our services, changes that would usually take centuries, and our reaction to all this has looked more like resigned weariness than zeal. When we come back, or maybe when we come back properly, able to sing, hug and drink coffee, it might be worth reflecting on what is important to us about our house of God, and what it should be and what it could be. Or maybe you are thinking that doing things in the right way, in the right place, means less to you than you thought. That God can be worshipped just as easily on a comfy sofa as in a church. But that still raises the question of what the essential aspects of a church are. It is often said that the church is the people, not the building, but then what are the essential aspects of a church, the things we should have zeal for, which mark it apart from any other group of people.

**Ann writes:**

Leon introduced us to the importance of place.

And here we are, a week before some of us return to worship in church .... in spirit with others who continue to worship from home....

Although our building closed in January, our worship continued in new ways. I'm often inspired by Juliet's creative ideas to sustain our worship on audio, zoom, preparing powerpoint slides, choosing music, pictures and liturgy for service sheets - that's a lot of preparation to fit in, week by week. But it has been a vital way of including everyone, wherever we may be and with whatever technology we have to hand.

Interestingly this morning's gospel reminds us God can't be restricted to one special place. It's also an uncomfortable picture of Jesus, driving out stall holders with a whip of cords. Can we imagine the upset this caused and moreover the offence of his words; 'destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it up.' No

one could possibly have understood why Jesus was referring to the Temple of his own body?



Whether we find the picture of Jesus using a whip of cords uncomfortable, are we better placed today, to interpret Jesus' message in the text?

With hindsight can we understand Jesus was pointing to himself. He challenged people to think bigger than the Temple, the building at the core of their identity. By drawing attention to himself, Jesus pointed to a new reality; that God is fully present in humanity too. Therein lies the hope, that we do not have to stay in one place or worship in the same way to meet God.

Reflecting on the past 10 months, have you met God in new and ways? Even when a zoom meeting reminds us of the muppet show!





I'm sure God understands our need for familiarity and to connect once more to sacred traditions which draw us closer to God, especially after a time of so much upheaval.... these are an important part of our Christian story too...connecting to our past is important...but so too is the way we move forward.

It will be fascinating to see how Churches journey forward. How will we mix the old and new together? Jesus' followers were sent out to share the hope of Christ for everyone. Had the first disciples stayed in one place, where would the Christianity be today?

I'd like to finish with some words from Rowan Williams from his latest book on Faith, hope and love in a time of pandemic. It's from a reflection about communion. He writes,

*'Of course, we all long for the restoring of the possibility of gathering and sharing in the way we are used to .... but in this period when we are limited in our access to the sacrament, we can focus on two things. One is simply the fact of having discovered new ways of including people....it has become part of the way we relate to a 'wider' public - not by great compelling displays of our national importance, but by patient and imaginative thinking about what makes sense in our local environment and what actually speaks into the need of those around us.'* Amen

## **Profession 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.**

## Prayers

We pray for healing in our world and our nation – we continue to pray for the vaccination program – for all nations to have fair access to vital health resources. We continue to pray for those impacted by Covid, for all those who work in healthcare, those whose lives are destroyed by loss and grief...

Together we can sow seeds of God's love.

**Amen**

We pray for all those who are oppressed and suffer through injustice and the greed of others; those who suffer because of violence and war, those who suffer because of a lack of food and inadequate housing...

Together we can sow seeds of God's love.

**Amen**

We pray for all those who need our prayers and our love....

We pause for a few moments to name those in need of our prayers...

And those who have asked for our prayers – for Fran and family, Claudia, Laurenda, Louisa and Lily, Lamar, Maureen, Karen, Paulette and their families, Catherine and Alfrina and family, Betty, Canon Richard, Martin, Rossy and family, Kevin, Gwen, Pamela, Neil, Debbie, Elaine and family, Clinton, Francis, Cynthia, Diane, Harold, Ivy, Sean, Taneisha, Talabi, Susan, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Ena and Stephen.

Together we can sow seeds of God's love.

**Amen**

For all those who have died recently... Carl, Emanuel, Gloria, Alan, Joseph, Sydney, Simone and John.

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord

**And let light perpetual shine upon them**

Merciful God

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

## **The Prayer Jesus taught us**

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 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.**

## **The Peace**

God has called us to live in peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

## **Notices**

- We will be returning to church next week for communion at 10am (distanced and abiding by all the safety rules) – all those who are unable to join us in the building can hear the sermon online on our website and access the service booklets online or can ask to have them delivered.
- Carl's funeral will be 24<sup>th</sup> March (restricted numbers) – If you have any tributes and memories of Carl please let Mother Juliet have what you would like to share.
- Happy Birthday to all those who have a birthday



# Dismissal and Blessing

## The Blessing

Loving God, Mother and Father of us all,  
Bless us as we struggle to live within your harmony.

Enable us that our lives may sing your praises.

Encourage us to journey through any temptations  
which take us away from your love.

And the blessing of God:  
Creator, Redeemer, Spirit  
be with us always.

**Amen.**

## The Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

