

7th February 2021
Second Sunday before Lent – Sexagesimae
Morning Prayer with Peter Widdess



Please be advised that everyone is supposed to be muted. That way we can hear the speakers and music without distraction. Linda will represent the congregation's voice. You are invited to join her words and the singing at your place but please stay muted.

Personal preparation before the service begins.

Please take time to remember where you are,
and why you are here.

Give thanks and become still
in the presence of God

Music before the service

We sing our first song

ACF 3

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and let us sing;
alleluia, alleluia!

Bright burning sun with golden beam,
pale silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise him, O praise him, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Great rushing winds that are so strong,
white clouds above that sail along,
O praise him, alleluia!

Fair rising morn, in praise rejoice;
O stars of evening, find a voice,
O praise him, O praise him, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

All you that are of tender heart,
forgiving others, take your part,
sing his praises, alleluia!

All you that pain and sorrow bear,

praise God and on him cast your care,
O praise him, O praise him, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship God in humbleness,
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise God the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three-in-One:
O praise him, O praise him, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

CCLI Song # 2846264
St. Francis of Assisi | William Henry Draper
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Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you.
And also with you.

We pray together with words from Psalm 104

All creatures look to you
to give them their food at the proper time.
When you give it to them,
they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good things.
When you hide your face,
they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to the dust.
When you send your Spirit,
they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.
May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works—
he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.
I will sing to the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
May my meditation be pleasing to him,
as I rejoice in the Lord.

But may sinners vanish from the earth
and the wicked be no more.

Praise the Lord, my soul.

Praise the Lord.

The collect for 2nd Sunday before Lent

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth and have
made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all
things,
now and for ever.
Amen

The reading is taken from the Book of Proverbs
chapter 8

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God

Our hearts and our minds are open.

Does not wisdom call out?

Does not understanding raise her voice?

“The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old;

I was formed long ages ago,

at the very beginning, when the world came to be.

When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,

when there were no springs overflowing with water;

before the mountains were settled in place,

before the hills, I was given birth,

before he made the world or its fields

or any of the dust of the earth.

I was there when he set the heavens in place,

when he marked out the horizon on the face of the
deep,

when he established the clouds above

and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,
when he gave the sea its boundary
so the waters would not overstep his command,
and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

Then I was constantly at his side.
I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence,
rejoicing in his whole world
and delighting in mankind.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

according to John

Glory to you, O Lord

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

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

We sing the song: Draw the circle wide.

Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song: no one stands alone.
Standing side by side, draw the circle, draw the circle
wide...

God the still-point of the circle
Round you all creation turns
Nothing lost but held forever
in God's gracious arms

Refrain

Let our hearts touch far horizons
So encompass great and small
Let our loving know no borders
Faithful to God's call

Refrain

Let the dreams we dream be larger
Than we've ever dreamed before
Let the dream of Christ be in us
Open every door!

Refrain

Words and music: Gordon Light

Homily

Dear fellow worshippers, some of you are sharing in our fellowship together this morning through the means of the written word. Others are sharing in fellowship hearing and speaking words through the live streaming in zoom.

On your screens you will see an elder gentleman looking over my shoulder. The Rev. Joseph Baylee has



been looking over my shoulder at all the services which I have prepared since I inherited his portrait from my parents 10 years ago. Jo, as I call him, was an Irishman. He worked as a priest of the Church of England in Liverpool around the middle of the 19th century. Liverpool had been home of the British slaving industry in the 17th and 18th centuries, and had then become in the 19th century one of the most important ports for the world cotton trade and also for the export of European migrants to the Americas, Australia and other colonies. The city was divided between the rich cotton merchants, ship owners and traders, and the others – a division of wealth, power, class and education, language and dialect.

The church didn't speak the dialect of the many workers, dockers, sailors and labourers in Liverpool, so in 1846 Jo Baylee founded a Theological College where men could be trained to become priests who had no formal education or academic background, men who could speak the "language" of their parishioners. He had learnt how necessary this was. One year he had wanted to hold services for the many labourers from Wales who were building the docks and railways. He learnt the Welsh language and translated the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. At least he thought he had. He couldn't understand why the men laughed when it came in the liturgy to the 10 Commandments. In his imperfect understanding of Welsh his translation was: you shall steal, you shall lie, you shall commit adultery.

In this congregation we are at home in many different languages and cultures. This can be very enriching. But when we speak English with one another and worship Jesus in the English language the possibility that we will misunderstand each other, or at the very least understand something else from that which was intended, is greater than that in a single language community with one common culture.

We can see this in the readings for today's service. The psalm is a great poem of praise for the creator God, the source of all life. All living beings are in relationship

with God, who gives and takes life. The response of the psalmist is to praise God. The psalm is thought to have been part of the autumnal harvest festival liturgy in the Temple in Jerusalem. It gives us great joy to pray with this psalm. We may know, or not, that in the sun God liturgy of the temples of Egypt a very similar psalm was used. We can say that we in Freiburg are sharing with the Jewish temple community 2500 years ago a psalm which earlier had been used by those worshipping the sun in Egypt. We are sharing words and images from very different cultures and religions.

The reading is from the Book of Proverbs. Like the psalm it is a reading about creation, but it begins with the creation of wisdom, a female person, as the first of God's works. She is there from before the creation of the world, delighting in what God, the creator, makes. We are more used to the prophets speaking the word of God against the wrong doings of mankind and promising future salvation.

But in the parts of the Jewish bible which are known as the wisdom literature the atmosphere is different. Here is a mystical language, pictures of the Godhead in male and female forms. Words, which encouraged Christians to think of God, as one, yet three different persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To see the Holy Spirit as an image for the female Wisdom of Proverbs is a very old Christian tradition.

We may know, or not, that the idea of wisdom as a female side of God has a long tradition in other religions and cultures of the near east. Again we are sharing with our Jewish brothers and sisters words and images to be found in many different surrounding cultures.

Today's Gospel is also a creation story. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind."

At least in my tradition, here is the prologue of John's Gospel tying together the different prophecies of the birth of Jesus and the different stories of his birth as the final reading of the carol service. Jesus here is not

countless words with all their confusions and differences but rather Jesus is the Word, the one Word which really counts.

John introduces us briefly to John the Baptist in his role as witness to Jesus, which reminds us that we all have this role of witness to Jesus and the witness of what faith in him means for us. This was what Jo Baylee was intending with his theological college, training witnesses to Jesus who can speak to people in their own language, in their own culture. This what the Lent groups and courses are about, helping us to think about our faith, understand it a bit more and speak about it more clearly.

The gospel reading ends with: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." In my sermons around Christmas I concentrated on Jesus, son of Mary. Here in the beginning of John's Gospel the story is Jesus son of God. The two stories need each other. They tell us of the greatness of the creator God who becomes one with his creation. They also tell us of the darkness which cannot see and will not understand "the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

We "who see the glory of the one and only son" need to continually remind ourselves that this great and life transforming truth is not necessarily obvious or true for others, especially when the reflection of this glory is not to be seen in us.

But before I abandon us in the bubble of our own comfort and joy, look again at the opening words of John's Gospel: "in the beginning was the Word" – you may or may not know: this whole passage describing the creation and the place of Jesus in creation is argued in the words and ideas of Greek philosophy. John is telling his readers the story of Jesus in the context of the most advanced ideas of his time, the Neoplatonism of the Alexandrian school.

Jo Baylee with his theological training for uneducated workers in Liverpool, the writers of the psalm and the reading from Proverbs, and John the evangelist are all doing the same thing, they are telling the story of God in the language and ideas of their times. They pulling

down the fence of tradition, the bubble of comfort, and are immersing themselves in the culture of their day, crossing boundaries of thought, ideas and language and saying to those round about them – this is what God, this is what Jesus means for me, and asking what does or what could God or Jesus mean for you. This is challenging, uncomfortable, but it can also be reassuring and life giving.

In this world which we rarely really understand, be comforted by this anecdote about Jo Baylee. He was known as a person who could understand many languages. On the occasion of a special anniversary in Queen Victoria's life, a government official asked him to translate letters which had come from rulers all over the world. The official asked him afterwards how he had come to know all these languages. He answered: I don't, but I could imagine what the rulers would have wanted to say to Queen Victoria!

We sing the song “Sing of the Lord's goodness

Sing of the Lord's goodness Father of all wisdom,
come to him and bless his name.
Mercy he has shown us, his love is forever,
faithful to the end of days.

Refrain:

Come, then, all you nations,
sing of your Lord's goodness,
melodies of praise and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory,
praise him with your music,
worship him and bless his name.

Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow,
Spirit of our God most high;
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,
splendour of the living God.

Refrain

Intercessions



In the Gospel it says: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” and later “The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.”

After one year of Corona Pandemic it sometimes seems like your children will never learn to recognize your light, but are blinded by darkness. We struggle so often to understand the reasons behind things like this virus, are frightened and frustrated, when we hear about new, more dangerous mutants. We need your light to see and understand. So we pray;

In the midst of such events help us to see, that your love is shown in the acts of bravery, selflessness and compassion which follow. We pray for all who suffer in such dreadful circumstances and for those who are tasked with providing medical and community support and, eventually, the long task of recovery that will surely follow this devastating Pandemic.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer!**

Loving God, we pray for our world, which is still shaken by the darkness of war, political conflicts, terror and all the damages, caused by power abusing leaders, climate change and is darkened by hatred, evil and greed. Let your light shine bright, so that we might see the glimpses of hope in “big politics” like the fact that the new US president started to turn back to cooperation and building up again a respectful atmosphere in diplomacy. Help us not to forget about all the other, still existing, problems, which are a bit unseen behind our fight with the Pandemic situation.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer!**

Mighty God, we pray for the worldwide Christian Church in all its wonderful diversity. We pray especially for

those churches who meet together in difficult and dangerous circumstances and at this time of the Pandemic for all those churches who cannot meet in person but only online. May they feel your abiding presence to uphold their courage and strengthen their faith. As we pray for our Chaplaincy here in Freiburg we bring before you all those who lead and inspire our worship, who make sure, that we can meet online, praying as well as worshipping. We pray, that the ongoing process of bringing our new minister here to us may succeed successfully.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer!**

Heavenly Father, we pray for all in need, who are sick, mentally or bodily, all who need a listening ear, calming words or just a compassionate smile. Let them feel, that they are rooted in your love despite of social distancing, give them healing and hope. We thank you for Carers whose love and compassion bring both material and spiritual comfort at times of need. Strengthen them with power, understanding and hopeful perseverance through your Spirit in their inner being and let your light shine brightly.

For this coming week we pray:

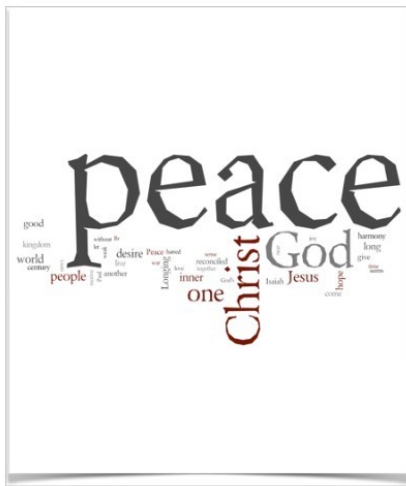
Lord, you have called us and brought light into our lives. And now you ask us to be your light in the continuing darkness.

At times we may be like a small, fragile, flickering candle, at times a bright strong, beam of light.

Help us this coming week to let your light shine through us in our words and our actions.

Merciful Father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

The Lord's prayer



The Peace

God is love
And those who live in love live in God
And God lives in them.

Let us give each other a sign of peace.



The Blessing

May the Father from whom every family
In earth and heaven receives its name
Strengthen you with his Spirit in your inner being,
So that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;
And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy
Spirit
come upon you and remain with you always.
Amen

Notices and other announcements

Our final song for today is “come as you are”

Come as you are, that's how I want you.
Come as you are, feel quite at home.
Close to my heart, loved and forgiven;
come as you are, why stand alone?

No need to fear, love sets no limits.
No need to fear, love never ends.
Don't run away shamed and disheartened.
Rest in my love, trust me again.

I came to call sinners, not just the virtuous.
I came to bring peace, not to condemn.
Each time you fail to live by my promise,
why do you think I'd love you the less?

Come as you are, that's how I love you.
Come as you are, trust me again.
Nothing can change the love that I bear you.
All will be well, just come as you are.

A few footnotes to the homily

St. Aidan's Theological College was founded by Revd. Joseph Baylee in 1846. He was the Principal until 1868. St. Aidan's played a significant role in training clergy for the Dioceses of Liverpool, Chester, Manchester and Blackburn, heartlands of the 19th century industrial revolution in north west England. The college was situated in a fine purpose built building in Birkenhead. In the 1960's there was a serious decline in the number of men (at the time there were no women) wanting to be ordained, so the Church of England closed all the Theological Colleges in towns where there was no university faculty of Theology as was sadly the case in Liverpool University just across the river Mersey from Birkenhead. My father was the last Principal of St. Aidan's and had the sad duty of dispersing property and selling the buildings. The Library went to Liverpool Cathedral together with a portrait of Jo. My father kept the other portrait, which now hangs in our study here in Schlatt.

In the late 1970's after the first few years of the rule of Margaret Thatcher, there were serious riots in Liverpool and inner city Manchester where I was vicar of a slum parish. The Church of England replied to the questions raised by the riots, bringing out a report entitled "Faith in the City", which, without saying so, went back to the ideas of Jo Baylee arguing for ordination of people without formal academic training, non-stipendary ministry of local people for local congregations.

The psalm is similar to the Hymn to Aten from the time of the 18th dynasty around 1400 years before the birth of Christ.

The wisdom traditions of the near east are very wide spread going from simple wisdom for deciding issues of daily life to theoretical discussions leading to the personification of wisdom. Significant in Psalm 104 is that the person of wisdom here is a revelation of God from before the beginning of creation. Elsewhere wisdom is part of creation

The traditions of greek philosophy after Socrates, Plato and Aristotle come together for our purposes in the Alexandrine School of “middle or neo Platonism”. A significant philosopher and theologian in Alexandria in Egypt at the time of Jesus was the jewish scholar Philo. John may have heard of his ideas and way of thinking without actually having been in Alexandria. Philo forms as it were a bridge between the wisdom tradition as he knew it in jewish thinking and the ideas of Plato.

