

the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24). This is our faith, our hope – Jesus is not a fly-by-night friend. He promises to stick by those he loves whatever happens. He promises to share the load. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Later in this First Letter of Peter we read, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7). We are told to be confident, when we are at our lowest, when we are feeling depressed, harassed, and helpless, when we hardly feel worthy of the love of Jesus, because that's just when he cares for us the deepest. As someone who is bound to us in a special relationship, he knows what is going on in our life and how battered we are feeling. So, let's be strong in the knowledge that as bad as things are, we are not in this alone. He encounters us in the very ordinary matters of every day – the struggles, the boredom, the questioning, the pain, the grief, the torments, the doubting, and the temptations. That's where he meets us. Down in the darkest valleys where we wouldn't expect to find him – that's where he is ready to embrace us and remind us that He is our loving shepherd.

Just as the heavenly Father met Jesus in the undignified muddy waters of the Jordan saying, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased", in the same way, our heavenly Father meets us in the muck and mire we find ourselves in and says to us, "My child, I love you very much. You are my own and you make me so happy. I will never leave you".

Friends, this is where our Christian faith, our trust and hope in God our Saviour really comes into its own. Yes, we might have those moments when we experience the closeness of God, our faith and trust in God is soaring, our courage is such we could wrestle a lion. No doubt you've had those times just as I have, but those moments are dwarfed by the number of times we have been down in the valleys where we have struggled against temptation, doubt, physical pain, emotional upsets, even questioned God's plan for our lives. It's just then we don't 'feel' God is near. The experience of God's closeness that we once had, seems a distant memory, if we remember it at all.

But the truth is, that no matter what is going on, God has promised himself to us through the life, death and resurrection of his Son. He is not going to let go of us that easily. We might think he has left us in the lurch, but because of what Jesus has done for you, he has given you a new life which will last forever. He wants you to enjoy that eternal life and he won't let you go now. He will refresh and strengthen you. He is the "Shepherd and Keeper of our souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

C.S. Lewis wrote a little book after his wife's death exposing the raw edges of grief and asking, "Where is God?" He goes on to say that it's easy to find God when we're happy; we readily

turn to him with praise and gratitude when we feel welcomed into his open arms. He goes on, "But go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After the silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become.

But, remember this is a man looking for God through the bitter tears of grief, and he can't see God's closeness. Lewis is not alone in these kinds of situations. Moses, Gideon, Joseph, Jonah, David, even Jesus felt this distance from God in their time of greatest need.

We have now entered the season of Lent and this is a great time to reflect on the unique relationship between our God and us. Consider what it is that prevents you from trusting the love of God; trusting the commitment he made to you at your baptism, believing those promises he has made to you – promises like, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)

Maybe it's time to repent of our failure to live in the hope and strength of the new life that has been given to us and, rejoice in the love and grace of God that will stand by us all during this life, His presence in these darkest of times. Amen

HYMN - TELL OUT MY SOUL

TELL OUT, MY SOUL, the greatness of the Lord! Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice; Tender to me the promise of His word; In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name! Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done; His mercy sure, from age to age the same; His holy name—the Lord, the mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might! Powers and dominions lay their glory by; Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight, The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His word! Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure: Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord To children's children and forever more!

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of

God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always.

Amen.



Welcome to Worship Sheet Issue #48. Lord, be in our worship today. May we feel close to You .

HYMN - DRAW ME CLOSE TO YOU

DRAW ME CLOSE TO YOU, never let me go.

I lay it all down again, to hear You say that I'm Your friend.

You are my desire, no-one else will do, 'cause nothing else could take Your place, to feel the warmth of Your embrace. Help me find the way, bring me back to You.

(Chorus)
You're all I want,
You're all I've ever needed.
You're all I want,
Help me know You are near.

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father at this beginning of Lent, may we find time each day to prepare our hearts for Easter. We thank you, Lord, that You never let us go and all glory, honour and praise belongs to You, and You only. Holy Spirit, refresh us and make us new in You today. Reign over all our hearts and in whatever this day may hold for us, we face it knowing You are already there. Bless You, Lord. Amen.

HYMN - MAJESTY

MAJESTY, worship His majesty, Unto Jesus be glory, honour and praise. Majesty, kingdom authority, Flow from His throne unto His own, His anthem raise.

So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus, Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the King. Majesty, worship His majesty, Jesus who died, now glorified, King of all kings.

Our Family

God made us a family
We need one another
We love one another
We forgive one another

We work together
We play together
We worship together

**Together we use God's word
Together we grow in Christ
Together we love all men
Together we serve our God
Together we hope for heaven
These are our hopes and ideals
Help us to attain them, O God
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen**

If we refuse to admit that we are sinners, then we live in a world of illusion, and truth becomes a stranger to us. But if we freely admit that we have sinned, we find God utterly reliable and straightforward— He forgives our sins and makes us thoroughly clean from all that is evil. The Bible urges us to admit and confess our many sins and evil ways. We are warned not to try to hide them from God, but to confess them to Him honestly and frankly. It is then that, in His mercy, God promises to forgive us. This is something we ought to be doing at all times, particularly when we meet together to thank God for what He has done for us, to praise Him, to hear His word and to ask for those things which we need for both our bodies and souls. I, therefore, ask all of you to join me humbly and sincerely in saying together—

ALMIGHTY AND MOST MERCIFUL FATHER, we have wandered from Your Way like lost sheep, following the inclinations of our own hearts. We have broken Your holy laws. We have ignored the things we should have done, and have done the things we should not have done. As You have promised, show us Your mercy, Lord; spare those who sincerely confess their sins and restore those who are truly sorry; so Lord, give us strength to live a godly and upright life, that will bring honour to Your Holy Name. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

ALMIGHTY God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that we should turn from our sinfulness and live.

God pardons and delivers all those who truly repent and wholeheartedly believe His Holy Gospel.

Let us therefore ask Him to grant us true repentance, and also the power of His Holy Spirit, so that our lives may please Him both now and always.

With such help, we know we shall have the joy of being with Him in the life to come. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**WORSHIP SHEET #48
Sunday 21st February 2021**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

O Lord open our lips
And our mouths shall declare Your praise
O God come quickly to save us
O Lord make haste to help us
Let us praise the Lord
The Lord's Name be praised
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

LESSON : Mark 1:9-15

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness,¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD THANKS BE TO GOD.

HYMN - RIVER, WASH OVER ME

RIVER, WASH OVER ME,
Cleanse me and make me new.
Bathe me, refresh me and fill me anew,
River wash over me.

Spirit, watch over me,
Lead me to Jesus' feet.
Cause me to worship and fill me anew,
Spirit, watch over me.

Jesus, rule over me,
Reign over all my heart.
Teach me to praise You and fill me anew,
Jesus, rule over me.

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified dead and buried; He descended into hell; the Third Day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord be with You.
And with your spirit.
Let us pray.

COLLECT - FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

O LORD, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights, give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

THE LENTEN COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, who hastest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Grace:

O Lord our heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, Who has brought us safely to another day, keep us by Your mighty power from doing wrong, and guard us from all danger. Watch over everything we do, so that all our actions may be right in Your sight. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Power:

O God, the Creator of peace and lover of unity, Whom to know is eternal life, and to serve is perfect freedom, guard us when we are attacked by the Devil, so that we, trusting in Your defence, may not fear any evil. Through the power of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

OTHER PRAYERS

THE GRACE

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

NOTICES

HYMN - 10,000 REASONS

CHORUS

*Bless the Lord oh my soul, Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before, Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name*

The sun comes up It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes

CHORUS

You're rich in love,
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great,
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find

CHORUS

And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore

CHORUS X2

Yes I'll worship Your Holy name!

JUST A BRIEF WORD by Revd Mark

Genesis 9:8-17, 1 Peter 3:20b-22, Mark 1:9-15
There's no doubt that living in lockdown has had a huge impact on the nation and individuals. More than two-thirds of adults in the UK (79%) have reported feeling somewhat or very worried about the effect COVID-19 has and is having on their life. 73% of people are worried about their futures, social security and how their mental wellbeing has and will be affected. 66% feeling stressed or anxious and almost of half of the people surveyed are bored of the situation. Lockdown has brought social isolation to many, particularly people living alone or those who have been shielding. One in eight households (12%) in Great Britain have had to cope with having no access to a private or shared garden. And the pandemic, indicates that we are likely to see an increase in mental

health problems such as depression, substance misuse and post-traumatic stress disorder for front-line health and care workers in the coming months. As difficult as it may be to digest these statistics, our Lord has been present with us during the darkest of times.

It doesn't happen very often but today there is a common thread that runs through all our readings in the lectionary. That is, God promises to stand by those he loves.

The reading from the Old Testament tells us of a time when God's plan for the world was totally forgotten and violence and evil controlled every human heart except for one man and his family. God decided to act in judgement on the corruption of humanity.

However, God stood by that one man, Noah, and his family, and brought them through the evil and wicked times in which they lived. After the flood, God comes down to Noah and does something unusual. He joins him in a relationship with humanity and so becomes interconnected with the hope and disappointment, joy and grief that is part of any relationship.

It's like a husband and wife who are bound together in a commitment of love. When one is happy, they both share the happiness. When one is distressed both share the unhappiness, when one is upset, the other is affected. Wherever there is love, the load is shared. And now when God binds himself to humanity, God feels what humanity feels. God promises his everlasting commitment of faithfulness and love and he shares our human load. He puts a rainbow in the sky as a sign of his reminder to all of this commitment of love.

We know that this relationship, this bond of love between God and humanity led to God's own Son giving himself to weakness and vulnerability as he became one of us. He not only shares in our sorry, sin, guilt, and shame but he dies in our place. It's a journey with humanity that began centuries ago, and to this day God hasn't given up on us and he will remain faithful to the end as Peter says, 'And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast' (1 Peter 5:10).

In the gospel reading today Jesus is about to start his ministry – a ministry that will bring hardship, suffering, cruelty, misunderstanding, mockery, pain, and a cruel death on a cross. From the moment of his baptism, the next three years will be hell on earth for Him. As tough as the going will be, Jesus has the reassurance and the promise that he will not be doing this alone. His Father will share the load. The voice of his loving Father speaks encouragement from heaven, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased".

And so, we come to the First Letter of Peter where we are reminded, that when things become difficult or we become tired of the insults and threats, or when we give into temptation, we are told to "Remember how much you are loved". "He himself bore our sins in his body on