

Worship for the third Sunday in Lent
7th March 2021
from Brian & Clare Kennard

Opening sentence: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” (Psalm 19:1)

Hymn suggestion:

AS THE DEER pants for the water,
So my soul longs after You.
You alone are my heart’s desire
And I long to worship You.

You alone are my strength, my shield,
To You alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart’s desire
And I long to worship You.

I want You more than gold or silver,
Only You can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
And the apple of my eye.

You’re my Friend and You are my Brother,
Even though You are a King.
I love You more than any other,
So much more than anything.

Prayer time:

Be still and focus on the awesome God we serve: great beyond all words, but revealing Himself through His Word, and most clearly through the Word who became flesh - the Lord Jesus Christ. Express your adoration, worship and praise in whatever ways you can.

Prayer for today (“Collect”):

Heavenly Father, you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you: Look upon the heartfelt desires of your humble servants, and stretch forth the strong hand of your Majesty to be our defense against our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, world without end. *Amen.*

Confession

The Bible says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 4: 8-9)

Let God speak to you about the attitudes and actions that need changing in your life. Confess to Him your weaknesses and failures, and receive His cleansing and forgiveness as He has promised.

Bible readings:

If you have your own Bible, please read: **Psalm 19**

New Testament: **1 Corinthians 1:18-28** : Christ Crucified Is God’s Power and Wisdom

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. **22** Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, **23** but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, **24** but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **27** But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. **28** God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are.

Meditation - God’s Tool Kit

Today is the third Sunday in Lent. I’ve not got a new message for you, but one I’ve shared before, which I think bears repeating - God’s Tool Kit.

Why would anyone want a tool kit? Well, to make things and fix things that are broken for a start. God is in the business (obviously) of creation, but also of renewal, restoration and revival - as many of us can personally testify, Praise the Lord! What is in God’s tool kit? Not hammers or chisels or screwdrivers!

We might think of his infinite power, His wisdom and understanding plus tools which are beyond our minds to conceive. But God's tool kit also includes people - men and women, boys and girls that God is using to get what He wants done in the world under way.

So far, so good. What kind of people does God use then? We would imagine that God would go for the most intelligent, the most courageous, the socially acceptable, the "high fliers" and so on. Well, we would imagine that if we hadn't read The Bible! In the Old Testament, God chose for his work people like stammering, reluctant Moses; fearful Gideon; "I'm only a youth" Jeremiah and if we come to the New Testament, think of who Jesus chose to be His disciples - "ignorant and unlearned men" according to the hostile authorities. Likewise, in our reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul reminds his hearers that in their congregation there were "not many wise, not many of noble birth..."

Of course, it isn't that God devalues learning, education or bravery - St. Paul himself had been - in our terms- a University professor and faced all manner of challenges! No, but you've all heard the saying, "A bad workman blames his tools." God is not a bad workman! Indeed He can make things work with some very poor equipment - like you and me! The Good News is there's room for each of us in God's Tool Kit. As has been often said, "The only ability God requires is **availability**" - if God's work ("The Kingdom of God") is to happen through us, we must give ourselves to Him wholeheartedly.

Here is a great difference between spanners, pliers....and us: they are inanimate, with no mind or will. We have been given the amazing privilege and responsibility of freedom - the freedom to choose whether or not we put ourselves in God's hands to be used.

There is another final point I want to make. Elsewhere, St. Paul tells us "our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5) and as God told him, "My (God's) Strength is made perfect in (our) weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9). We see this worked out in the OT characters I've already mentioned -Moses who liberated a whole race, Gideon who saved Israel from oppression, Jeremiah who spoke the truth when all the other prophets were giving lying platitudes. In the history of the church in this country, William Clowes from Burslem in the Potteries was instrumental in a nationwide awakening in the 1800s known as the

"Primitive Methodist revival". Yet Clowes was so shy that he often held his hand in front of his face when preaching, so as not to look at his audience! God uses **those who know they need Him!**

Time to respond! "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8)
Amen.

Prayer time. In your own words, remember before God...those in authority in this country and around the world grappling with the present crisis and the many other difficult problems humanity faces....all those "on the front line" whether NHS staff, transport workers, shop workers, the emergency services...those most personally affected by the Covid-19 outbreak: the bereaved, those seriously ill, those who have already lost their jobs.. the Church of Jesus Christ as together we seek to witness to the love and care of God in word and action....that people everywhere would recognise that those of every race and language are made in the image of God and that we are all one in Christ...and for yourself and your family. Pray for Owen O'Neill, previous Catholic chaplain here, who is seriously ill at a nursing home. Remember, too, thankfulness!

The Lord's Prayer (traditional version):

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 blessing: Now may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with and remain with us always. Amen.

A message from Emma: Thank you from me and my husband for asking after us and for your prayers after the arrival of our son. We're loving spending time with him as a family of 3! I hope you're all doing ok, you're in my prayers. Take care and God bless, Emma.