

Welcome to  
your Parish Church  
in the Diocese of Birmingham



ALL SAINTS  
KINGS HEATH

# A touch of tenderness

Holy Communion on the Fifth Sunday of Lent 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022

We gather

***We do not, at present, pass the collection plate around to receive offerings for the work of All Saints. If you wish to contribute a gift, please put it in the plate at the back of Church when you leave.***

*If you are worshipping at home, have ready in an honoured place a portion of food and something to drink. It may be bread and wine or something else. Set your Bible alongside. You might light a candle to mark the beginning of worship.*

*Music as we gather:*

1. How deep the Father's love for us,  
how vast beyond all measure,  
that he should give his only Son  
to make a wretch his treasure.  
How great the pain of searing loss;  
the Father turns his face away,  
as wounds which mar the chosen One  
bring many souls to glory.

2. Behold the man upon a cross,  
my sin upon his shoulders;  
ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
call out among the scoffers.  
It was my sin that held him there,  
until it was accomplished;  
his dying breath has brought me life –  
I know that "it is finished".

3. I will not boast in anything,  
no gifts, no power, no wisdom;  
but I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
his death and resurrection.  
Why should I gain from his reward?  
I cannot give an answer;  
but this I know with all my heart,  
his wounds have paid my ransom.

*(words & music: Stuart Townend)*

*When invited to stand, we keep silence and then sing: [Lift high the Cross](#)*

*Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim  
till all the world adore his sacred name!*

1. Come, Christians, follow where our Saviour trod,  
o'er death victorious, Christ the Son of God.

2. Led on their way by this triumphant sign,  
the hosts of God in joyful praise combine:

3. For thy blest Cross which doth for all atone,  
creation's praises rise before thy throne:

4. So let the world proclaim with one accord  
the praises of our ever-living Lord.

*(words: George William Kitchin & Michael Robert Newbolt alt; music: Sydney Hugo Nicholson)*

Priest: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**  
Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ  
be with *us all*.

*In Church we respond:*           **and also with you.**

WELCOME *and* NOTICES

*We pray:* **Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known  
and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of  
our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may  
perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**We seek forgiveness**

CONFESSION

Deacon: Brothers and sisters, as we prepare to celebrate the presence of Christ  
in word and sacrament, let us call to mind and confess our sins.

*Silence*

In the wilderness we find your grace;  
you love us with an everlasting love.  
Lord, have mercy.

*We sing:*   **Kyrie eleison.**

There is none but you to uphold our cause;  
our sin cries out and our guilt is great.  
Christ, have mercy.

**Christe eleison.**

Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed;  
restore us and we shall know your joy.  
Lord, have mercy.

**Kyrie eleison.**

Deacon: God assures us: "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"  
(Isaiah 43:18-19)

**FORGIVENESS** *is declared:*

*[May]* The Lord enrich *us* with his grace, and nourish *us* with his blessing; the Lord defend *us* in trouble and keep *us* from all evil; the Lord accept *our* prayers and absolve *us* from *our* offences, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

*We pray* A COLLECT for the Fifth Sunday of Lent.

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world; grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; 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 [Isaiah 43:16-21](#)

[Psalm 126](#)

A Song of Ascents.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;

then it was said among the nations,  
'The Lord has done great things for them.'

The Lord has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.

NEW TESTAMENT READING [Philippians 3:4b-14](#)

HYMN 1. Glory be to Jesus who, in bitter pains,  
poured for me the life-blood from his sacred veins.

2. Grace and life eternal in that blood I find:  
blest be his compassion, infinitely kind.
3. Blest, through endless ages, be the precious stream  
which, from endless torment, did the world redeem.
4. There the fainting spirit drinks of life her fill;  
there, as in a fountain, laves herself at will.
5. Abel's blood for vengeance pleaded to the skies,  
but the blood of Jesus for our pardon cries.
6. Oft as it is sprinkled on our guilty hearts  
Satan in confusion terror-struck departs.
7. Oft as earth exulting wafts its praise on high  
angel hosts rejoicing, make their glad reply.
8. Lift, then, all your voices, swell the mighty flood;  
louder still and louder, praise the precious blood.

*(words: 'Viva, viva, Gesù' [18th Century], trans Edward Caswall alt; music: Friedrich Filitz)*

#### GOSPEL READING [John 12:1-8](#)

*In church we stand and, when it is announced, we say:*

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*At the end:* This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

#### SERMON *from David*

Violence and death are all around, but the sweet, melancholy sound of a saxophone fills the little makeshift hospital in Ukraine, where the medics, many volunteers from Israel, stop and listen, some shedding a tear at the lovely music. A father is playing to thank them for saving his son, injured when their apartment block was hit by Russian artillery. That musician shows us what Mary was doing, and conveys the intensity of that little room in Jesus' friends' house in Bethany.

Jesus has saved their brother, Lazarus, brought him back to life, and now they lay a feast for him. He has dined with them often before. The Gospels give us more detail of Mary's and Martha's character and conversation than any other disciples. Once again, Martha serves the meal. The same word is used by Jesus when he says later, "I am among you as one who *serves*." Mary anoints his feet, perhaps echoing another woman's actions in Simon the Pharisee's house. Having been moved by their tenderness, Jesus will later wash his disciples' feet. Martha is a theologian, talking over doctrine with Jesus, even in

her grief. Mary wants to teach the faith and so, Luke tells us, takes the posture of the student at her Rabbi's feet hanging on his every word. Both of them push back at Jesus when they think he might have been uncharacteristically neglectful. Mary clearly knows her scriptures. Surely this daring poem was in her mind and Jesus' as she poured the ointment:

"Your love is better than wine, your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is perfume poured out; therefore the maidens love you..."

While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance..."

The man in turn calls her "an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna, nard... and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes."

She responds:

"Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind. Blow upon my garden that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits."  
(Song of Solomon 1:2-3; 3:12-16)

Wiping his feet with her hair is unsettlingly erotic, and yet Jesus seems both moved and at ease. When Judas reveals his lonely resentment, clearly disappointed that someone else be blessed, desperately trying to scramble to some bleak moral high ground, Jesus gives thanks for Mary's tenderness, and the extravagance of her attention. The violent sounds of empire recede for a little while. The stink of the cemetery on a hot day, which Martha had warned about when Lazarus died, is overcome by the perfume of attentive love.

It's often said that death makes people randy. Maybe it's some evolutionary impulse to breed, and maybe it's a sensuous grasping of vibrant life in the face of oblivion. Eating always implies our death. For the act of eating highlights the precariousness of our existence. It is a display of need, dependence, transience. Jesus very deliberately highlights the connection between the erotic anointing and the tragic anointing after death. The connection is made in the Song of Solomon, too, where spices include Myrrh, sex pointing to death in an intriguing way.

I wonder why Jesus loved that unusual family so much: three unmarried siblings, talkative sisters and silent brother, clearly leaders in some way given the crowds that came to the funeral. Perhaps it's their being single, like him, and a certain sexual charge (visible in Mary's anointing) is channeled, as all our sexuality should be, towards a deeper understanding of God. Perhaps Jesus also valued the way they challenged him in pastoral discussion, reminding him of the ugly side of death if they thought he was being too theoretical; reminding him of the practical realities of preparing a meal while he taught the faith. Surely he liked all the food. Maybe their home, which will be the place he chooses to say goodbye at his Ascension, is a safe place for the Messiah's candid reflection.

In that space, Martha's cooking and Mary's anointing solve nothing. It does not remove the Authorities' threat, nor delay Jesus' death, but it does make sure there is something

beautiful about his last days. Jesus notes how she might have kept the ointment for his burial. Maybe there is some left over. But she opened it while he is there to enjoy it. Say that you love each other before it's too late, he hints. David Ford rejoices that "As in the Song of Solomon, here in Bethany there are fragrance food and utter mutuality in love." Even when heartbroken, Martha had kept hope alive in conversation with Jesus and brought Mary back to him when she has stayed at home too hurt by her brother's death to come and see him. Now, still surrounded by death, they host a thank you meal to celebrate their brother's return, however temporary it may be. We know from Luke there were crackling tensions between Martha and Mary sometimes, but in the imperfect fellowship around Jesus there is mutual affirmation; intelligent curiosity; candid practicality; humble service; defiant tenderness; affirmation that opens up possibilities and keeps the community alert to hope.

Contrast what John 11:47-53 tells us, that the authorities had a crisis meeting about Lazarus. They couldn't enjoy the moment. They were embittered that he was so blessed, sure it would put them at a disadvantage, so they began encircling Jesus, plotting his death. Here is the spiritual alignment between them and Judas who also can't cope with others' happiness. We recognize such bitterness Judas Putin, so resentful when he sees Ukraine being blessed in freedom and friendship; claiming moral high ground but harboring thoughts of theft and death.

Mary and Martha show the exact opposite of bitterness. In their different patterned sorrow, they do something beautiful: one cooks a meal and the other anoints their guest. Nothing changes in their circumstance, and yet everything changes. The world is full of sensory colour. As Isaiah knew long before them, it is important to remember and mark the times in the past where God has led us through the chaos when we thought there was no way through, but not to get stuck there. In an antidote to nostalgia, Isaiah laughingly casts God saying "*don't* remember what I did in the past. Rather look around and see what I'm doing now. Yes, I did deliver the people of Israel from the sea, but you ain't seen nothin' yet."

Wonderfully, Isaiah insists that the jackals who went scavenging in the ruins of Jerusalem in earlier chapters, a sign of mercenary pleasure in death, will soon be joining in the praise of God, which is the destiny of all creation. Some of the most evil people in the current war are the jackals prowling the borders of Ukraine to see if they can take advantage of refugees, commoditise them and traffic them. It is truly wicked. Yet, the salvation of God could, if they chose to be healed, encompass them, such is the vast scope of his grace. The Israelites remember being rescued from a foreign power so they could praise God all by themselves in peace. Now, God shows them the vision is even bigger. They will be rescued in such a way that the whole world can enjoy God and join in the praise.

Paul is distressed that some of Christians who share his Jewish heritage have kept remembering the old covenant too rigorously and are imposing it on new believers. They are continuing the mindset of an exclusive elite. That is why he overwhelms them with his Jewish credentials, and insists our perfection in faith is not obtained through pedantry and rules, which is bound always to tend towards exclusivity. Rather, perfection is found

through the grace of God working in us. That is a much less controllable kind of salvation. It is more in the realm of the fragrance filling the house in Bethany.

It's hard for us to separate the concept of righteousness from the word self-righteousness. We are alert to its superiority. Paul means the opposite, though. It is Christ's perfection that puts us in touch with God. Righteousness is a desire to be like the God who made us in his/her image. In this life righteousness manifests as humble joy. Paul responds to the perfection of God he meets in Jesus by reaching towards it, straining for it because he can't help it. As St John Chrisostom put it, "It is the mark of a perfect [person] not to reckon [themselves] as perfect." Paul calls this mode of being "the upward call of Christ" (v14).

As ever, without changing the circumstance around us, our scriptures have given us something to do and something to pray. The doing is to take every opportunity to express tenderness, from the Ukrainian flag on a Cotswold cottage gate, to a moist sponge dabbing a dying man's chapped lips; from the kind or constructively critical word someone needs before we go, to the extravagant thank you meal; from the beautiful line in a card to the widower, to the lover's tender touch; from the laughter of the powerless to the medic staying beside the dying as bombs fall; from the giving to the receiving of hospitality; from music in a field hospital to hands held in prayer: in all its forms, tenderness matters. Your tenderness matters. Tenderness defies tyranny. Tenderness keeps each other's hearts open to the upward call of Christ.

Our prayer might be for the differently opportunist jackals and those crippled by resentment and those boastful in their exclusive power: that they might catch the strangely arousing scent of tenderness and realize how all they had relied on for reputation, status and survival is rubbish compared to that perfume. Amidst the wreckage of their making let them sense: God is doing a new thing. Can you not perceive it? Don't you want to be a part of it?

## We affirm our faith

*At home, if able, we stand and turn in the direction of Church, where we also stand to affirm our faith saying the Apostles' Creed:*

Deacon: We stand to affirm our faith:

**All: I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,**

**he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

INTERCESSIONS *In Church, prayers are led by Becky Frall.*

*If you are praying at home, give yourself time with each reading, seeing who these prompts brings to mind. In silence hold them before God.*

*From Psalm 126: we pray for those who mourn, that joy and laughter will return in good time.*

*From Isaiah 43: we pray for those to whom the world seems barren and hostile.*

*From Philippians 3: we pray for any who try to establish their reputation by unhealthy means.*

*From John 12: we pray for all who crave tender touch, but experience only harshness;*

*all who feel resentful when others are blessed;*

*all who need tender care at the end of their life, and those called to give it.*

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

## THE PEACE

Deacon: Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross. We meet in his name and share his peace, so we say to one another:

**All: The Peace of the Lord be always with you.**

## HYMN

1. Peace is flowing like a river,  
flowing out through you and me,  
spreading out into the desert,  
setting all the captives free.

*Let it flow through me,  
let it flow through me,  
let the mighty peace of God  
flow out through me. (x2)*

2. Love is flowing like a river,  
flowing out through you and me,  
spreading out into the desert,  
setting all the captives free.

3. Joy is flowing like a river,  
flowing out through you and me,  
spreading out into the desert,  
setting all the captives free.

4. Hope is flowing like a river,  
flowing out through you and me,  
spreading out into the desert,  
setting all the captives free.

5. Christ brings peace to all creation,  
flowing out through you and me,  
love, joy, hope and true salvation,  
setting all the captives free.

*(words: vv1-4 unknown; v5 editors of 'Complete Anglican Hymns Old & New';  
music: unknown, arr Andrew Moore)*

*The Table is prepared in Church. At home, now is the time to say the Lord's Prayer  
(below) and consume the food and drink you have prepared, first praying:*

God, we long for Communion. With this symbolic meal stir my hope for  
the fellowship meal we cannot yet see, and help me wait for it with  
patience. **Amen.** (cf Romans 8:2)

## We celebrate God's faithfulness

*In Church we stand, if able, for the Eucharistic Prayer.*

Priest: The Lord is here.

**All: God's Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

Extravagant God, you poured out your life in your covenant with your  
chosen people and you poured out your lifeblood in the ministry and death  
of your Son Jesus Christ. You meet our meanness with your grace, our  
scarcity with your abundance and our suspicion with your generous trust.  
And so we give your thanks, with angels and archangels and all the  
company of heaven singing the hymn of your unending praise.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Sharing God, in Jesus you attended a meal to celebrate Lazarus'  
resurrection, and so we gather today to celebrate your resurrection, in faith  
that even now you are preparing a feast to celebrate our resurrection with  
you. Sanctify us that, even as our flesh and blood decays, our hearts are  
made ready that we may meet you face to face. Send down your Holy  
Spirit that this bread of sustenance and wine of joy may be for us the body  
and blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Who, at supper with his disciples, took  
bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying,

“Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

*A bell is rung*

After supper he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples saying, “Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

*A bell is rung*

Abundant God, when we know the price of everything and the value of nothing, may this meal remind us of the limitless joy you take in us. When we are full of criticism of others and hatred of ourselves, may this sacrifice show us the goodness you see in us all. Bless all our touching, that we may touch your gifts and one another as if we were touching your body and blood. Bless all our desire, that in every craving and longing we may discover a deeper yearning for you. Renew the hearts of all your people, that your whole church, seeking together the justice of your kingdom, may discover in the stranger the gifts that only come from you, through whom and with whom and in whom comes all honour and glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Deacon: As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive  
those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but  
deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Priest: We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All: Though we are many, we are one body.  
For we all share in one bread.**

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you. Eat in remembrance that he died for you and feed on him in your hearts with thanksgiving.

*We sing:* **Jesus, Lamb of God: have mercy on us.  
Jesus, bearer of our sins: have mercy on us.  
Jesus, redeemer of the world: grant us peace.**

(Shephard)

*We pause to remember all who pray at home, then share the bread, now for us the body of Christ.*

*SONG during Communion*

1. When you prayed beneath the trees,  
it was for me, O Lord;  
when you cried upon your knees,  
how could it be, O Lord?  
When in blood and sweat and tears  
you dismissed your final fears,  
when you faced the soldiers' spears,  
you stood for me, O Lord.

2. When their triumph looked complete,  
it was for me, O Lord;  
when it seemed like your defeat,  
they could not see, O Lord!  
When you faced the mob alone  
you were silent as a stone,  
and a tree became your throne;  
you came for me, O Lord.

3. When you stumbled up the road,  
you walked for me, O Lord,  
when you took your deadly load,  
that heavy tree, O Lord;  
when they lifted you on high  
and they nailed you up to die,  
and when darkness filled the sky,  
it was for me, O Lord.

4. When you spoke with kingly power,  
it was for me, O Lord;  
in that dread and destined hour,  
you made me free, O Lord;  
earth and heaven heard you shout,  
death and hell were put to rout,  
for the grave could not hold out;  
you are for me, O Lord.

*(words: Christopher Idle; music: John Barnard)*

## We are sent out

**All: Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with your Word [and with the body of Christ]. Strengthen us in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.**

THE BLESSING *In Church the priest declares God's blessing. At home we pray:*  
*May we press on towards the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us always. Amen.*

*(Philippians 3:14)*

HYMN [To God be the glory!](#)

1. To God be the glory! great things he hath done;  
so loved he the world that he gave us his Son;  
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,  
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord! let the earth hear his voice;  
praise the Lord, praise the Lord! let the people rejoice:  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
and give him the glory; great things he hath done!*

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood!  
to ev'ry believer the promise of God;  
the vilest offender who truly believes,

that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

3. Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,  
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
but purer, and higher, and greater will be  
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

*(words: Frances Jane van Alstyne [Fanny J Crosby]; music: William Howard Doane)*

Deacon: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All: In the name of Christ, Amen.**

*(words: William Williams, trans Peter Williams & others; music: John Hughes)*



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