

Parish of Central Exeter

Lent 2

13 March 2022

Stand firm in the Lord

Welcome everyone.



Our reflections this morning have been provided by Sheila.

Inevitably our service today will reflect the events happening in Ukraine, indeed it would be wrong to do otherwise. Christians in Ukraine and Russia are generally members of the Orthodox Church, and as Father Porphyrios, who conducts worship for the Russian Orthodox community in Exeter explains:

‘The Russian Orthodox church is present in many countries including Ukraine.

My diocese has parishes and communities in many European Countries including England, Scotland and Wales. This complexity, little understood in the West, is reflected in the composition of our congregation which includes English and other Western Europeans, Lithuanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and others. We are so grateful that we have place in your church to meet together at the Table of the Lord where there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free but are all one in Christ.... ‘

As part of our service we shall include prayers from the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of the Orthodox Churches of Russian Tradition in Europe.

Our theme for today from Philippians is ‘Stand firm in the Lord’, and this surely implies the Christian hope that will see us through these difficult times.

Call to Worship in Hope

Hope nonetheless.

Hope despite.

Hope regardless.

Hope still.

Hope where we had ceased to hope.

Hope amid what threatens hope.

Hope with those who feed our hope.

Hope beyond what we had hoped.

Hope that draws us past our limits.

Hope that defies expectations.

Hope that questions what we have known.
Hope that makes a way where there is none.

Hope that takes us past our fear.
Hope that calls us into life.
Hope that holds us beyond death.
Hope that blesses those to come.

(written by Jan L. Richardson, and posted on The Painted Prayerbook.)

Gathering Hymn

All my hope on God is founded. Sung here by the Choral Scholars of St Martin in the Fields.
Words are on the screen.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaP7CNrqF_k

A call to confession

Abandon the illusion you're a self-contained individual.
Be a part of this wounded world,
and find yourself with Christ.

Set aside your own desires,
give yourself fully for others;
be the hands and heart of Jesus.

Renounce self-protection,
accept your brokenness,
and reach out for love.

Let go of your own plans.
Join in the healing of the world.
You will not be alone.

Follow your soul, not your ego.
Follow it right into people's suffering.
Follow it right into the heart of God.

Pour yourself out;
let the world pour in;
then you are one with the Beloved.

(written by Steve Garnaas-Holmes and posted on Unfolding Light.)

A collect for the Second Sunday of Lent

Almighty God,
by the prayer and discipline of Lent
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,
and by following in his Way
come to share in his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reading 1

Psalm 31: 21-24:

²¹ Praise be to the Lord,
for he showed me the wonders of his love
when I was in a city under siege.
²² In my alarm I said,
"I am cut off from your sight!"
Yet you heard my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.
²³ Love the Lord, all his faithful people!
The Lord preserves those who are true to him,
but the proud he pays back in full.
²⁴ Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the Lord.

Philippians 3:17-4:1

¹⁷ Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. ⁴ ¹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Luke 13:31-35

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' ³² He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem." ³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to

gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

Reflection

The verses from Psalm 31 are ones that Ukrainian Christians are praying and suggesting that we use when we pray for them. They are words of encouragement and hope which conclude a psalm that is full of laments. There is much to lament about as we watch the needless destruction of buildings and infrastructure, the uprooting of people and most importantly the loss of life.

In our gospel for this Sunday Jesus foretold his suffering in Jerusalem and his concern for the city. Later in Luke 19:41-44 he wept for the city aware of the destruction that would happen. Throughout the centuries I believe God has continued to mourn over the violent and destructive behaviour of humanity.

Paul wrote his letter to the small community of believers in Philippi from prison. With his loss of freedom and suffering he still wrote words full of joy and assurance and encouraged them to 'stand firm in the Lord'. He noted with sadness those who lived just for themselves. His hope was in the transformation that will happen with the second coming of Jesus. We may not have the fervent expectation that this will happen soon as Paul did, but we do have the assurance of eternal life.

In addition, I am reminded of the final verse of the hymn by John Ellerton, 'The day thou gavest, Lord is ended'. This is always sung at the end of the annual (Women's) World Day of Prayer service on the first Friday of March

So be it, Lord, thy throne shall never,
like earth's proud empires, pass away;
thy kingdom stands, and grows forever,
till all thy creatures own thy sway.

The Roman empire passed, the British empire which was still growing when Ellerton died in 1893 passed and so today the Russian empire will pass away. Sadly, though much suffering may happen before it does. Today we pray and give what we can.

A prayer for Ukraine

by Sally Foster-Fulton, Head of Nations and Church Relations, Churches Together

Borders, barricades, bewilderment...
When the bargaining begins,
God please protect peace.

Sanctions, security measured in minutes and it's scary...
When safety scatters,
God please protect peace.

War dresses up in peace-keeper's clothes,
Troops amass, the ground trembles and so do people...
When the future feels fragile,
God please protect peace.

The littlest, the least likely to have a say,
Those whose lives are sanctioned and bargained over –
Violence always finds them first.
And the 'oh-so-important' political manoeuvres mean nothing to them.
They just want to live.

When the winners want to wipe them out of the way,
God please protect peace.

We will not turn away. We will stand together –
God give us the strength to protect peace.

Amen

Meditative song

'The Lord is my Light'. This is a Taizé chant – very simple yet powerful.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFUJi7xmlnc>

Affirmation of Faith

Jesus taught us to speak of hope as the coming of God's kingdom.

We believe that God is at work in our world
turning hopeless and evil situations into good.
We believe that goodness and justice
will triumph in the end
and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever.
One day all tears will be wiped away;
the lamb will lie down with the lion,
and justice will roll down like a mighty stream.

True peace and true reconciliation are not only desired,
they are assured and guaranteed in Christ.

This is our faith. This is our hope. *(20th century South African creed.)*

Intercessions

From the Archdiocese of the Orthodox Churches of Russian Tradition in Europe

Look with compassion on the people in the land of Ukraine, make them steadfast before those who sow trouble there:

Merciful Lord, we pray to You,
listen to us and have mercy on us.

May the thoughts of those clouded by human weakness be illuminated by the light of divine wisdom. Strengthen Your faithful in the land of Ukraine and keep them safe:

Merciful Lord, we beg You,
listen to us and have mercy on us.

You who have given the commandment to love You and our Neighbour, make hatreds, enmities, corruptions, bloodshed and other iniquities come to an end, that true love may reign,

Merciful Lord we pray to You,
listen to us and have mercy on us.

Worship Song

‘O Love that will not let me go.’ Sung by the Celebration Singers accompanied by the band of the Sheffield Salvation Army Citadel. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biHQVoAUTtU>

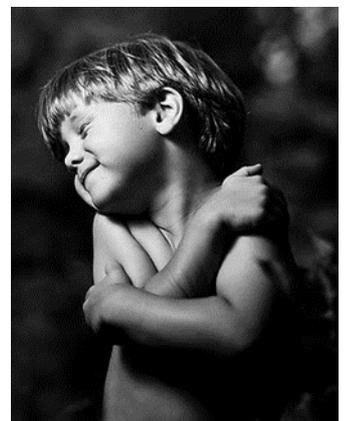
The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly ‘eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ’, even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.



O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to Wait for the Lord sung by St David's church choir. Words are on the screen. Thank you Nigel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M89oWjt0Ok>



Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

Almighty God,
you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:
keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
and inwardly in our souls;
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Closing Prayer

From the Archdiocese of the Orthodox Churches of Russian Tradition in Europe.

"Lord Jesus Christ our God, You have destroyed the wall of enmity, You have granted true peace to Your people, and You have called peacemakers, 'blessed sons of God'. We implore You: bless those who seek true peace and work diligently for this cause.

Enlighten the minds and hearts of all who engage in the God-pleasing work for peace. Give wisdom to those in civil authority, strengthen will for peace in the rulers of our peoples and enlighten their minds so that they can work with wisdom and discernment to build the desired peace.

By the grace of your Holy Spirit, let peace be made in all peoples, not by words, but by deeds, so that orphans and widows may be comforted and no longer weep, but may rejoice in seeing the expected peace.

Softened hardened hearts, so that they may seek in sweetness harmony and love.

Bless every man and teach him to understand and do Your will, which is salvation, love, peace and the union of all. For You are the King of Peace, to whom there are no limits, and to You be glory, thanksgiving and adoration, with Your Father who is without beginning and to Your most holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and always, and to the ages of ages.

Amen".

Blessing

May the path
that Christ walks
to bring justice
upon the earth,

to bring light
to those who sit
in darkness,
to bring out those
who live in bondage,
to bring new things
to all creation:

may this path
run through our life.
May we be
the road Christ takes.

(written by Jan L. Richardson, and posted on The Painted Prayerbook.)

Closing Music

Lord of all Hopefulness, sung here by the choir of St Alban's Cathedral. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8mti7VL3gg>

