



Martin Bird's Prayers for Monday 15th to Sunday 21st March 2021

Monday

Reading – Hebrews Chapter 9, verses 1 to 14

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now. When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings - external regulations applying until the time of the new order. But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God!

Lord Jesus, thank you so much for your sacrifice made once for all. Thank you for dying for us on the cross that now means we can come to you, knowing that if we do give ourselves fully to you, your blood, the final sacrifice will cleanse our lives and cleanse our hearts, so we can come to God, through you knowing that we will be accepted. Help us to keep serving you, the living God, so that we will be able to claim the eternal life that you promise us. We pray this in your name, our crucified and resurrected Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord Amen

Tuesday

Reading – Hebrews Chapter 9, verses 15 to the end

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.” In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you came to earth to be the one, true sacrifice. Thank you that, through your blood, you take away the sin of all who come to you. Help us to continually come to you throughout this tough time and always. Thank you that you will appear again to bring salvation to all of us who are waiting for you. We ask you now, Lord Jesus, our Messiah, to help us whilst we wait, to continue to do your work here on earth and do our part in bringing in the harvest for you so more and more people will come to know you. We thank you Lord Jesus that you did return to heaven, and are there now, appearing for us in God’s presence. Because of this, we can know, for sure, that we can and will get to heaven to spend eternity with God, through you Lord Jesus. Help us to truly live as saved people, and bring more and more people to you to be saved too. Amen

Wednesday (Patrick)

Reading – John Chapter 10, verses 11 to 21

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” The Jews who heard these words were again divided. Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?” But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Lord Jesus, you are the good shepherd. You laid down your life on the cross for us, your sheep, and we cannot even begin to thank you enough for that. You never abandon us – you are always there to lead us in the right direction. You know us – may we always remember that we know you too, just as you said. Help us to be shepherds to other people, sharing the love and hope we have in knowing and following you to as many people as we can, and in whichever way we can. You followed your Father’s command – now may we follow yours and do your work, this day and always, Amen

Thursday (Cyril)

Reading – Hebrews Chapter 10, verses 19 to 25

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Lord Jesus, your blood was shed for all, and because of your wonderful sacrifice for us all, we can now draw near to God, because you have opened the pathway to Him. May we always have a truly sincere heart and may we know that those hearts have been sprinkled by your blood to cleanse us from the inside out. Let us, like the writer of Hebrews, hold on to the wonderful hope we have in you – a hope that comes from a place of certainty. A hope that says we will come to God and to eternal life, because of your one, true sacrifice on the cross. May we all do all we can, even in this most difficult of times, to spur each other on and encourage each other, so that our faith in you would remain strong and so that more people would come to you with that self-same faith and hope. Amen

Friday – Joseph of Nazareth

Reading – Matthew Chapter 1, verses 18 to the end

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Lord God, we thank you today for the person of Joseph, Jesus’s earthly father. He remained faithful to Mary after an angel of the Lord appeared to him – he didn’t question what the angel said, he just faithfully acted on it and took Mary as his wife. He accepted without question that Mary’s baby was your Son, and he looked after Mary and made sure she remained safe so that the birth could take place as had been foretold. May we today be as faithful and caring as Joseph in our everyday lives, and may we, too, when we hear your voice telling us what to do, follow the instructions you give us as faithfully, honestly and unswervingly as Joseph did. Amen

Saturday Cuthbert)

Reading – Psalm 150

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.

Lord God, may our whole lives be built to praise you. May all we do give you the glory, may all that we are glorify you and may all that we say both praise you and bring more people to you. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord, says the psalmist. May this be especially true now as this world is struggling with this pandemic, and so many people are in desperate need of your presence but don’t know it. May all your people rise up in praise and all your creatures rise up in praise. May this outpouring of praise be so loud and so obvious that it cannot be ignored and may more and more people finally recognise you as their God, and your Son Jesus as their one, true Saviour. We praise you Father God – hear our praise! Amen

Sunday – Passiontide begins

Reading – John Chapter 12, verses 20 to 33

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me. “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Lord Jesus, as you said to Philip and Andrew, “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” Knowing as we do that that glory would come via death on the cross, we can never stop being so very grateful for what you went through to save us all. May we now be seeds for you, and through what we say, what we do and what we are, may we produce more seeds for you too. You glorified your Father’s name through your incredible actions and through your death and resurrection. May we too glorify God’s name through living our lives for Him through you. May we too be able to truly take up our cross and follow you, just as you ask us to do, and may we never stop giving you the glory, our crucified and resurrected Messiah and Saviour. Amen