

Sunday 1st March '26 (2nd Sunday in Lent) (prayers from Roots)

Call to worship

Come, those who feel certain, and those who feel unsure.

Come, those with few questions, and those with many questions.

Come, those who have just started to ask questions and those who have been asking questions for a long time.

Come, come and worship the one who has the answers to all our questions.

Hymn StF465 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore;
feed me now and evermore.

Open thou the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream shall flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

William Williams (1717-1791)

Prayers

A prayer of adoration

God of all knowledge,

we worship and adore you!

Son who makes the Father known to us,

we worship and adore you!

Holy Spirit who brings wisdom to our hearts and minds,

we worship and adore you!

A prayer of confession

Heavenly Father, you created us to be curious creatures, yet we forget this when it comes to our

faith.

We hear the stories of your deeds with complacency and without comment, so often forgetting to try and see in depth, to question.

Forgive us for this lack of respect.

We renew our commitment to a relationship with you that is not afraid to ask questions, for you delight in the curiosity of your children.

Assurance of forgiveness

You forgive us, Lord,

when we become lukewarm and complacent towards you.

You forgive us

when we allow the unimportant things of life to distract us from the big questions we should be asking.

Praise be to you, God,

for waiting, father-like, to hear and forgive us.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: John 3 1-17

Reflection Keep asking questions?

Our passage tells of the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus. It was at night for fear of being seen because of his position in the temple. He was a Pharisee and used to telling others what to do. He came with questions, but had he come ready to listen and hear.

Most of us have been on the receiving end of endless questions from a young child. Are we there yet? How does? Why? Etc. it can feel an endless barrage and we can get irritated in the way we reply. But asking questions is one way we learn, not just taking things at face value.

Nicodemus in this instant is like that young child as asks for clarification of what Jesus means. 'How can anyone be born who has already been born and grown up?' he asks. Jesus tells him he's not listening and then continues to explain in a slightly different way. Here is how the Message puts it and I feel it gives a very understandable version.

Unless a person submits to this original creation – the 'wind-hovering-over-the-water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life – it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. When you look at a baby, it's just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can't see and touch – the Spirit – and becomes a living spirit.

But even the Nicodemus asks again ‘What does this mean?’ and Jesus replies with telling him that his position in the temple has blinded him in seeing the truth when it is right in front of him. He is indicating himself. He is the way to the Father. He then refers to an illustration that would have been very familiar to Nicodemus, again from the Message.

Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up – and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

In this explanation he is also foretelling the events that will happen on Golgotha when he is lifted up in front of the people on the cross and then again when he ascends to the Father in glory.

We are not told if Nicodemus finally understood but we do know that he left the meeting before anyone would be around so to keep the secret of the meeting. He had to be told in different ways to aid his understanding. Just like that young child who keeps asking he really wanted to understand but he had to put to one-side the knowledge he already had. To take on a new perspective.

If you’ve ever injured a limb and had to do things in a different way to you normally do them you will understand the situation Nicodemus found himself in. All of a sudden the rules have changed.

What can we learn from this? Perhaps it’s the idea of opening our minds to new ideas and trust in the promise of God.

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

Prayers for others

God who makes known what is unknown, we offer our prayers for those who step out into the unknown on behalf of the community. We pray for ambulance crews, members of the fire service and police officers responding to emergency calls who do not know what to expect when they respond to a call.

Lord of the light, **bring vision, wisdom and strength.** God who makes known what is unknown, we offer our prayers for those whose lives have been devastated by earthquake, famine and flood. We hold before you people who have no idea what tomorrow holds because their homes and livelihoods have been destroyed.

Lord of the light, **bring vision, wisdom and strength.**

God who makes known what is unknown, we offer our prayers for those who flee their country without really knowing what journeys end will be; for those who cross the channel in small boats; those seeking asylum and for refugees.

Lord of the light, **bring vision, wisdom and strength.** God who makes known what is unknown we offer our prayers for ourselves. We do not know what lies ahead for us. We have hopes. We have apprehensions. Help us always to remember that whatever the unknown holds for us you will be with us, beside us, within us and your love will guide us on the way forward.

Lord of the light, **bring vision, wisdom and strength.** In the name of Jesus, we pray.

Amen.

While sitting in a short time of quiet bring your own thoughts and concerns to the Lord.

Hymn StF 424 God forgave my sin

God forgave my sin in Jesus’ name:
I’ve been born again in Jesus’ name,
and in Jesus’ name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.

*He said: ‘Freely, freely you have received,
freely, freely give;
go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.’*

All power is given in Jesus’ name
in earth and heaven in Jesus’ name;
and in Jesus’ name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.

Carol Owens (b1931)

Closing prayer

God of our journey and God of our questions, thank you for being with us each step of our journey, and that you hear each question we ask – both those we ask aloud and those we ask silently in our hearts. Be with us as we journey on and keep asking questions.
Amen.

As we come to the grace, cup your hands together and imagine all those you hold dear cradled there, then bring them close to your heart as you say the words:

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen