



**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2022.**

**A service of worship for use at home**

**Prepared by Phil Colbourn**

**Lent 4. Mothering Sunday**

**Welcome**

Our opening sentences are from Psalm 32 (Good News)

Happy are those whose sins are forgiven,  
whose wrongs are pardoned...

<sup>3</sup> When I did not confess my sins,  
I was worn out from crying all day long...

<sup>5</sup> Then I confessed my sins to you;  
I did not conceal my wrongdoings.

I decided to confess them to you,  
and you forgave all my sins.

<sup>6</sup> So all your loyal people should pray to you in times of need

**Let's sing our opening hymn:** Morning has broken

1 Morning has broken, like the first morning,  
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!  
Praise for them, springing fresh from the  
Word!

2 Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from  
Heaven,  
Like the first dewfall on the first grass.  
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,  
Sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

3 Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning,  
Born of the one light Eden saw play.  
Praise with elation, praise every morning,  
God's re-creation of the new day!

**Prayers:**

We come to worship (*If you have flowers, perhaps you could hold a flower as we pray*)

This Mothering Sunday, let's pause and hold before God our own circumstances, our family, our homes, thankful for love shown and experienced in so many ways, over so many years.

We give you thanks, O God, that you watch over us your children like a mother hen, longing for us to seek shelter under your wings.

We bring you our praise and worship, ever-loving God, this Spring morning, as new life returns to our wintered world.

We worship you who are always new, always giving life and always bringing new life into your world.

We worship you, our God and our Creator, Lord of all, in Jesus' name. **Amen**

*We share in a prayer of penitence based on Psalm 32:*

Happy are they whose sin is forgiven. When we hang on to our pride and selfishness, our hearts shrivel up inside us and we become desiccated husks and our bodies suffer all kinds of ills. But when we talk to God, when we listen, when we confess, then we find relief. God is true, always ready and waiting to welcome us home, to heal and restore us to full health. **Amen.**

Praise be to God.

*Happy are they, they that love God,  
Whose hearts have Christ confessed,  
Who by his cross have found their life,  
And 'neath his yoke their rest.*

## Readings:

### Joshua [4, 23-24] 5, 9-12 (The Message)

“Yes, God, your God, dried up the Jordan’s waters for you until you had crossed, ... so that everybody on earth would recognize how strong God’s rescuing hand is and so that you would hold God in solemn reverence always.”]

<sup>9</sup> God said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt.” That’s why the place is called The Gilgal. <sup>10</sup> The People of Israel continued to camp at The Gilgal. They celebrated the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the plains of Jericho.

<sup>11-12</sup> Right away, the day after the Passover, they started eating the produce of that country. And then no more manna; the manna stopped. As soon as they started eating food grown in the land, there was no more manna for the People of Israel. That year they ate the crops of Canaan.

### 2 Corinthians 5, 16-21 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation... <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

### Sing: One more step

1 One more step along the world I go,  
One more step along the world I go,  
From the old things to the new,  
Keep me traveling along with you:

*And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me traveling along with you.*

2 Round the corners of the world I turn,  
More and more about the world I learn;  
All the new things that I see  
You'll be looking at along with me:  
*And it's from the old...*

3 As I travel through the bad and good,  
Keep me traveling the way I should;  
Where I see no way to go  
You'll be telling me the way, I know:  
*And it's from the old...*

4 Give me courage when the world is rough,  
Keep me loving though the world is tough;  
Leap and sing in all I do,  
Keep me traveling along with you:  
*And it's from the old...*

5 You are older than the world can be,  
You are younger than the life in me;  
Ever old and ever new,  
Keep me traveling along with you:  
*And it's from the old...*

### Talk:

*And it's from the old we travel to the new. Keep us travelling along with you. Amen*

What is on your mind? The war in Ukraine? The climate crisis? The pressure on the NHS? Covid19: Omega and the next mutation? Or is it something more personal or family?

I’m preparing this on St Patrick’s Day. Patrick was someone who had his fair share of troubles. He was taken into slavery by Irish raiders as a boy, but escaped to the Continent and later returned to Ireland and saw the conversion to Christ of his erstwhile captors. He knew all about the world where everything goes wrong but that did not stop him from living in God’s world where everything ‘works to the good for those who love God’.

Today’s four lectionary readings trace a course down the years, through the Old Testament and into the New. We start with Joshua and the Israelites entering the Promised Land and progress, via Psalm 32, to a Gospel story and onto Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians. All these

passages of scripture tell us something about how we can make a fresh start and I find time and again in my own life, that I have to return to begin again.

Let's go back to Joshua. The Israelites have just crossed the Jordan and, after all this time wandering in the wilderness, they are back home. They renew their covenant, the Manna stops falling and, as it says, "That year they lived off the produce of the land". This is the Promised Land 'flowing with milk and honey'. It's all here in the verses surrounding our first reading. But did you notice that little reference that God rolled away their 'reproach'? God rolled away what had kept them imprisoned in a world where everything was always going wrong and always a burden; liberating them. Now, they are free to start again.

Gilgal, by the way, the name they give this place, sounds like the Hebrew for 'roll away' and that phrase, 'rolled away', puts me in mind of another rolling away: the rolling away of the stone sealing the tomb of Jesus on that first Easter morning. In other words, we could say Joshua's new beginning, the Israelites' homecoming, is like a resurrection; a wholly new life.

Now let's look at the Gospel story. It is one you will be very familiar with. It is the story of the son's return. Of course, we all know it as the Parable of the Prodigal Son but let's shift the emphasis and concentrate on his return. No matter what he might have done before, it is the return that is the important thing. When we find ourselves living in a pigsty, we know we have to do something about it. He does. He decides to go back home.

Home is where the heart is, they say. Home represents the place we ought to be; the place we want to be; the right place for us. As well as new beginnings, today's readings are about homecoming. Today is Mothering Sunday and, although the parable tells us about a father waiting, watching and welcoming, in real life it is more often than not a mother who makes the home and waits for the children to return. It is a mother's love we seek when we return needing comfort, healing or reassurance and a new beginning.

Is this resurrection? I think you could say it is. The 'stone', whatever imprisons us, is rolled away when we return. Dead to our old life, a new life can begin. We are home, at last.

Last but not least, what does Paul say to the Corinthian church? In typical Pauline fashion he says: 'New Creation! Yippee! Free at last!' Be reconciled to God. Come back home! This is the message of scripture from beginning to end. God wants us back home where we belong, where things can be put right, in the 'Kingdom of God' where everything is good and wholesome and beautiful and of good report. "Think on these things", Paul says elsewhere. A new beginning. A resurrection. A homecoming. Return to God this Mothering Sunday, to the place you truly belong, and live life to the full; a life filled with love and peace and joy; a life of purpose and fulfilment, guided and directed by the Spirit of God. Come home! Think on these things. And give thanks.

**Amen**

**Sing:** Give Thanks to the Holy One  
Give thanks with a grateful heart  
Give thanks to the Holy One  
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

And now let the weak say, "I am strong"  
Let the poor say, "I am rich"  
Because of what the Lord has done for us"

Give thanks with a grateful heart  
Give thanks to the Holy One  
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

**Intercessions** with a response from Psalm 32:

*We pray to you in time of distress*  
**Because you, O Lord, are our refuge and our help**

*Winter to Spring, Summer to Autumn. We all have different experiences of the earth's abundance but sadly it seems the human capacity to harm & hurt continues unabated.*

And so, we pray for:

Ukraine & Russia; Yemen; Ethiopia	<i>Response</i>
The Government & people of the UK	<i>Response</i>
Covid & The NHS	<i>Response</i>
Oil, gas and the climate emergency	<i>Response</i>
The natural world in crisis	<i>Response</i>
Friends, family, mothers & parents	<i>Response</i>
Those who grieve	<i>Response</i>

*The seasons turn but some things never change: God's love never fails. **Amen.***

**Blessing:**

May the God who stays with us through every trouble and distress, welcome you.

May the God whose heart is a heart for truth and justice, restore what is good.

May the God whose world is a world of joy and love, give you peace. **Amen.**

And so: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ. **Amen.**