

Worship@Home 17th March 2024 Fifth Sunday in Lent with Revd David Speirs

Opening Prayer:

O God, you who are always doing a new thing, we confess that we sometimes close windows against the fresh air of new ideas, against the noise of other people's worries, against the winds of change.

God of every place and time,
we confess that we often draw the curtains
against people who are different,
against world news or community concerns.

Forgive us our insulation in our locked homes,
our shuttered churches, the security systems
on our hearts. Open up our lives,
and let your Spirit blow through. Amen.

By Terri on the RevGalBlogPals' *A Place for Prayer* blog:

<https://revgalblogpals.org/>

Reposted at RE:Worship: [https://re-](https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/04/prayer-opening-windows.html)

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STF 446 - I will offer up my life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fG5EVeGtO0>

I will offer up my life in spirit and truth,
pouring out the oil of love, as my worship to you.
In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord, receive this sacrifice of a broken heart.

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
to so faithful a Friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
as a praise of your name for the things you have
done? Oh, my words could not tell, not even in
part, of the debt of love that is owed by this
thankful heart.*

You deserve my every breath, for you've paid
the great cost; giving up your life to death, even
death on the cross. You took all my shame
away, there defeated my sin, opened up the
gates of heaven and have beckoned me in...

Matt Redman (b.1974). Words & Music © 1994 Thankyou Music.
Admin by Integrity Music Ltd. CCLI Song Number: 1083764

Please read:

John 12: 20-33

<https://bible.oremus.org/?ql=195080425>

Time to Reflect

In March it has given me a lot of joy to see the emergence of daffodils and other spring flowers in my garden and the cherry blossom growing on our trees. The sudden emergence of this new life is a reminder that our long winter is coming to an end and that we are transitioning into the season of Spring and the emergence of new life that comes with it.

The theme of new life is evident in the text that we have today from John's Gospel. Within the reading we have a group of gentile Greeks who approach the disciples asking to see Jesus. In response to this request, Jesus speaks to his disciples about his glorification and his death. He talks to them about a single grain of wheat, that falls to the earth, and then goes on to bear much fruit.

Jesus's disciples lived in an agrarian society where people would have been very familiar with the cycles of planting, crop growth, and harvesting. Jesus uses agrarian imagery because he knows that his listeners would be able to relate to it. The disciples would know that decaying and dying plant life would fertilise the soil and make it rich for planting. The seed that is planted in the soil would then lie dormant until it germinates and begins to grow. In time, and under the right conditions, it sprouts into a new plant and then bears much fruit for the harvest.

Jesus alludes to his own death and resurrection as he speaks of a seed that is buried in the ground that springs up. However, he is also talking about the life of faith and discipleship for those who would follow his path. Following Jesus involves death and new life, putting to death our old selves and finding new life in Christ through the Spirit. Indeed, we cannot find that new resurrected life, and the fruits that come with it, without first experiencing a death within us. This is also the case in the life of the Church, which is renewed by God's life-giving Spirit.

When reading this passage this week, I was reminded of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of El Salvador, Óscar Romero, who dedicated his life to social justice and non-violence in the name of Jesus.

Following the recent death of the activist, Doña Sarita, he preached this on the Gospel reading that we have today, on the need to involve ourselves in the struggle for a better and more loving world through giving and sacrifice. You can read the full text of his sermon here:

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/10/12/homily-oscar-romero-was-delivering-when-he-was-killed>

As he finished his sermon a man, most likely hired by a right-wing leader, came into the Church and killed Óscar Romero in front of his congregation. Now declared a saint by the Catholic Church Óscar Romero serves as an example of the discipleship that Christ advocated and the love that Jesus demonstrated through the cross. Óscar Romero was willing to follow Jesus and serve the Kingdom of God, putting his own life at risk so that others might also find life in Christ.

As we move through Lent and towards the season of Easter, we are encouraged to reflect on what it means to follow Jesus on the way to the cross and the resurrection. This journey involves a willingness to give up and also to receive new life from God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. I pray that God would help us in that giving up and in receiving that new life. May we bear the fruit of the Spirit together as we each grow in Christ Jesus our saviour.

Prayer of Intercession

You are invited to pray silently for:
The needs of the world...
The Church and its calling...
Loved ones going through difficult times...
For peace, justice, and reconciliation...
In Jesus name. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen

StF 306 – Now the green blade rises

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

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain
Wheat that in the dark earth many years has
lain. Love lives again, that with the dead has
been:

*Love is come again like wheat that springs up
green.*

In the grave they laid Him, love whom we had
slain. Thinking that he'd never wake to life again
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:

Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain
He that for three days in the grave had lain
Quick from the dead, my risen Lord is seen:

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain
Then touch can call us back to life again
Fields of our hearts, that dead and bare have
been:

John Macleod Campbell Crum (1872-1958)
From *The Oxford Book of Carols*, Words © 1928 Oxford University Press;
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Final Prayer

O God, who makes all things new,
new stars, new dust, new life;
take my heart,
every hardened edge and measured beat,
and create something new in me.

I need your newness, God,
the rough parts of me made smooth;
the stagnant, stirred;
the stuck, freed;
the unkind, forgiven.

And then, by the power of your Spirit,
I need to be turned toward Love again. **Amen.**

By Pamela C. Hawkins, in *The Awkward Season: Prayers for Lent* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2009), 30. Posted on **Prayer and Creeds**, <https://prayersandcreeds.wordpress.com/>
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