Lent Letter 2022

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge….. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51: v1-4, v7)

Dear friends, as I write this Lent reflection Ukraine is beginning a fight for its sovereignty as Russian armed forces invade their homeland. Like myself you may be finding that your prayer life has changed its focus, as a natural desire for peace in that region becomes our dominant prayerful concern.

Psalm 51 is one of the great penitential psalms and the above verses a reflection I’ve often turned to during Lent. A Psalm of David it reminds all of us of our sinfulness and our need for God’s forgiveness and mercy in our lives.

I hope that this Lenten period will bring us all closer to Jesus as we journey on with Him to the desolation of the cross and shared moments of forsakenness to the complete victory that resurrection and redemption brings.

In Lent this year we also move into a period where we find restrictions being lifted after two long years of lockdowns and disruption because of the Covis-19 pandemic. The effect of this period has changed every area of our lives and we have lost much during this period. Loss of life in the UK amounts to around 160,000 people and has affected around 5 million lives as people who have lost loved ones and were unable to grieve in ways we would have expected. One friend we lost at Heddon on the Wall, we still await an opportunity to arrange a fitting memorial service when friends and family can bring our tributes, for a faithful life, lived in power and love of Christ.

During Lent this year I will also be seeking to retire as a Methodist Minister after 25 years serving alongside many faithful people. Not quite sure where the time has gone as we’ve served in the Nottingham and Derby, Sheffield and Newcastle Districts. It’s seemingly flown by. Sharing in the highs and lows of what life brings. It’s been difficult at times as we have striven together to serve the present age. Thank you for sharing in this journey.

In closing I return to the hostilities in Ukraine and ask that we pray for the peoples of Ukraine and Russia asking God for peace to fall now. To help us I turn to the hymn writer Anna Briggs (b. 1947)

We lay our broken world in sorrow at Your feet. Haunted by hunger war and fear, oppressed by power and hate.

Here human life seems less than profit, might and pride, though to unite us all in You, You lived and loved and died.

O Spirit, on us breath, with life and strength anew; find in us love, and hope, and trust, and lift us up to You. Blessings in Christ as always, Rev Colin (28th Feb 2022)