

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2025:** Second Sunday in Lent

*For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or some other suitable time.*

**Theme for today is “**

**Lent liturgy**

Give us this day our daily bread to shelter our soul. As bricks and mortar give our bodies shelter, shelter our being, our souls, with your spirit. Give us this day our daily bread to shelter our soul. As houses protect and keep safe our physical being, hold us in the shelter and safety of your Word. Give us this day our daily bread to shelter our soul. As an umbrella holds back the rain and the storms, so Lord be our umbrella, our tent, our shelter in life's uncertain times. O Lord our God, on this Lenten journey, shelter us in the struggling world's uncertainties. **Amen.**

**Hymn StF 440 H&P 215                      Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: 'The first commandment is, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'

**Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

**Prayer:**

Lord, you are steadfast in your love and infinite in your mercy; you welcome sinners and invite them to be your guests. We confess our sins, trusting in you to forgive us.

**Silence**

We have yielded to temptation and sinned: Lord, have mercy.

We have turned from our neighbours in their need: Christ, have mercy.

We have resisted your word in our hearts: Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and keep us in life eternal.

**Amen.**

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Hymn StF 611                      Brother, sister let me serve you**

**Bible readings:                      Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18                      Philippians 3:17-4:1                      Luke 13:31-35**

**Reflection**                      God's promises brought to us by Aileen Fox, one of our Local Preachers.

In Genesis Abram is worried that he does not have any offspring and cries out to God. God tells him not to worry that he will indeed have an heir, and it will be his own child. To indicate that there will be many descendants, Abram is told to look towards heaven and count the stars if he can, because his descendants will be too many to count. Abram believed God's promise even though it was hard to see this and the land that Abram was promised as his own did not come to fruition until long after his death.

Promises we all make them, sometimes too easily and then when someone reminds us of a promise we made, it can be difficult to keep. Like many people I have promised to do something regularly but then found it difficult. I promise to do more Bible study or read more spiritual books; however, the lure of a new crime novel or mystery beckons and if I am tired the easy read happens! On a more serious note, people promise all sorts of things, politicians in their election manifestos to entice us to vote for their party saying they will improve our lives! More recently we have the possibility of devolution, the coming together of different district councils to increase efficiency and promises that it will make life better for us all. Will it?

Promises mean a lot, as a small child the promise of a special treat was looked forward to but sometimes when cancelled or forgotten about it meant disappointment or frustration. Abram was truly disappointed that his property and possessions would pass outside of his family as he had no children, God had other plans.



Sometimes we wonder about our own lives how we responded to God's call but it hasn't come to fruition or so we think. If we look back at our lives there are disappointments, things that didn't quite work out that seemed right at the time and that is very much so in our journey with God. God's promise to each one of us is that he never leaves us alone he is with us and opens many doors where we perhaps see only one. I was thinking back to being a mature student at UEA Norwich, the opportunity I had longed for to get a degree; however, some evening lectures were on a Wednesday and as time went on, I began to miss them to carry on in a church youth club with difficult youngsters. Rarely was there vandalism on a Wednesday youth club evening in town, it felt right to give up those lectures. I never did get my MA just a diploma, I don't think the missed lectures really hindered there were other factors. But God had opened that door to serve difficult youngsters, and we were able to stand with them when one of their peers died. I promised to serve God years ago when a teenager and he has opened so many doors and ways to serve him, even though I have strayed at times. I don't regret not having the MA, nor obtaining the other things I thought was the way forward in my Christian journey.

God uses us as we are and gives us the skills,

- Are we willing to Trust in God?
- Are we willing to move in different ways from what we might think is the way forward?

Abram trusted despite the seemingly impossibility of a child and heir.

To reflect:

- Look back at your lives and see where things didn't work out.
- What happened next?
- Were you sent in a different way; did you see new ways opening up?
- Did you feel frustrated but then something else opened up?

Remember Abram and his promise from God.

**Hymn: StF 272**

**From heaven you came heavenly babe**

**Prayers of Intercession:**

Let us pray for the Church of God throughout the world.

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for those who have power and influence and for all who govern the nations,

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for the powerless, for all victims of famine and war, and for all who strive for justice and peace,

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for the afflicted and sorrowful and for all who need our prayers,

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us remember before God those who have passed from this life in faith and obedience,

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Eternal God, through the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence.

Help us in our sufferings and trials and strengthen us in our weakness;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...**

**Hymn: StF 319**

**Christ triumphant ever reigning**

**Closing blessing –**

The God of all grace who has called us to eternal glory in Christ, make us perfect, confirming and strengthening us; and to him be the power for ever and ever.

**Amen.**