

Morning Worship for James the Apostle

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

**enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,**

that we may truly worship you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,
all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

**Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.**

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring you his pardon and peace,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius. The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword.
(Acts 11:27 – 12:2)

This is the word of the Lord; *thanks be to God*

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

The mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favour of him. And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.' When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.' (Matthew 20:20–28)

This is the Gospel of the Lord; *Praise to you O Christ*

A reflection by Rev'd Stephen Burge

This morning we are celebrating the life and witness of St. James, also known as St. James the Great – not because he was better than the other James, just because he was older! When Jesus called his disciples, he found James, and his brother John, the sons of Zebedee, by the lakeside. They dropped their nets and followed him. James and John had something of a reputation and were called "the Sons of Thunder" – for their outspokenness, their boldness and their hastiness to judge. But, along with Peter, James and John were very close to Jesus and were present at the Transfiguration, the moment

when Jesus' glory was revealed on the mountainside. In the early church James was an important evangelist and his fiery temper and criticism of Herod seems likely to have led to his arrest and execution.

Turning to the Gospel reading we had today, we can see something of James' and John's rashness and boldness – and it seems to be something that ran in the family. It's quite hard to know what exactly the mother of James and John thought she was doing. She certainly comes over as something of a pushy mother, asking for her two sons to be given special treatment and places of honour next to Jesus in the Kingdom of Heaven. It's easy to see how and why the other disciples might have got a little bit annoyed, both with James and John, as well as with their mother too.

However, it is important to remember that in Mark's account, James and John asked Jesus themselves. It is hard to know what would have sounded worse – the request coming from them or from their mother? It is also hard to tell whether it was their mother pushing them on, or whether James and John got their mother to ask the question for them. The early Christian writer, St. John Chrysostom comes down quite harshly against James and John and commented that in Matthew's account it is almost as if, deep down, they knew that what they are asking for was wrong, so they hid behind their mother. It is no surprise that Jesus rebukes James, John and their mother, and tells them that that isn't something that he can give.

It is tempting to asking the question, why did James and John – or their mother – make that request of Jesus in the first place? It does seem like an odd request to make. But working out their reasons and motivations is anybody's guess. What is more important is *when* they asked it, because they asked it at one of the most inappropriate times possible! In the passage immediately before what we heard being read this morning, Jesus and his disciples were approaching Jerusalem, and on the way he had predicted his arrest, torture, death and resurrection to his disciples. The disciples keeping true to form, completely misunderstand the seriousness of what Jesus had had to say.

But perhaps we shouldn't blame them: they had been following Jesus for some time, they had seen him heal the sick, walk on water, calm a storm, give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, they had even seen him raise the dead: why would being arrested be anything to worry about? The disciples were all focused on the eventual goal, on the coming of the Kingdom, without really thinking about what was going to have to be done to get there. Perhaps that's why James and

John made their request to be sat next to Jesus in heaven. They had their eyes set on the glories of the Kingdom.

When Jesus was arrested a few days later, when they saw him being tried, when they saw him hung on the cross and dying an agonizing death, the true meaning of Jesus' words must have suddenly revealed themselves to James, John and all the other disciples. James and John must have felt a great deal of shame at having made their request, they must have felt foolish and petty. Similarly, when James was stood before King Herod, and was facing his own arrest, torture and execution, Jesus' words to him that he would drink from the same cup must have taken on a new meaning. There must have been a sudden realization of how significant those words had been.

We can draw much inspiration from the life and witness of St. James. There are times when we could, and should, be a bit bolder in our proclamation of the Gospel, in making known what we feel and think as Christians is the right thing to do, we should always live in the hope and joy of the everlasting Kingdom. But I think we can also learn a lot from the short episode that we heard about this morning: James and John did something wrong, they must have felt embarrassed and ashamed, but Jesus does not reject them, it does not make them lesser people in his eyes. Jesus responds by showing them love and teaching them a better way of living and being. We too will do things wrong, and God will show us love and forgiveness too, but, most importantly, God will always show us a better way of living and being – we just need to listen carefully and prayerfully to what God has to say. God will show us the way that will help us grow into the people that God wants us to be, people who serve rather than are served; people who forgive; and people who reveal the love and fellowship of God to all. Amen.

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;**

**he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Chris Banks

Lord, we continue to live in difficult and troubling times and seek your support as we try to adapt and to make sense of the evolving and changing environment in which we live. We give grateful thanks for the support offered by our clergy and other members of the St Mary's community who are there for the family of this, your church.

In the face of this adversity, strengthen your church in the service of Christ, praying this morning for our Bishops, Alan, Richard, and Michael and for the church's pastoral ministry in communities around the world.

Lord, in your mercy: ***hear our prayer***

Bless and guide Elizabeth our Queen; give wisdom to all in Government that their actions in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis be guided by you and that their actions to protect the nation might in the longer term prove to be successful.

As ever in our prayers, we give grateful thanks for the dedication of our health professionals and for all who expose themselves to personal risk in caring as well as for the many other people in key and other roles who work tirelessly in the background ensuring that those who cannot leave their homes are provided for.

Lord, we pray too at this time for all those living in Dagnall; in Dunstable Road, Nelson Road & Hamilton Close as well as for Clergy and laity of our fellow churches in the North Chilterns Group of Parishes and, today more than ever, we pray for all find themselves unable to attend their church or participate in services in another way

Lord, in your mercy: ***hear our prayer***

Comfort and heal all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit – whether infected themselves or concerned about loved ones who may be at risk or who find themselves isolated from their families and friends. We pray that their trust in you will be rewarded and that all will soon be reunited with their loved ones

Lord, through weariness and hurt,
through disaster on the news,
through headaches and depression,
we are still yours.

We do not understand,
but we believe that you are here
in the dark places of human life,
and that nothing
can take us out of your hands.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Lord, hear us too as we remember those who have died in the faith of Christ, especially those whose years mind falls at this time, the families who cannot properly mark the loss of their loved ones, and all who mourn.

Lord, you lead us in ways we do not know, through joy and sorrow, through victory and defeat, beyond our understanding. Give us faith to see your guiding hand in all things; that being neither lifted up by seeming success, nor cast down by seeming failure, we may press forward wherever you my lead us.

Merciful Father **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**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.**

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

Merciful God, whose holy apostle Saint James, leaving his father and all that he had, was obedient to the calling of your Son Jesus Christ and followed him even to death: help us, forsaking the false attractions of the world, to be ready at all times to answer your call without delay; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power.
For you have created all things,
and by your will they have their being.
You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed us for God.
From every tribe and language and nation,
**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
**be blessing and honour and glory and might
for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11)**

We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person, nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

*Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or
if you would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.*

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Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

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