

WELCOME AND NOTICES

ACM today after the service
DEC Ukraine giving - £960 so far.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

(Isaiah 53:1-3)

OPENING PRAYER

Most holy God, to you alone belongs all glory, honour and praise. We join with the hosts of heaven as we worship you. You alone are worthy of praise from every mouth, and every tongue will sing your praise. For you create the earth by your power, you save your people in

your mercy, and renew us by your grace.

To you, loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be all glory, honour and praise, now and for ever. **Amen.**

SONGS:

I will worship (I will worship)
With all of my heart (with all of my heart)

I will praise you (I will praise you)

With all of my strength (all my strength)

I will seek you (I will seek you)
All of my days (all of my days)
I will follow (I will follow)
All of your ways (all your ways)

I will give you all my worship
I will give you all my praise
You alone I long to worship
You alone are worthy of my praise

I will bow down (I will bow down)

Hail you as King (hail you as King)

I will serve you (I will serve you)
Give you everything (give you everything)

I will bow down (I will bow
down)
Hail you as King (hail you as
King)
I will serve you (I will serve you)
Give you everything (give you
everything)

I will give you all my worship
I will give you all my praise
You alone I long to worship
You alone are worthy of my
praise

I've come here today
to worship again
'Cause I know that my
Father's here,
My Father has shown me
a way, away from the pain
Of the sin that I've stumbled in

You lift up my eyes,
You show me the scars
Where Your love paid
everything, paid for me
To live with my God,
no longer apart
For You bled, You died for me

My soul is alive with worship
I'm singing again 'cause

my heart it overflows
With the love and mercy
of You my God

My soul is alive with wonder
I'm welcomed again before
You my Father
Oh how I love to worship
You my God

I'm covered and clean,
forgiven and freed
By the grace that You stand me
in, I'm standing
My feet on a rock, my future in
God
And my soul,
You've counted free

My soul is alive with worship
I'm singing again 'cause
my heart it overflows
With the love and mercy of You
my God

My soul is alive with wonder
I'm welcomed again before
You my Father
Oh how I love to worship
You my God

**When I look into
Your holiness,**
when I gaze into Your
loveliness,
when all things that surround
become shadows in the light of
You.

When I've found the joy of
reaching Your heart,
when my will becomes
enthroned in Your love,
when all things
that surround
become shadows in the light of
You.

I worship You, I worship You;
the reason I live is to worship
You. (x2)

CONFESSION

Loving God,
**We have sinned against you in
what we have thought, said
and done. We have not loved
you with our whole heart; we
have not loved our neighbours
as ourselves. We are truly
sorry and turn away from what
is wrong... Forgive us for the
sake of your Son, Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Christ Jesus came into the
world to save sinners. This is his
gracious word: 'Your sins are
forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

OFFERTORY

God of all goodness and grace,
receive the gifts we have to
offer; and grant that our whole
life may give you glory and
praise; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR SUNDAY CLUB

God of all ages, we pray for
Sunday Club, for the children
and leaders, for all they will
share together, and for all they
will receive from you; through
Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SONG:

**Jesus Christ, I think upon Your
sacrifice,**

You became nothing, poured
out to death.

Many times I've wondered at
Your gift of life,
And I'm in that place once
again.

And I'm in that place once
again.
And once again I look upon
The cross where You died,
I'm humbled by Your mercy
And I'm broken inside.

Once again I thank You,
Once again I pour out my life.

Now You are exalted to the
highest place,
King of the heavens, where one
day I'll bow.

But for now, I marvel at this
saving grace,
And I'm full of praise once
again.
I'm full of praise once again.

And once again I look upon
The cross where You died,
I'm humbled by Your mercy
And I'm broken inside.

Once again I thank You,
Once again I pour out my life.

Thank You for the cross,
Thank You for the cross,
Thank You for the cross, my
Friend. *(Repeat)*

READING: Luke 22:47-62

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸ but Jesus asked him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'

⁴⁹ When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, 'Lord, should we strike with our swords?' ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus answered, 'No more of this!' And he touched the man's ear and healed him. ⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, 'Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs?' ⁵³ Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour – when darkness reigns.'

⁵⁴ Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter

followed at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶ A servant-girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, 'This man was with him.' ⁵⁷ But he denied it. 'Woman, I don't know him,' he said. ⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, 'You also are one of them.' 'Man, I am not!' Peter replied. ⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, 'Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.' ⁶⁰ Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the cock crows today, you will disown me three times.' ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

REFLECTION: THREE DAYS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD (3) A betrayal and a denial

Everyone abandons Jesus. It's really remarkable when you think about ... just how many people abandoned Jesus at His time of greatest need. While Judas fully forsakes Him, it is Peter – leader of the disciples, impulsive, ambitious, self-assertive, and fully committed to his Lord --who temporarily deserts Jesus. Yet, it's not just these two whose loyalty can be questioned – it's everyone's loyalty.

We are still around 15 hours before Jesus' death and the narrative is action packed. There is so much packed into the few hours before Jesus' murder that you feel like you are watching three tennis matches at once. But let's press the pause button for a moment and focus on two disciples, Peter and Judas. For these two disciples' faltering relationship with Jesus not only makes for great theatre, but they even more importantly show us

something about our relationship with Jesus.

Today, I want to ask you a chilling question: Are you Peter or are you Judas?

The setting of today reading is Thursday in Holy Week. Jesus' death is just around the corner and the hostility towards Him is growing rapidly. Two men had spent equal amounts of time with Jesus since He began His ministry but came away from their encounter walking in completely different directions. One of those men hanged himself while the other went on to become a martyr for Christ. One – Peter -- faltered but was a genuine disciple, while the life of the other – Judas -- is completely without the marks of true discipleship. What was it about these two men and their response to Jesus Christ?

Sandwiched in the tight space of the events of that Thursday evening -- Jesus' washing the disciples' feet, the eating of the Passover lamb, the beginning of

the last Supper -- is Jesus' abandonment through a betrayal and a denial.

This isn't a comfortable story for us to consider. The story of Judas tells us that there is a gate to hell even from the very gates to heaven. Judas is so synonymous with betrayal that his very name is listed in the thesaurus as a synonym for betrayal. Each time the gospels list the twelve disciples, they always list Judas last while Peter is always first.

By my reckoning, five times Jesus mentions the eventual betrayal without mentioning the name of the betrayer. Judas' kiss is the first step toward Jesus' arrest. Judas' actions are deadly betrayal. What makes it truly chilling is that none other than Jesus Himself chose Judas. He was so close to Jesus that Judas even dipped his bread into the same cup with the Lord at the Last Supper.

Let's consider three facts about Judas:

- **He was greedy**

He was motivated by thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16). Throughout their time together, Judas would often steal from the common moneybag that the disciples used to pay for expenses (John 12:6). It was Judas' lifelong love of money that set up him to betray Jesus. Judas was greedy; he loved money. Greed is a passion of demonic strength. Whenever you see someone's moral collapse, you should know that it's been going on for a long time. An oak tree doesn't fall simply because of high winds, it has been rotting inside for many years. Judas covered his greed with a phony, external relationship with Jesus.

- **He was responsible for his own actions**

Judas' betrayal was predicted hundreds of years before in the Old Testament. Both the psalms and the prophet, Zechariah, predicted it. 'I told them, "If you think it best, give

me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the LORD.' (Zechariah 11:12-13). "Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me" (Psalm 41:9). And Jesus predicted Judas' betrayal: "Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him)' (John 6:70-71).

Everything about Jesus' betrayal, false imprisonment and trial, and eventual execution was planned and predicted by God. Even Judas' betrayal was planned. But mark this: Judas could have said 'no', he was completely responsible for his actions.

- **Satan used him**

On Wednesday of that fateful week, Luke records a troubling thing: “Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present” (Luke 22:3-6). Judas’ sinful passions painted him bright red to Satan’s eyes. But it was Judas’ greed that placed the weapon in the hands of Satan.

Satan doesn’t take innocent people captive. Satan shows his hatred in very cruel ways. Judas is a counterfeit Christian but, long before Satan captured him, it was his own greed that paved the way for Satan to enter.

Satan hates all of us. In the Screwtape Letters, C.S Lewis portrays a senior demon named Screwtape telling his nephew, Wormwood, a younger and less experienced demon, this: “One must face the fact that all the talk about God’s love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures, whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself: the Enemy wants a world full of

beings united to Him but still distinct.”

And you can rest assured, every believer meets Satan on their journey. When Satan gets a hold of you, he shakes you to the core. You have no breathing space with Satan. But while every believer will meet Satan, not every believer meets him at the same place. Beelzebub torments some very early in their Christian journey while others are saved from his fiercest attacks later in life. You can go for years where life is like a sea of glass, scarcely a ripple upon the waters and then the enemy makes up for it in a matter of minutes.

Out of all the apostles, besides Judas, who had the worst track record during the passion and the death of Jesus Christ? Peter! And he's the one Jesus leaves in charge when He goes away. Satan works on Peter just as he did Judas. Only when we encounter Peter, we see a genuine disciple rather than a counterfeit.

Think of the importance of Peter for a moment. Peter wasn't just a disciple. Instead, he was one of Jesus' most trusted lieutenants, one of the inner circle of three, one of those privileged to see Jesus transfigured in all His glory. When you survey all of the gospels, no disciple spoke as often as Peter. Jesus said sterner things to Peter than He did to any of the others. It was Peter who asked Jesus to walk on water. It was Peter who correctly identified Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And it was Peter who caught the boatload of fish early on with Jesus, fell on his knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' (Luke 5:8).

So ... let's consider three facts about Peter aka Simon Peter

- **Jesus knew all about him**

'Then Jesus told them, 'This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the

flock will be scattered.”
(Matthew 26:31b). “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”
(Luke 22:31-32). In addition to warning Judas five times, Jesus also predicts Peter’s failure. Jesus has a perfect knowledge of Peter.

- **Jesus prayed for him**

Jesus not only predicts Peter’s temporary failure -- He also prays for Peter **before** he’s even tempted: “but I have prayed for you...” (Luke 22:31a). Before the temptation occurs, Jesus sees it. For every believer, Jesus has three important functions He performs for you continually. Jesus is your prophet, He’s your king, and He is your priest. Jesus is the Great High Priest and like any good priests, Jesus prays for you. Think of the power of that for a moment. It’s one thing for your family to pray for you. It would be nice if

Moses or Daniel could pray for you ... but to have Jesus Himself pray for you! WOW!

- **Jesus protected him**

Jesus’ prayer is focused like a laser to protect Peter’s faith. “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:31). Now, you might find it odd that Satan asks God for permission and God grants him permission to shake and sift His children. God and Satan can work on the same project but for entirely different outcomes. Satan loves to destroy one of God’s chosen; if Satan is capable of anything close to happiness, he finds malicious joy to bring one of God’s chosen down into evil. And if Satan were to succeed in defeating a believer, he would have robbed Jesus of one that He purchased with His very own blood. If Satan could destroy a child of God then he would have defeated God’s grace and wounded the very heart of God.

Peter dripped with dangerous self-confidence. “Peter said to him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death’” (Luke 22:33). “Peter said to him, ‘Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!’” (Matthew 26:35). Peter’s story is Job’s story. Like Peter, Job was sifted and shaken to his core. You have heard of the patience of Job? Yet, you wouldn’t have heard of the patience of Job if it were not for the sifting of Satan. All the great lessons in the book of Job and the truth we find there are because God permitted Satan to test Job so severely. There are certain degrees of grace that are never produced in a believer until he or she is severely tempted.

‘The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the cock crows today, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly’ (Luke 22:61-62).

Contrast the reactions of Judas and Peter. What does Jesus do to Judas at the table of the Last Supper, when He sees the betrayer there? Does He get up and say, “Men, there’s a traitor in our midst and that’s the man?” We’re told that nobody at the table knew who the traitor was. We’re told that Jesus Christ continually brought the subject up, and even at the end, personally served Judas some bread. Why is Jesus so discreet? Why won’t Jesus tell anybody else? Because he’s not trying to shatter Judas; instead, He’s trying to melt his heart. He’s not trying to condemn Judas; instead, He’s trying to convert him.

Unlike Judas, Peter melts: “The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.” Peter melts while Judas hardens. The only reason Peter’s pride melts is due to the blowtorch of God’s love.

Two men spent equal time with Jesus but came away from their encounter walking in completely different directions. Six weeks after the

resurrection, Judas is hanging and rotting in a field while Peter is leading a movement to change the world. It wasn't because Peter was smarter or more resilient; it was simply because Peter repented.

Are you Peter or are you Judas? When you see the face of Jesus, will you metaphorically hang yourself in regret or will your heart soften in repentance? I suggest that's a question we all have to ask ourselves this Lenten season.

Let's close with a word of prayer:

Lord, when we see the testing of Peter and the betrayal of Judas, it shakes us. How these two men could walk with you for so long, and then find themselves capable of this, scares us. Vanquish the evil love of money in our hearts and rid us of the awful thoughts engendered by over-confidence. Cause us to see your face of love and may our hearts melt. Thaw the pride inside us and make us supple to

your will. Cause us to recognise our frailty but even more importantly make us feel the depth and breadth of your love for us, in spite of our betrayal and denial.

In Your name, **Amen.**

PRAYERS

God our Father, grant us the help of your Spirit in our prayers for the salvation of all people.

We pray for the peoples of the world, for the leaders of the nations, and especially for Ukraine and its President Zelensky. We pray for those fleeing Ukraine and seeking safety elsewhere, and we thank you for the 87,000 British homes that have applied to welcome Ukrainian refugees. Lord, we pray for an end to this war and an end to the barbarity of the Russian government under President Putin.

We pray for the continuing crisis that is the famine in Yemen, South Sudan, North East Nigeria and Somalia. We

pray for aid to come quickly to those nations, and for a greater distribution of the world's wealth so that no-one has to go hungry or suffer malnutrition.

We thank you for the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori from incarceration in Iran, and for their reuniting with family after so many years. We pray for all political prisoners around the world, for those who have dared to stand up for what is right and true, those who were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, and those who are fighting for their voice to be heard. We pray for the work of Amnesty International and other such organisations who care about having the freedom to speak truth to power.

We pray for the Church throughout the world, for this church and all its members. We pray for the church in war zones for hope to be given. We pray for the church in countries that are hostile to the gospel that new Christians may gain

the fellowship and teaching they need. We pray for the church in communities that are remote and cannot connect with the wider church, that they may know they are part of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Closer to home we pray for our partner denominations and especially our Denominational Church Leaders and the responsibilities they carry. We also pray for churches throughout Norwich, for greater unity in mission and compassion. Replace mistrust and fear with love and generosity of spirit. Bless all these in your love, and all whom they love and care for, that in faith and unity we may constantly be renewed by your Holy Spirit.

Finally, we pray for all who are suffering in body, mind or spirit. We continue to pray for Roger and Robert that in their need you may be their strength. We also pray for all those who have lost a loved

one and are living in sorrow,
that they may find light in the
darkness, hope in despair. And
we commend to you all who
have died, especially those
known to us.

All these things we pray for
your glory's sake. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done on earth as
in heaven
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin
against us
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

SONG:

I stand amazed in
the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene
And wonder how He could love
me
A sinner condemned, unclean

Singing:

*How marvellous,
how wonderful
And my song shall ever be
How marvellous,
how wonderful
Is my Saviour's love for me*

For me it was in the garden
He prayed 'Not my will, but
thine'

He had no tears for His own
griefs
But sweat drops of blood for
mine

Singing....

He took my sins and my
sorrows
He made them His very own
He bore the burden to Calv'ry
And suffered and died alone

Singing....

And with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see
It will be my joy through the
ages
To sing of His love for me

Singing....

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Loving Lord Jesus, you suffered at the hands of those who were close to you by being betrayed and denied. May we who call you Lord never desert you or deny you by our words or actions but live to your praise and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.