

# St. James Episcopal Church

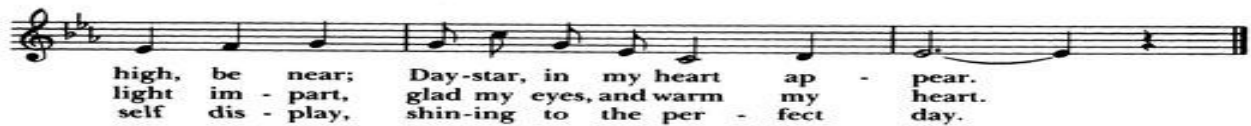
Morning Prayer Worship Leader

BC Franson

## Preface of Lent

Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin. By his grace we are able to triumph over every evil, and to live no longer for ourselves alone, but for him who died for us and rose again.

### Processional Hymnal 7 "Christ whose glory fills the skies"



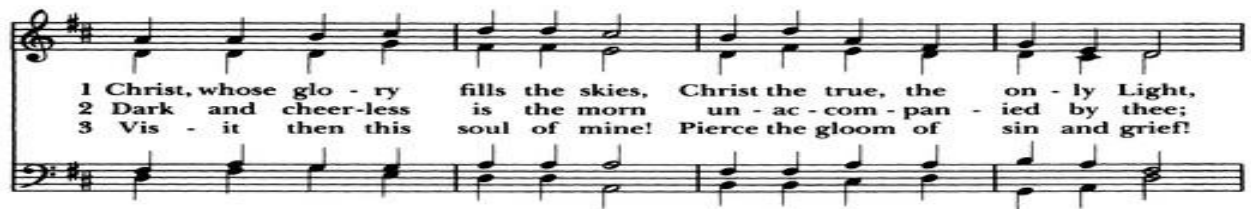
Words: Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Music: *Christ Whose Glory*, Malcolm Williamson (b. 1931)

77. 77. 77

### Morning

7



Words: Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Music: *Ratibon*, melody from *Geistliche gesangk Buchleyn*, 1524; adapt. att. William Henry Havergal (1793-1870); harm. William Henry Havergal (1793-1870), alt.

77. 77. 77

Opening Acclamation Book of Common Prayer [BCP] 76

Confession BCP 79

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and be what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen**

Absolution Prayer BCP 80

The Invitatory and Psalter BCP 80

Lord, open our lips

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen

Jubilate

BCP 82

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness and some before his presence with a song. Know this: The Lord himself is God; he himself has made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving' go into his courts with praise; give thanks to him and call upon his Name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting' and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

## Psalm 121

- <sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills; \*  
from where is my help to come?
- <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord, \*  
the maker of heaven and earth.
- <sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot be moved \*  
and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.
- <sup>4</sup> Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel \*  
shall neither slumber nor sleep;
- <sup>5</sup> The Lord himself watches over you; \*  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
- <sup>6</sup> So that the sun shall not strike you by day, \*  
nor the moon by night.
- <sup>7</sup> The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; \*  
it is he who shall keep you safe.
- <sup>8</sup> The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, \*  
from this time forth for evermore.

## The Lessons

**First Lesson:** Genesis 12:1-4a

<sup>1</sup>Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." <sup>4</sup>So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.

**Second Lesson:** Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

<sup>1</sup>What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." <sup>4</sup>Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. <sup>5</sup>But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. <sup>13</sup>For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup>If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null

and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup>For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. <sup>16</sup>For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup>as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) —in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Gradual Hymn 674 “Forgive our sins as we forgive”

## Forgive Our Sins



1. “For - give our sins as we for - give,” You  
 2. How can your par - don reach and bless The  
 3. In blaz - ing light your Cross re - veals The  
 4. Lord, cleanse the depths with - in our souls And



taught us, Lord, to pray, But you a - lone can  
 un - for - giv - ing heart That broods on wrongs and  
 truth we dim - ly knew: What triv - ial debts are  
 bid re - sent - ment cease. Then, bound to all in



grant us grace To live the words we say.  
 will not let Old bit - ter - ness de - part?  
 owed to us, How great our debt to you!  
 bonds of love, Our lives will spread your peace.

Text: Rosamond Herklots, 1905-1987, © Oxford University Press  
 Tune: DETROIT, CM; Supplement to *Kentucky Harmony*, 1820; harm. by Gerald H. Knight, 1908-1979

## Third Lesson John 3:1-17

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.<sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.”<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”<sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water

and Spirit. <sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

## Sermon

BC Franson, LWL

The Gospel of John is written in sweeping poetry: The author speaks of light and dark, flesh and spirit, above and below. These themes come together in a unique way in the story of Nicodemus. We meet Nicodemus at night—and *there* is some heavy symbolism right from the start. He is already “in the dark” when he introduces himself to Jesus; you can almost hear the anxiety in his voice.

Nicodemus is a Pharisee—a movement of Jewish leaders who emphasized a rigorous interpretation of the Law. The Pharisees wanted to make religious practice accessible and clear, to offer understandable guidelines for people so that they would know how to show devotion to God. (The Apostle Paul was a Pharisee.) Now Pharisees are often portrayed by the Gospel writers as ready-made counter examples to Jesus, since they are at the heart of the religious establishment he is testing. It’s important to remember, however, that if Jesus seems to argue with them all the time, that might have more to do with his *respect* for them than his *disdain*. They are, simply put, very faithful. And the movement that was gathering around Jesus was not behaving in the right way, according to their interpretation of faithfulness.

Nicodemus, even if he comes at night, is risking something in approaching Jesus: the disapproval of his colleagues as well as the skepticism of the Jesus movement. But he is just too interested to let it go. Something in Nicodemus is drawn to Jesus.

From the start, he wants Jesus to know that he means well: “We know you come from God,” he says. We know the signs you are doing must be from God. You couldn’t do it otherwise.

In response, Jesus seems to go in a different direction. “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

Could Jesus be commending Nicodemus for his understanding? It might be that Jesus is saying to Nicodemus: “you wouldn’t know this unless God were with you. You get it!”

Unfortunately, it seems that Nicodemus sails right past this commendation and gets stuck: Born from above? What could that mean?

Rather than let the metaphor stand, Nicodemus takes it as literally as possible: “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”

Nicodemus is puzzling this out in a very “apples vs. oranges” kind of way. He is trying to use geometry to solve a poem, trying to use an axe to cut off a slice of bread. He is, as Jesus later puts it, not understanding “the earthly” and therefore not having any chance whatsoever of getting at “the heavenly.”

For Jesus, being born from above means being born of the Spirit, claimed by the Holy One, the Lord. Being born from above is about releasing the assumptions of the world, receiving eyes to see and ears to hear a reality bigger than what’s right in front of you.

Born from above, you see the longing of God for liberation and healing for all people. Born from above, you see how the categories and judgments of the world have no ultimate sway. Born from above, you are changed and given the gift of God’s true freedom.

Jesus, doesn’t just move the goal posts here, he changes the game entirely. His response is an invitation into deepest wonder and awe at the reality of God’s love: a love so wild and incredible that God’s own beloved child is given to the world, so everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. The gift of this life is so persistent, so alive, that it lasts forever.

“Everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” The question must be asked; what does it mean to believe in God’s Son, Jesus? Does it mean believing things *about* Jesus, like a theological litmus test? Is it how you act? What you think?

In the Gospel of John, belief in Jesus Christ simply means having a relationship with Jesus Christ. This truth comes through in story after story. It’s not about a grand confession of orthodoxy. Not about perfect behavior. Certainly not about spending time only with the right people. To be in relationship with Jesus Christ means to be open to this joy and wonder. To be in relationship with Jesus Christ means knowing that no one is outside the reach of his love. And to be in Christ’s love is to have eternal life, to live in that promise forever: a promise so strong that even death cannot hold sway.

Just in case it's still unclear, Jesus continues: "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

What a gift is this verse in John 3:17! Can you imagine what Christianity might look like if we were all people of John 3:17 as much as John 3:16?

Indeed...this message is not about condemnation. It is about salvation: saving everyone.

The son of God came for everyone. No matter what.

That's the other important thing about this passage: the Greek word used here in "loved the world" is *kosmos*—as in: Everyone. Everywhere. Everything.

Jesus did not come to condemn or dismiss or separate. Jesus came—and comes to us still—to make visible God's love and forgiveness. Our Gospel text, along with our Old Testament passage, invites us to give ourselves and our lives to the Savior who calls us into a new way of life and a new trust in God. We are called to trust God, as Abraham did, with our whole lives, hearts, and minds. With our wallets, our cars, our choices about how we spend our time.

Follow the God of Abraham, who told him that he would be a blessing, that the whole world would be blessed through him. Leave your kindred and your logic and your usual ways of thinking. Just go. Allow yourself to be born again.

That's what the real work of Lent is: this work of opening to new birth.

The Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday with an uncompromising look at our vulnerability, our frailty, our sin. But that's just one day; the whole season is about how we allow ourselves to be found by God, how we allow ourselves to be changed by—as the writer of First Corinthians names—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

What are the things in your life that "do not exist?"

What could God be calling out of you?

What does being "born from above" mean in your life, and how is God midwifing that newness in this moment?

*The Rev. Sara Irwin is the Rector of St Andrew's Episcopal Church in the Highland Park neighborhood of Pittsburgh.*

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dies, and was buried. He descended to the dead, On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the hold catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen

Peace  
Announcements

Offertory      Hymnal 304      "I come with joy to meet my Lord"

## I Come with Joy to Meet My Lord



1. I      come      with      joy      to      meet      my      Lord,      For -  
 2. I      come      with      Chris -      tians      far      and      near      To  
 3. As      Christ      breaks      bread      and      bids      us      share      Each  
 4. And      thus      with      joy      we      meet      our      Lord.      His  
 5. To -      geth      -      er      met,      to -      geth      -      er      bound,      We'll



giv - en, loved, and free,      In awe and won - der  
 find, as all are fed,      The new com - mu - ni -  
 proud di - vi - sion ends.      The love that made us  
 pres - ence, al - ways near,      Is in such friend - ship  
 go      our dif - f'rent ways,      And as his peo - ple



to      re - call      His      life      laid      down      for      me.  
 ty      of      love      In      Christ's      com - mu - nion      bread.  
 makes      us      one,      And      stran -      gers      now      are      friends.  
 bet -      ter      known;      We      see      and      praise      him      here.  
 in      the      world,      We'll      live      and      speak      his      praise.

Text: Brian Wren, b.1936, © 1971, 1995, Hope Publishing Co.  
 Tune: LAND OF REST, CM; American; harm. by Annabel M. Buchanan, 1888-1983

### The Prayers

The Lord's Prayer  
Suffrage A

BCP 97  
BCP 97

### The Collect of the Day

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of

your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Prayers of the People, Form III

BCP 387

Hymnal 142 "Lord, who throughout these forty days"

When thou hast done, thou hast not done, for I have more.  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done, for I have more.  
And hav - ing done that, thou hast done, I fear no more.

Words: John Donne (1573-1631)

Music: *So giebst du nun*, melody from *Geist und Lehr-reiches Kirchen und Haus Buch*, 1694;  
harm. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

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Lent

142

1 Lord, who through-out these for - ty days for us didst fast and pray,  
2 As thou with Sa - tan didst con-tend and didst the vic - tory win,  
3 As thou didst hun - ger bear and thirst, so teach us, gra - cious Lord,  
4 And through these days of pen - i - tence, and through thy Pas - sion - tide,  
5 A - bide with us, that so, this life of suf - fering o - ver - past,

1 teach us with thee to mourn our sins, and close by thee to stay.  
2 O give us strength in thee to fight, in thee to con-quer sin.  
3 to die to self, and chief - ly live by thy most ho - ly word.  
4 yea, ev - er - more, in life and death, Je - sus! with us a - bide.  
5 an Eas - ter of un - end - ing joy we may at - tain at last!

Words: Claudia Frances Hernaman (1838-1898)

Music: *St. Flavian*, melody from *Day's Psalter*, 1562; adapt. and harm. Richard Redhead (1820-1901)

CM

The General Thanksgiving

BCP 101

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom

BCP 102

Concluding Prayer

Recessional Hymnal 550 "Jesus Calls us O'er the Tumult"

*Unison or harmony*

1 Je - sus calls us; o'er the tu - mult  
 2 as, of old, Saint An - drew heard it  
 3 Je - sus calls us from the wor - ship  
 4 In our joys and in our sor - rows,  
 5 Je - sus calls us! By thy mer - cies,

1 of our life's wild, rest - less sea, day by day his  
 2 by the Gal - i - le - an lake, turned from home and  
 3 of the vain world's gold - en store; from each i - dol  
 4 days of toil and hours of ease, still he calls, in  
 5 Sa - vior, may we hear thy call, give our hearts to

1 clear voice sound - eth, say - ing, "Chris - tian, fol - low me;"  
 2 toil and kin - dred, leav - ing all for his dear sake.  
 3 that would keep us, say - ing, "Chris - tian, love me more."  
 4 cares and plea - sures, "Chris - tian, love me more than these."  
 5 thine o - be - dience, serve and love thee best of all.

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895), alt.  
 Music: *Restoration*, melody from *The Southern Harmony*, 1835; harm. *Hymnal 1982*,  
 after *The Southern Harmony*, 1835

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