

Service for Week 16th – 22nd

Feb 2026 Ash Wednesday and First
Sunday in Lent By Chaplain Andy



Our Opening Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for this season of Lent: a time to reflect upon our own discipleship, to

examine ourselves and assess the health of our faith.

Help us to come to you now. To acknowledge our faults, recognize our weaknesses and receive your unconditional forgiveness, which alone can make us whole. **Amen**

Say to yourself - The Lord's Prayer

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

Bible Reading Matthew 5: 38-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your

cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Holy words, Holy Wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

This week includes the start of the Lent period on Ash Wednesday and the first Sunday in Lent. Lent is the period of 40 days leading up to Easter which this year is on Sunday 5th April.

And the time of Lent is 40 days long for a reason –because that was the length of time that Jesus spent alone in the desert. It was a time for Jesus to pray and was also a time when you may remember that the devil came to



tempt him and Jesus rejected the devil's motives and temptations.

Our reading, taken from Jesus's sermon on the mount, is about the love and care we must show to others, even those who have evil motives towards us. Other faiths encourage "resisting evil with good" but a unique aspect of the Christian faith is embodied in Jesus' command to 'Love your enemies' and pray for them.

This is a command that can be very hard to follow. When someone has treated us badly, has let us down or hurt us in any way it is our inclination to retaliate and wish to harm them in a similar way. The law in Jesus's time was just that - 'an eye for an eye' meaning that if someone, let's call him Tom, deliberately made Harry blind in one eye, then Tom should be punished by having one eye made blind. In other words, the punishment should be equal to the crime. In reality in such a case a sum of money was paid to Harry by Tom instead of Tom being made blind.

Jesus turns this law on its head when he gives some examples of how we should love our enemies and says instead of retaliating to violence, turn the other cheek and if someone robs you give them more than they take. If they should force you to do something, do more for them than they ask. Don't refuse those who want to borrow from

you, because you think you won't see it returned. The examples that Jesus gave, if taken entirely literally and put into practice, especially the one about giving robbers more than they take could have left the disciples vulnerable to exploitation. My belief is they were instead designed to make the disciples, and us, think about and change the relationship we have with others.

Jesus tells us to love the person that has done us wrong. This doesn't mean that we can forget the wrong that they have done to us or to others. We can hate the wrong but still have love in our hearts and care for that person. This has been expressed as 'hate the sin, love the sinner' As Jesus said 'if you (only) love those who love you' what good is that? We must show our love and concern for everyone if we want to live as God wants us live.

If you are still living with hate for someone who has wronged you in the past Lent is a time to bring that to God. Remember Jesus's words, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." and find the peace that God's unconditional love will bring to your life.

Amen

Our Closing Prayer

Loving God give me courage to walk the way of discipleship, and by your grace, to stay true to you, come what may. **Amen.**

Prayer inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett