



Sunday 6th June

PREPARATION

Welcome

Leader Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

All and also with you.

Leader This is the day that the Lord has made.

All Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Hymn Lord, I come to you

Lord I come to you
Let my heart be changed renewed
Flowing from the grace that
I have found in you
And lord I have come to know
The weakness I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of your love
*Hold me close
let your love surround me
Bring me near
draw me to your side
And as I wait*

*I'll rise up like an eagle
And I will soar with you
Your spirit leads me on
By the power of your love*

Lord unveil my eyes
Let me see you face to face
The knowledge of your love
As you live in me
Lord renew my mind
As your will unfolds in my life
In living everyday
By the power of your love
Hold me close...

Opening activity ~ What we missed while in lockdown

Confession

Leader God shows his love for us
in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Let us then show our love for him
by confessing our sins in penitence and faith.
Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

All **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.**

Absolution (*we are reminded that God forgives all who repent*)
This or another absolution may be said

Leader May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Collect (1st Sunday after Trinity)

Leader O GOD, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee,
mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the
weakness of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing
without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of
thy commandments we may please thee, both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All **Amen**

Psalm 137.1-6

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
- 2 There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
- 3 for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
- 4 How can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land?
- 5 If I forget you, Jerusalem,

may my right hand forget its skill.
6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy.

Everyday Faith - Jacquie Still

Hymn **O Lord the clouds are gathering**

O Lord, the clouds are gathering
The fire of judgment burns
How we have fallen!
O Lord, you stand appalled to see
Your laws of love so scorned
And lives so broken

Have mercy, Lord, (Men)
Have mercy, Lord, (Women)
Forgive us, Lord, (Men)
Forgive us, Lord (Women)
Restore us, Lord (All)
Revive your church again
Let justice flow (Men)
Let justice flow (Women)
Like rivers (Men)
Like rivers (Women)
And righteousness like a never
failing stream (All)

O Lord, over the nations now
Where is the dove of peace?
Her wings are broken
O Lord, while precious children
starve
The tools of war increase Their
bread is stolen

O Lord,
dark powers are poised to flood
Our streets with hate and fear
We must awaken!
O Lord, let love reclaim the lives
That sin would sweep away
And let your kingdom come

Yet, O Lord,
your glorious cross shall tower
Triumphant in this land
Evil confounding
Through the fire your suffering
church display
The glories of her Christ
Praises resounding!

Bible readings

[2 Chronicles 36.11-20](#) ~ Rob Moore (St Peter's)

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. ¹² He did evil in the eyes of the Lord his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the Lord. ¹³ He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff-

necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the Lord, the God of Israel. ¹⁴ Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the Lord, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

The Fall of Jerusalem

¹⁵ The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. ¹⁷ He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, ^[a] who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁸ He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. ¹⁹ They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

²⁰ He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

Isaiah 40.3-5 ~ Lyzabelle Waako

³ A voice of one calling:

"In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

⁵ And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Sermon – Samuel Waako

'Into Exile'

2 Chronicles 36.11-20 & Isaiah 40.3-5

This week's sermon begins a two months sermon series looking at Israel's return from Exile in Babylon to help us as we continue to look forward to coming out from the Covid 19 pandemic and it's resulting restrictions into whatever God has in store for us, or as the rest of the world seems to call it; 'The New normal.'

This series will aim to draw out similarities between Israel's exile and our 'exile' caused by the pandemic and things we can learn from this significant period of Israel's history. And I believe we could not have begun this series at a better time. Just this week on Tuesday, zero covid deaths were announced in England for the first time since the pandemic, and it's thought that the government's roadmap of ending restrictions on June 21st is still on course.

The recession of Covid 19 glimmers on the horizon, there is a general sense of things looking up; sorrow is giving way to joy, light is dawning in the darkness, even the weather is finally joining in the cheer, especially in this half-term week, where it's been greatly appreciated. Just like the Israelites looked forward and longed to their return home in Jerusalem, we too are looking forward to returning 'home', to normal.

We will find out later in the series that when the Israelites returned home, it was not exactly the same as they had left it, lots of rebuilding had to be done. And as we have already seen, returning back to 'normal' for many of us if not all of us is not going to be the same, lots of 'rebuilding' (not literally) is going to be needed. A lot has changed, and if we are to be honest, we too have changed and are different in many ways than we were over a year ago. This Series is aimed at helping us enter into the experience of people who were exiled from their homeland – Land that gave them belonging, purpose, and an identity as God's people. Exile was more than just Geographical dislocation; it was more than that. Hopefully, this series will help us begin to think of how we can navigate the next season of our lives.

Into Exile

The story of Israel's exile and eventual return to Jerusalem I believe is poignant to help us navigate this particular season in which we find ourselves. But why Exile? We are told in our reading in Chronicles that *"...all the leaders of the priests and the people became more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the Lord, which He had consecrated in Jerusalem"* (2 Chron 36.14). In doing so, Israel had broken God's covenant relationship with His people that He had entered with them following the Exodus.

God was to be their God and they His people (Jeremiah 32.38). One of the consequences of rejecting God was that "they would find themselves scattered among the nations." Ultimately thou, exile came for Israel not because they had sinned (which they had), but because they spurned

God's offer of reconciliation over and over again. God in his great mercy and pity for His people had sent many prophets and warnings but we are told they were all rejected. We are told, "they mocked God's messengers, despised his words, scoffed at the prophets until the wrath of God was aroused..." This rejection of God's message and His messengers sealed the doom for Israel.

I have heard in my circles a school of thought that we too are in this 'exile' because we have rejected God's message. And I think that might be partly true when we look around us and see how people have rejected God and are so negative, resistant they are to God's word.

That said, I want to think that we are in this 'exile' because of the enemy that is Covid 19. One of the other reasons that Israel went into exile was because of the Babylonian power ~ the rise of the enemy so to say. Israel's defeat and eventual exile two fold; Rejecting God and the rise in power of the 'Babylonian empire' where they were exiled.

While in Exile, in a state of captivity, the Israelites found themselves living in a state of perpetual discomfort and fear of the unknown, suffered from loss of community, grieved the loss of loved ones experiences that were normal to them in Jerusalem and were now forced to ride out the wave of uncertainty. In Exile, the Israelites were forcefully ripped out of their places of comfort and plunged into an extended period of grief and lament as they experienced the loss of familiarity, safety, independence, social ties, religious expression (temple was the centre of worship), things that am sure will sound very familiar to all of us in this season.

Living in the reality of exile raised questions for the Israelites about God, their own identity and purpose, whether God was after all just another tribal deity just like other gods at the time, or perhaps He was weaker than these gods. And could they still be seen as God's chosen people, especially without the access to daily temple worship??

Many of us am sure will relate with some of these experiences that the Israelites went through in captivity, especially the loss of familiarity, safety in relationships or jobs, lack of independence because of lockdown, loss of social ties, loss of religious expression; thank God for technology in our case, but many haven't been able to join in with worship and there are many who this hasn't been enough. And this season of covid and lockdowns has had a knock-on effect on every aspect of our lives, including our faith. Not being able to worship together, have familiar

routines for prayer, bible study and fellowship have led some to question, just like the Israelites did.

Lament

Many of the Psalms express the peoples lament in exile, and rightly so. And it's ok to lament, to question, it's ok to cry out to God and ask in prayer where God is in all of this. But we also need to remember that God laments over exile. Remember He created all creatures for worship, and until a restoration of abundant communal life can take place, God laments and He continues to provide.

Even in exile, where it's depressing and the situation looks hopeless, Isaiah reminds us in our second reading that 'the glory of God shall be revealed.' The prophet was seeking to awaken hope – hope focussed on the person of God and not circumstances or formulas. As we long to return to normal, God is calling us to prepare to see Him at work. Despite the challenges, God called the Israelites and is calling us to prepare the way of the Lord, even when evidence seemed to suggest He had abandoned them.

Conclusion

As we ponder Israel's exile and hopeful return, and as we ponder our own return to the new normal, I believe it's always worth looking back, seeing how God has seen us through whatever difficulties we have been through, the things we have missed while in 'exile'. We also need to remember that the previous 'home' might no longer be the home of our memory, we need to embrace the new normal. When the Israelites returned, there are things they returned with and things they left back. In our own experience, what do we carry on into the new normal what needs to be left behind? There will be those who have settled into the exile arrangement and don't want to return or be disturbed, there are others who are longing to get back, perhaps majority in the latter group! Hopefully this series will help us engage fully with some of these thoughts and questions.

Above all, let's be open to what the Lord is doing, in our lives, in our communities and in the world, He still reigns.

Song **Blessed be your name**

Blessèd be your name
in the land that is plentiful,
where the streams of abundance
flow,
blessèd be your name.
And blessèd be your name
when I'm found in the desert place,
though I walk through the
wilderness,
blessèd be your name.
Every blessing you pour out
I'll turn back to praise,
and when the darkness closes in,
Lord, still I will say:

*Blessèd be the name of the Lord,
blessèd be your name.*

*Blessèd be the name of the Lord,
blessèd be your glorious name.*

Blessèd be your name
when the sun's shining down on
me,
when the world's all as it should be,
blessèd be your name.
And blessèd be your name
on the road marked with suffering,
though there's pain in the offering,
blessèd be your name.

You give and take away.
You give and take away.
My heart will choose to say,
'Lord, blessèd be your name,'
You give and take away.
You give and take away.
My heart will choose to say,
'Lord, blessèd be your name.'

*Blessèd be the name of the Lord,
blessèd be your name.*

*Blessèd be the name of the Lord,
blessèd be your glorious name.*

Apostles' Creed

**All 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 ~ *Pauline Wilde (St Peter's)*

After each prayer I will say Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Heavenly Father this last 16 months has been a very strange time, as we have lived with restrictions on our daily lives, not being able to visit family and friends and worshipping together in church. We have also had the constant reminders of an invisible enemy threatening to infect us and our loved ones. When we look back we can see how you have sustained us through this time. We give you thanks that you are the same yesterday and forever. We thank you for the ministry team and others who have led us in worship during this time, for the technology that has enabled us to connect with one another and with you, so we have been able to sing a new song whilst in a strange land.



Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

We continue to pray for the government and scientists as they consider whether to lift the final restrictions upon our lives. We thank you that the vaccination programme is going well and that vaccines are beginning to be shared with the developing world, we pray that this will continue so we can all will be protected from the virus. We pray for areas where the infection rate is rising and pray that the vaccination programme will prevent the hospitals being overwhelmed.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Yesterday was world environment day this year focusing on ecosystem restoration and focusing on resetting our relationship with nature. During the pandemic many of us have become more aware of the natural world around, whether that be on our daily walks around the area or sitting in our gardens. We thank you Lord for the way nature has helped us to cope and to draw us closer to you through it. Help us to take care of the world around us and to do our bit to protect the environment.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Father there are so many areas in the world that are struggling at the moment either through war natural disasters and the pandemic. We pray

especially for the cease fire between Palestine and Israel that a negotiated peace will be possible. We pray for the many situations that are ongoing, but no longer make the news headlines. We pray for the refugees who are making difficult and dangerous journeys seeking better lives for themselves and their families.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

The pandemic has made us look at our lives afresh, some things we will return to with no problem, but there may be other things we are considering as to whether we will return to or not. We pray for the ministry team and PCC and DCCS as they look at the church activities and decide the way forward for services and other activities.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

We pray for our local schools as they enter the last term of this current school year. We especially pray for those who have now left school and university, as they look ahead to their future either entering the work place or further education. May they feel your guiding hand directing their path.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

We bring before you those who we know personally who are in need of your healing and comfort at this time. We especially pray for Mary Angus, Eileen and Peter Bliss, Patrick Chapman, Brenda Collard, Gloria Johnson, Lynda Kirk, Barbara Lloyd, Trevor Lloyd, Catherine McCormack, Denise Randell, Jacquie Still, and Joy Storkey. Ease their pain, and fill them with the warmth of your love now and always.

We also pray for those who have been recently bereaved especially for the family and friends of Marjorie Roulston and Gary Castle bring them your comfort at this difficult time. We ask you to accept all these prayers for the sake of your son Jesus Christ Amen

We conclude our prayers by saying together the Lord's Prayer

**All 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

Notices (See Notes & News)

Hymn **Because He lives**

God sent His son,
they called Him Jesus
He came to love, heal and forgive
He lived and died
to buy my pardon
An empty grave is there to prove
my Saviour lives

*Because He lives, I can face
tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know He holds the
future
And life is worth the living, just
because He lives*

How sweet to hold a newborn baby
And feel the pride and joy He gives
But greater still the calm assurance

This child can face uncertain day,
because He lives

Because He lives...

And then one day, I'll cross the
river
I'll fight life's final war with pain
And then, as death gives way to
victory
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll
know He reigns

Because He lives...

I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just
because He lives

The dismissal

The peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

