

**OPENING PRAYERS AND HOLY COMMUNION ARE AVAILABLE AS A VIDEO ON OUR ONLINE SUNDAY SERVICES PAGE HERE OR ON OUR YOUTUBE PAGE HERE**

**PART 1 – OPENING PRAYERS**

**WELCOME**

The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.

**SENTENCE**

Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Matthew 22.21

**PRAYER OF PREPARATION**

Let us pray.  
Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name,  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22.37–40, Mark 12.30–31

**CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

In penitence and faith,  
let us confess our sins to Almighty God:

Merciful God,  
our maker and our judge,  
we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
and in what we have failed to do:  
we have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;  
we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.  
Father, forgive us.  
Strengthen us to love and obey you  
in newness of life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God,  
who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith:  
pardon you and set you free from all your sins,  
strengthen you in all goodness

and keep you in eternal life,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God,  
in your wisdom you have so ordered our earthly life  
that we must walk by faith and not by sight:  
give us such trust in your fatherly care  
that in the face of all perplexities  
we may give proof of our faith  
by the courage of our lives;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**PLEASE PAUSE THE VIDEO – PRESS THE SPACEBAR TO PAUSE**

**PART 2** — AN ALL AGE VIDEO SERIES ON THE 4 GOSPELS, THE FIRST BEING ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW AND DOWNLOADABLE MATERIAL FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN [HERE](#)

**PART 3** — LOOK UP AND READ THROUGH THE READINGS, LISTEN TO THE [SERMON PODCAST WHICH INCLUDES THE JOB READING](#) (READ ALONG IF YOU WISH) BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE, AND PRAY THE INTERCESSIONS, TODAY BY RICHARD BROOKS.

#### READINGS

**Dialogue between Zophar and Job**  
selected from Job 11, 12, 13, 20 & 21

##### *Zophar*

Do you think you can explain the mystery of God? Do you think you can diagram God Almighty?  
He sees through vain pretensions, spots evil a long way off—no one pulls the wool over his eyes!  
Hollow men, hollow women, will wise up about the same time mules learn to talk.  
Reach Out to God. Still, if you set your heart on God and reach out to him, if you scrub your hands of sin  
and refuse to entertain evil in your home, you'll be able to face the world unashamed and keep a firm grip  
on life, guiltless and fearless.  
Your world will be washed in sunshine, every shadow dispersed by dayspring.  
[Job 11:7,11-14,17]

##### *Job*

I'm sure you speak for all the experts, and when you die there'll be no one left to tell us how to live.  
But don't forget that I also have a brain—I don't intend to play second fiddle to you.  
It doesn't take an expert to know these things.  
I'm ridiculed by my friends: 'So that's the man who had conversations with God!'  
Ridiculed without mercy: 'Look at the man who never did wrong!'  
It's easy for the well-to-do to point their fingers in blame, for the well-fixed to pour scorn on the strugglers.  
True wisdom and real power belong to God; from him we learn how to live, and also what to live for. If he  
tears something down, it's down for good; if he locks people up, they're locked up for good.  
Yes, I've seen all this with my own eyes, heard and understood it with my very own ears.  
Everything you know, I know, so I'm not taking a back seat to any of you.  
I'm taking my case straight to God Almighty; I've had it with you—I'm going directly to God.  
Listen now while I make my case, consider my side of things for a change. Or are you going to keep on lying  
'to do God a service'? to make up stories 'to get him off the hook'?  
Why do you always take his side? Do you think he needs a lawyer to defend himself?  
Please, God, I have two requests; grant them so I'll know I count with you:

First, lay off the afflictions; the terror is too much for me.

Second, address me directly so I can answer you, or let me speak and then you answer me.

How many sins have been charged against me? Show me the list—how bad is it? Why do you stay hidden and silent? Why treat me like I'm your enemy?

[Job 12:1-5,13-14; 13:1-2,6-8,20-24]

### *Zophar*

I can't believe what I'm hearing! You've put my teeth on edge, my stomach in a knot.

How dare you insult my intelligence like this! Well, here's a piece of my mind!

Don't you even know the basics, how things have been since the earliest days, when Adam and Eve were first placed on earth?

The good times of the wicked are short-lived; godless joy is only momentary.

The evil might become world famous, strutting at the head of the celebrity parade, but still end up in a pile of dung.

Acquaintances look at them with disgust and say, 'What's that?'

Such God-denying people are never content with what they have or who they are; their greed drives them relentlessly.

They plunder everything but they can't hold on to any of it. Just when they think they have it all, disaster strikes; they're served up a plate full of misery. When they've filled their bellies with that, God gives them a taste of his anger, and they get to chew on that for a while.

Life is a complete wipeout for them, nothing surviving God's wrath. There! That's God's blueprint for the wicked—what they have to look forward to.

[Job 20:1-7,20-24,28-29]

### *Job*

It's not you I'm complaining to—it's God. Is it any wonder I'm getting fed up with his silence?

Take a good look at me. Aren't you appalled by what's happened?

No! Don't say anything. I can do without your comments.

Still, how often does it happen that the wicked fail, or disaster strikes, or they get their just deserts?

How often are they blown away by bad luck? Not very often.

But who are we to tell God how to run his affairs? He's dealing with matters that are way over our heads.

Some people die in the prime of life, with everything going for them—fat and sassy.

Others die bitter and bereft, never getting a taste of happiness. They're laid out side by side in the cemetery, where the worms can't tell one from the other.

[Job 21:4-5,17-18,22-2]

**Hear the word of the Lord.**

**Thanks be to God.**

**Psalm 106:1-5**

**Matthew 22:1-14**

## SERMON BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE

[Available to listen online and/or download – access via Pentecost 2020 link and notice also a reasonable library of past sermons for you to listen to as you exercise or meditate...](#)

### SERMON 'JOB AND ZOPHAR'

*Let us pray:*

*Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Word and as we think on the matters raised, open our hearts and our minds to hear you. Amen.*

#### *When things are not getting better*

In a book called 'Sharing the Darkness – the Spirituality of Caring' by Shelia Cassidy, there are these four pictures that are quite profound to reflect upon, especially if you were to find yourself journeying with a person in a dark and prolonged time of their life

First of all there is the picture of a doctor assisted by a nurse treating a patient. The doctor is armed with competence and instruments, and protected by the nurse.



The second picture shows a priest in sacramental ministry, wearing stole and dog collar, protected by having a role to play and a ritual to perform.



The third picture is of the patient meeting with either doctor or priest, either of whom have exhausted the physical aspects of their ministry. Their hands are left empty, but the resources of counselling are still available.



The fourth and last picture shows both patient and carer stripped of their resources, present to one another, but utterly naked and empty-handed, just two human beings.



When an illness, a condition or situation with someone is not getting any better but appears set for the long-term, it is not only hard for them, but also for their family, friends and community.

I mentioned my post-natal depression last week.

Some people could not understand why I could not just snap out of it.

Some people who have chronic pain conditions are blamed for not trying hard enough, or using it as an excuse to withdraw from life.

The sufferer is blamed for their own suffering.

In the book of Job, it is interesting to note that in each dialogue with each friend, the idea hardens that this *has to be* just retribution meaning that Job is guilty and this is his entire fault.

#### *If you're not to blame, who is?*

After all, if Job is innocent, there would be someone else to blame.

Like, God?

'Heaven forbid!!' exclaims Zophar.

Zophar has no doubt about Job's guilt.

What is happening to Job *proves that*, and proves that God is good!

The whole question of theodicy – that is the justice and righteousness of God – comes into view here.  
How can God allow evil and suffering?  
Is God really ‘good’?

There are those who will be cheerleaders for God by being damnners of the human race.  
But, does it really take something away from God by being positive about human beings?  
Human beings who are made in the image of God?

But Zophar here seems to glory in the wickedness of human beings and how God punishes them.  
In as much as I long to see justice,  
it is not so much in the punishment and revenge done upon the tyrants,  
but to see the liberation and healing of the victims.  
I would hope the tyrants would be healed and become whole in themselves.

If we were to derive comfort by the evil ‘getting it’, or by being in torture for all eternity,  
what then is my soul becoming?  
Scarily Zophar is crowing in delight as he talks about the head of the celebrity parade  
ending up in a pile of dung, or being served a plate of misery!  
Worse is thinking how much better we are compared to those poor blighters.

At least we’re not like *them*.  
And then one day we realize we are *just* like them – oh oh!  
By what we have judged shall we be judged.  
If we are unable to forgive others, how can we ever forgive ourselves?  
Zophar believes Job’s guilt gets God off the hook.  
It’s all very logical, all very rational, and all very fair.  
Zophar even goes as far as to say God has already included the discount of mercy in his treatment  
of Job.  
*How I wish God would give you a piece of his mind.*  
*You can be sure of this, you haven’t got half of what you deserve!*  
Ouch! So Job is to be thankful to God that it’s not worse!

There is this side to the Christian faith that describes humanity as depraved.  
Heavy words like sin, guilt and judgment are waved around predominantly.  
The axe is waved above our heads.  
Will the hand of God hold it aloft, or let it drop?

### ***Retribution or relationship?***

The doctrine of retribution is like a rigid merit and demerit system.  
And if any relationship depends upon this system it is going to fail.  
You have to love a person for who they are, not what they do,  
for as soon as they fail they will not be loved anymore.  
And how often do Christians think God does not love them, because of what they have failed to do.  
Is it that hard to believe in a love that is patient and kind, encouraging and hopeful?  
To believe in the spirit of gentleness and peace?  
Is it possible to love God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength –  
if you are doubtful that God loves you so wholly?

As much as Job is angry with his friends’ suggestions and insinuations,  
and is also angry at the silence of God -  
Job’s faith, stretched as it is, still reaches out to God –

but not in the way Zophar wants him to, groveling in repentance,  
rather, Job asks God to get off the pedestal and have a face to face conversation.

Now those who cheerlead for God will not have God associating with sinners.  
God should not be tainted so.

But as soon as those words are out of the mouth, they have to be swallowed back down,  
for God indeed has come, and still comes and associates with sinners.  
This is what we call the incarnation.

Jesus touched the diseased, embraced the marginalized, welcomed the despised,  
and forgave the sinner – whole heartedly,  
maybe better said: *with his whole heart, mind, soul and strength.*

We can only know God in who we are and in what we are.  
Some have said that the study of anthropology is as important as theology,  
for the former is how we have come to know God, and in which God became known to us.

St Paul wrote: *Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made.* (Romans 1:20)

He also wrote: *We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28)

Those who love God *know*, that all things work together for good.  
The basis of our faith and our hope, no matter the circumstances or situation we find ourselves in.  
God honors and uses our human experience to enrich our relationship with God.

That is where we say nothing is outside of God.  
Nothing is outside of our faith.  
We bring it all in, as a good marriage, a good relationship will always have the room to do so.

### ***Questioning God***

Job's friends, who so dearly needed a water-tight system to live by, found it failed them.  
They did indeed, as Job charged them, have to make up lies and generalizations to make it work.  
At the end of this book God asks Job to pray for his friends,  
for they spoke nonsense of God and were not honest with God as Job was.

So did we find out who was to blame, why bad things happened to a good person like Job?  
No, we didn't.  
We found out what an awful lot of rubbish it is we can speak!  
We found that we sometimes have to become empty and naked  
when faced before the mystery of suffering, whether it's our own or someone else's.  
We have to live the questions.

Life is not predictable, there is no set format.  
And when you think about it,  
the virtues of love, faith and hope exist and grow where there is no format.  
Faith, hope and love, from us, and from God.

Eugene Peterson, the author who made the translation of the Bible into *The Message*, says  
Reading the book of Job prayerfully and meditatively, leads us to face the questions that arise  
when our lives don't turn out the way we expect them to.

First we hear all the stock answers.  
Then we ask the questions again, with variations –  
and hear the answers again, with variations.  
Over and over and over.\*

Real faith cannot be reduced to spiritual bromides merchandised in success stories.  
It is refined in the fires and storms of pain.\*

I finish with this prayer written in Lent this year in response to the pandemic. The author is  
Sharlande Sledge:

*Let us pray,*

*God, it takes courage to be the creatures  
you made us to be.  
Year after year we add to our experiences of the world,  
pushing against our limits  
to find out what will budge and what will not.  
We find that we can make certain things happen,  
and we can prevent other things from happening.  
We can make friends, and we can make enemies.  
We can say “yes,” and we can say “no.”  
God, we confess that we get so carried away  
that we begin to think we are in control of our lives—  
until something happens.  
God, we are tentative before you,  
confused in the clutter of our abandoned dreams  
and tattered faith,  
worn out by our efforts to improve the world,  
cramped by responsibilities,  
and lost in an ocean of time.  
In our brokenness we turn to you.  
Resurrect the shattered pieces  
into a stronger whole.  
Take the fragments of our faith,  
and in your mercy, Lord,  
redeem them and make us whole.*

Sharlande Sledge

<https://www.nextsunday.com/brokenness-a-prayer-for-lent/>

\*Eugene Peterson, *Introduction to Job*, The Message Remix (NavPress 2003) p.826, 824.

## **INTERCESSIONS BY RICHARD BROOKS**

Let us pray for the world and for the church.

Holy and immortal God, our Lord Jesus Christ said to your disciples, "I am with you always". Be with us today as we offer ourselves to you. Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves, and keep us all in your care.

We give you thanks and praise that you raise people of great knowledge and wisdom to deal with crises that beset us. By your grace, grant them skills in their work, and courage in their lives, that the peoples of this world may be protected from the threats of a pandemic and that the elements of communal life across the globe may be protected.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Keep us all, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty, distress and fear of the unknown. 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. Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love, for your name's sake.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for your church, for its leaders and its members that the Good News of your covenant may continue to reach more people and more nations. We remember missionaries in remote and, sometimes, threatening territories. Grant them safety and strength, that there will always be faithful leaders available to respond to people searching for Truth and meaning in their lives.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God, plant into us all a desire to dream for the future of your church. Bring us to focus on what a new church would be like and what of the church we know should prevail into the future. Allow us to learn from the experiences of our current difficulties, that we may stand ready to offer ourselves into the challenges before us. Guide us to take Jesus wholly into our lives, that we may model our lives on his.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of compassion, be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.

In their loneliness be their consolation.

In their anxiety, be their hope.

In their darkness, be their light.

Bless all those caring for others that they may find wisdom, patience and fulfilment in the challenges they experience.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for those who have died in the faith of Christ. We remember especially Ross Buckman whose anniversary falls in this week. Give us grace to follow their good examples, that we too may enter the beauty of your heavenly kingdom. Amen

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray:

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.

Save us from the time of trial,

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are yours

now and for ever. Amen.



**PLEASE RESUME THE VIDEO FOR HOLY COMMUNION BY PRESSING THE SPACEBAR**

**GREETING OF PEACE**

We are the body of Christ.  
His Spirit is with us.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
And also with you.

**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.  
Accept and use our offerings for your glory  
and for the service of your kingdom.  
Blessed be God for ever.

**HOLY COMMUNION**

The Lord be with you,  
And also with you.  
Lift up your hearts;  
We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All thanks and praise, glory and honour,  
be yours at all times, in every place,  
holy and loving Father, true and living God.

We praise you that through your eternal Word  
you brought the universe into being  
and made us in your own image.

You have given us this earth to care for and delight in,  
and with its bounty you preserve our life.  
We thank you that you bound yourself to the human race  
with the promises of a gracious covenant  
and called us to serve you in love and peace.

Above all, we give you thanks for your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ:  
born as one of us, he lived our common life  
and offered his life to you in perfect obedience and trust.  
By his death he delivered us from sin, brought us new life,  
and reconciled us to you and to one another.

Therefore with angels and archangels,  
with apostles, and prophets,  
with holy men and women of every age,  
we proclaim your great and glorious name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.

Holy God, we thank you  
for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine,  
and we pray that we who eat and drink them  
in obedience to our Saviour Christ,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
may be partakers of his body and blood,  
and be made one with him and with each other  
in peace and love.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread;  
and when he had given you thanks  
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,  
'Take, eat. This is my body given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup,  
and again giving you thanks  
he gave it to his disciples, saying,  
'Drink from this, all of you.  
This is my blood of the new covenant  
shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died,  
Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded:  
proclaiming his offering of himself  
made once for all upon the cross,  
his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,  
and looking for his coming again,  
we celebrate, with this bread and this cup,  
his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice  
for the sins of the whole world.

As we eat and drink this holy sacrament,  
renew us by your Spirit  
that we may be united in the body of your Son  
and serve you as a royal priesthood  
in the joy of your eternal kingdom.

Receive our praises, Father,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
with whom and in whom,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
we worship you in songs of never-ending praise:  
Blessing and honour and glory and power,  
are yours forever and ever. Amen

**THE BREAKING AND SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE**

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.  
We who are many are one body,  
for we all share in the one bread.

**DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION**

**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We believe in one God,  
who made and loves all that is.  
We believe in Jesus Christ,  
God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was born, lived, died and rose again,  
and is coming to call all to account.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
who calls, equips and sends out God's people,  
and brings all things to their true end.

**This is our faith, the faith of the Church:**

**We believe in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

Living God,  
in this holy meal you fill us with new hope.  
May the power of your love,  
which we have known in word and sacrament,  
continue your saving work among us,  
give us courage for our pilgrimage,  
and bring us to the joys you promise.

Most loving God,  
you send us into the world you love.  
Give us grace to go thankfully and with courage  
in the power of your Spirit.

**BLESSING**

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. Amen.

**DISMISSAL**

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