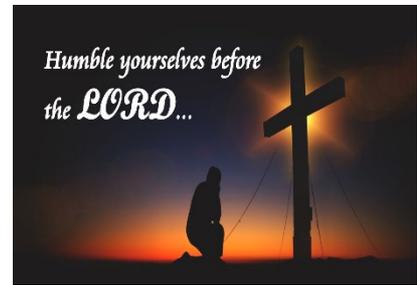




**Second Sunday of  
Epiphany**

**'Humble yourselves'**

**Morning Prayer**



*You are invited to guard time for us to be together, united in prayer in one faith,  
to our one Lord. Dispersed community prayer at 10:30am.*

*You may wish to prepare by lighting a candle*

◆ denotes an optional pause to keep silence and meditate on the words

🔊 Denotes optional audio / video version from the church website:

<https://widcombe.church/our-churches/church-life/church-online/>

***Preparation***

O Lord, open our lips

*and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.*

Your light springs up for the righteous

*and all the peoples have seen your glory.*

Blessed are you, Sovereign God,

king of the nations,

to you be praise and glory for ever.

From the rising of the sun to its setting  
your name is proclaimed in all the world.

As the Sun of Righteousness dawns in our hearts

anoint our lips with the seal of your Spirit

that we may witness to your gospel

and sing your praise in all the earth.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Blessed be God for ever.*

***Jubilate – A Song of Joy***

<sup>1</sup> O be joyful in the Lord, all the earth; ◆

serve the Lord with gladness

and come before his presence with a song.

<sup>2</sup> Know that the Lord is God; ◆

it is he that has made us and we are his;

we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

<sup>3</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving

and his courts with praise; ◆

give thanks to him and bless his name.

<sup>4</sup> For the Lord is gracious; his steadfast love is everlasting, ◆

and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

*Psalm 100*

*Glory to the Father and to the Son*

*and to the Holy Spirit;*

*as it was in the beginning is now*

*and shall be for ever. Amen.*

### *Opening prayer*

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;  
let us pray with one heart and mind.



As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and for ever. Amen.

### *The Apostles' Creed*

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.

### *Hymn*

From heaven you came, helpless babe,  
Entered our world, your glory veiled;  
Not to be served but to serve,  
And give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears,  
My heavy load he chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,*

*To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the Servant King.*

Come, see his hands and his feet,  
The scars that speak of sacrifice,  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the Servant King.*

So let us learn how to serve,  
And in our lives enthrone him;  
Each other's needs to prefer,  
For it is Christ we're serving.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the Servant King*



*The Word of God* 🗣️

### **Epistle reading: Philippians 2: 1-13**

#### **Imitating Christ's humility**

**2** Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

**5** In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

**6** who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

**7** rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

**8** And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death –  
even death on a cross!

**9** Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,

**10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

**11** and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

**12** Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and

trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.

### **Gospel reading: John 13: 1-17**

#### **Jesus washes his disciples' feet**

**13** It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup>The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, 'You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

<sup>8</sup> 'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.'

Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.'

<sup>9</sup> 'Then, Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!'

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, 'Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.' <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. <sup>13</sup> 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

#### **Reflection from Sarah Sanderson**

When I was about 16, I was in a girl guiding group and we were all sat in a circle on chairs. I was swinging on my chair and the leader told me to stop. Being 16 I carried on, and so obviously I fell off my chair backwards. However, to make things worse, my back was to a door, so the top half of me went through the closed door and ended up in a large hall where there was a serious meeting going on. Although being incredibly embarrassed, it did and still does cause me a lot of amusement.

Currently, through our sermons we are looking at a passage in 2 Chronicles chapter 7, verse 13-15: It reads:

*When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, <sup>14</sup> if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. <sup>15</sup> Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.*

I don't know about you, but I am desperate to see God come and heal our land, but as Jenny beautifully said last week, this is one of God's conditional promises. Today, we start looking at these conditions and we begin with God asking us to humble ourselves. The story I used at the beginning was a truly humbling experience however I don't think that this is what God is calling or asking us to do! Augustine said "should you ask me what is the

first thing in religion? I should reply: the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> thing therein is humility." However it is tricky to define humility, and possibly harder to work out how to be humble in a Godly way.

Paul, in Romans, in his discourse about grace asks should we sin more so that we understand grace more? The answer is obviously no. However we could easily use this argument for humility. If we focus more on our sins, then we understand more how unworthy we are, would we then become more humble before God? Again – of course not. C.S. Lewis says "**Humility** is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." The Lord is not asking us to become like worms, to become obsessed with the sin that is in each one of us to make us remember how hopeless we are as humans, or to put ourselves down saying we are worthless. God does not say any of this. When we look at Jesus, the perfecter of our faith, He made some outrageous claims about who he is – I am the light of the world, I am the good shepherd, I am the bread of life, No one comes to the Father except through me. And yet we see in Matthew 11:29 Jesus says "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." We also heard in our reading from Philippians, that Jesus humbled himself. So as Jesus is humble, humility obviously isn't about putting ourselves down and making ourselves like worms.

Humility is when we place our entire dependence on God. I'll say it again, humility is when we place our entire dependence on God. But how can we practically live this humility out? T.S. Eliot says that "humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve: Nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself". Jenny recommended a book to me by Andrew Murray on humility (it's only a tiny book so if you are interested in pursuing humility deeper, then it is well worth a read) and he says again and again we can't make ourselves humble. The more we focus on ourselves, the less humble we are – this affirms our C.S. Lewis quote that humility is about thinking of yourself less. Murray says, "flee to Jesus and hide yourself in Him until you are clothed with His humility". But how do we flee to Jesus... it's great Christian jargon but what does it mean? There's a beautiful prayer used in the Eastern Orthodox Churches which is based partly on the story in the bible, where two men go into the synagogue – one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The pharisee started to pray in a way that now a days would be a bit like Donald Trump praying, Thank you God that I am the best at everything, thank you that I am not like other people who sin, thank you God that I have loads of money and loads of brilliant ideas, thank you that I understand the workings of all businesses and societies, thank you that I am on a higher plane than all other men! And the other man, a tax collector wouldn't even raise his eyes to heaven, he just said "God be merciful to me, a sinner". This Jesus prayer used as a repeated mantra in the orthodox churches and which you may well know is "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner". Although I knew of it, I hadn't ever used it, and I have found it amazingly fruitful. Interestingly although the second part of the prayer is about our sin, because the first part focuses us on God, instead of feeling full of sin it causes us to be awe of our amazing God. I tried for a while repeating it, and found that each time I said I would focus on a different part of the prayer and it drew me closer to God, to be more in awe of God and to be more humbled before him. I have also used it to pray for others by replacing the "me" with someone's name and by imagining myself with the other person standing in front of God.

Another way to practice humility is thanking God for everything, not like the pharisee, but for all things, even the things that are difficult. Sometimes, we have these things in us that Paul puts as "thorns in the flesh" in order to keep us humble. I have found myself thinking yes I'm doing OK with God, and I depend and trust him, and then something happens that shakes my world. I realise that my dependency and trust on God has left and I don't know

where to turn. This is where our bible reading of Jesus washing the disciples feet comes in. Jesus washes each of the disciples feet as an act of humility. I am sure that you, as good Christians, are brilliant at helping those in need especially during these tricky times. Of putting others first not for your own gain but just because they need help. A little like our Philippians reading Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. However, and I am not trying to diminish this amazing Christian service so please continue to do things for others in need, regarding them better than yourselves, let us look at when Jesus turns to wash Peter's feet and Peter says no. How many of us turn and say no when someone offers to help us? Often this is rooted in pride, the opposite of humility. I can cope, I can manage, how can I accept help from someone worse off than myself? When something shakes my world, I've lost my focus and trust of God, I've realised I need to humble myself, bite back my pride and ask people, please can you pray for me? We've had to isolate as a family a couple of times recently as someone has developed a cough (that has been non covid). I really enjoyed shopping for others during the first lockdown, but I have had to turn to neighbours, and again swallow my pride, my ability to cope in all situations in my own strength and ask them to shop for us. Spurgeon says that humility is the proper estimation of oneself.

So as we move on from here, let us follow Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith in his example to us of humility. Not dwelling on our shortcomings nor on our gifts, but instead meditating on God's awesomeness. And I pray that this would then be worked out in our lives not only in our service to others but also in accepting and asking others for help.

### ***Intercessions***

*Let us pray.*

Eternal God,  
Creator and Father of us all,  
We thank you for this wonderful world;  
For the ever-changing skies,  
The blessed winds,  
And the earth beneath our feet.  
We thank you that Your Son gave up all of this life's loveliness in sacrifice for us.  
In our turn and in great humility, we offer You our lives.  
All that we do and all that we say we give in joyful and willing service to You, our Lord and heavenly King.  
Amen.

*As we reflect on what has been happening around the world since Christmas, we say together;*

All- powerful God,  
Who has ruled the world from the beginning;  
Look upon our leaders as they strive to govern their peoples.  
Guide them with Your wisdom,  
Give them humility to serve,  
And reveal to them the injustices that they can challenge.  
May ALL world leaders become true servants of God,  
That they will rule with fairness and in peace, and not by oppression or violence.  
May they value peace above power, equality more than status and their people's welfare more than personal ambition.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus,

Amen.

We pray for all who are sick...

all who are in pain or distress,  
all who are troubled or anxious.

In a moment of quietness let us remember them by name.

We pray for all who seek to relieve pain and suffering... for doctors, nurses and those who support the lonely, bereaved or those with mental health problems....

Lord Jesus, be with them all in your infinite love,  
Amen.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

*Amen*



***The Collect***

Almighty God,

in Christ you make all things new:

transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,

and in the renewal of our lives

make known your heavenly glory;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

***Lord's Prayer***

*Believing the promises of God, as our Saviour taught us, so we 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.

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.



***To Conclude***

May Christ, who sends us to the nations,

give us the power of his Spirit.

*Amen.*

Let us bless the Lord.

*Thanks be to God.*

