

Readiness to worship together:

Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love

Prayer entering the presence of our heavenly Father:

Dear father, you have brought your beloved Son to us and through him we are in turn brought into your presence. You desire us to stay well in his company, to feel his holy love, and like the woman of old, who washed his feet with her tears, to learn all we can of him who knows all about us and yet loves us forever. So, we too shall love him with undying love.

Hymn: love divine all loves excelling C Wesley

1. Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of Heav'n to Earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown;
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, enter ev'ry trembling heart.
2. Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit into ev'ry troubled breast;
Let us all in thee inherit, let us find thy promised rest;
Take away our love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.
3. Come, Almighty to deliver; Let us all thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never, never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy host above,
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.
4. Finish, then, thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory till in Heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise

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Prayer;

We pause and remember our brothers and sisters who are persecuted and pursued by violent men because they love and follow you. The mourning families of those killed just last month in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The frightened ones in certain Indian states facing angry Hindu mobs. The imprisoned for their faith. Father help us to so love, that as the Scripture instructs we can 'remember those in prison as if we were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if we ourselves were suffering'.

In Jesus Name, Amen

Hymn: O love that will not let me go; G Matheson.

1. Oh love that will not let me go I rest my weary soul in thee
I give thee back the life I owe that in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.
2. Oh light that followest all my way I yield my flickering torch to thee
My heart restores its borrowed ray that in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.
3. Oh joy that seekest me through pain I cannot close my heart to thee
I trace the rainbow through the rain and feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.
4. Oh cross that liftest up my head I dare not ask to fly from thee
I lay in dust's life's glory dead and from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

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Scriptures:

- Psalm 145 (read this as if you have written this Love song to Jesus yourself)
- Romans 10.5-13
- Philippians 2.5-11
- Revelation 11.15-18

Message: 'In your hearts revere Christ as Lord' 1Peter 3.15a

The Australian Broadcasting Commission is highlighting the start of Ramadan, which takes up the month of March. Muslims celebrate the forming of the Koran and other directions from Allah. A Muslim scholar summarises the practice of Ramadan as: "Ramadan is not just about giving up food and drink — it is a time for introspection, forgiveness and reflection; it is a time to cleanse the heart of all ills, pray, share a meal and, above all, reorient the heart toward the oneness of God".

Christians make use of Lent about the same time as Ramadan. I wonder if the ABC will give an explanation of Lent to help people understand and practise this Christian tradition?

So what is Lent, which begins this Sunday? Last Wednesday was Ash Wednesday which in many church calendars prefaces Lent with a reminder of our indebtedness to Our great Redeemer, who on the greatest Day in human history descended into our souls and through the eternal Spirit dealt for all time with the sin that keeps us in the dark away from God and away from each other.

Then comes Lent which continues up to Easter Saturday. It is a lengthened time, of 40 days, a preparation with prayer and fasting before commemorating the great historic acts of Christ's death and Resurrection.

Essentially Lent is a way to help Christians pause and intentionally think about their faith. That is a good plan. Do you think about your Lord Jesus in a loving and grateful way?

The early church was full of love for Jesus, as in any place today where believers are forced to draw close to Jesus for help and wisdom.

The early church urges believers to 'reverence Christ as Lord in their hearts'. This means to allow one's heart to become convinced, like Thomas, of the literal fact of Christ's resurrection. And secondly, to give public announcement of the implication of that belief, by acknowledging openly that Jesus is the true Lord.ⁱ

Contrary to the urging of the ABC in its Religion and Ethics segment to search for the meaning of Ramadan, we should make better use of the Lent season to cleanse our hearts of all idolatry that places value on anything that is above the Lord Jesus Christ.

Islam is really a split off from Judeo-Christianity in the early seventh century (632 AD). But it is a heresy of the true faith. Islam denies the deity of Jesus. It denies his redemptive sin-bearing death. Therefore it is not a saving belief. It is inappropriate for the national broadcaster to sponsor and promote the Islamic sect, especially in a country, like Australia, which owes so much to the preaching of the true Gospel of Christ.

This season is a reminder to acknowledge, nay, fall at the feet of Jesus who at the name of Jesus all creation shall bow and declare that he is Christ the Lord to the glory of the Father.ⁱⁱ

We must pay attention to the truth about Jesus and to reject Islamic and other substitutes of false adoration. Yes, we can be glad for devout God-fearing characteristics wherever they are manifest. But look at the fruit. Only the truths of the Christ have given rise to the advancement and flourishing of whole nations. And where the Christ is received into the sanctuary of any human heart, whatever state it is in, or whatever culture or background has affected it, His presence always brings changes for the better. His company liberates and blesses. Can you not happily agree to that statement and take your place in boldly acknowledging the resurrected Lord Jesus?

Not only Lent but through all our days let our love for Jesus remain and grow deep and warm and unashamed. There is much cause for that.

Prayer:

Dear Father, on this day grant me to reverence your beloved Son as lord of my life. I rest upon him to guide, govern and guard my heart. May these days of Lent see me join with believers around the world being refreshed in my first love, with my Lord Jesus.

In His Name I pray, Amen

Hymn; Be thou my vision O Lord of my heart, Elizabeth Byrne

1. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me save that thou art.
Thou my best thought by day and by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.
2. Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true Word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.

Thou my great Father, I thy dear child;
Thou in me dwelling, with thee reconciled.

3. Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my dignity, thou my delight.
Thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower;
Raise thou me Heavenward, O Power of my power.

4. Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always.
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art.

5. High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

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Benediction (A blessing of Apostle Paulⁱⁱⁱ)

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be under a curse. Come, O Lord! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.

ⁱ Romans 10.10

ⁱⁱ Philippians 2.5-11

ⁱⁱⁱ 1Corinthians 16.22-24 A rarely used benediction because of its seeming sharp wording. However, the word 'curse' points to the awful curse of being exposed on judgment day in all our personal sin and shame before God and all eyes. But herein is our peace; all this is dealt with by our Lord Jesus who received and bore that curse of shame in our place, so we never will. What love is this! On the other side those who despise or ignore this manifest love of Jesus for them, continue in the realm of curse.