

Dear friends

I hope this morning finds you well. Once again, I'm sending out the link to our online worship, for those who are unable to be present in Kingsbury Church for our service at 11am today, together with the words of the youtube worship and the reflection that I've written on today's reading.

<https://youtu.be/yTrlpK9stb0>



### Worship and Reflection for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

A short act of worship for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity from the Kingsbury and Baxterley Group of Parishes, with a reflection from John White on the Gosp...

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/yTrlpK9stb0)

As we adjust to having a mix of worship online and in our buildings, I am feeling the time is right to send out more occasional emails, perhaps once a month or so, rather than every Sunday morning. There will continue to be the youtube videos posted onto facebook and the website each week, as well as zoom compline on a Tuesday evening. However, if you value having the worship being sent to you directly like this, just let me know and I will happily send it out to you.

Many of you will have heard the sad news last week that Kelly Tyler from Kingsbury died last weekend. Our thoughts and prayers are with Sid and the family, and with all those who have been recently bereaved. Unfortunately we are still in the situation when attendance at funerals is strictly limited, but we will look towards having wider gatherings when restrictions are lifted. Details of the funeral service for Kelly had not been entirely confirmed by the time of the newsletter going to press, but it is looking likely to be Monday 14 September at 1pm at Kingsbury Church.

With my prayers and best wishes

John

## **Worship for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity**

### ***Greeting***

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

### ***Confession***

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.

We are often slow to follow the example of Christ.  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

We often fail to be known as Christ's disciples.  
Christ, have mercy.  
**Christ, have mercy.**

We often fail to walk the way of the cross.  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

May the Father forgive us by the death of his Son  
and strengthen us to live in the power of his Spirit  
all our days.  
**Amen.**

### ***Collect***

God of constant mercy,  
who sent your Son to save us;  
remind us of your goodness.  
Increase your grace within us,  
that our thankfulness may grow,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

***First Reading: Romans 12.9-end***

***Gospel Reading: Matthew 16.21-end***

## **Reflection**

While I was still in training for ministry (so over 30 years ago now), a film came out that sparked quite a lot of controversy, with a number of church leaders and Christian groups calling for it to be banned. The film was Martin Scorsese's adaptation of a novel by Nikos Kazantzakis, 'The Last Temptation of Christ'. Not being too keen on being told what I should or should not watch, I went to the cinema to see the film and make up my own mind. My general reaction was that, whilst I didn't think it was a great film, and Jesus as portrayed in it falls a long way short of the Jesus whom I have come to know and follow and worship, neither was it the outrageous and blasphemous attack on Christian faith that its detractors were claiming. In particular, I had no objection to the sequence central to the movie that had attracted most criticism. It takes place in Jesus' imagination, as he is being crucified and hears the jeering of the crowd as they challenge him, if he is the Messiah, to come down from the cross. What if he did? What if he took a different path from the one that led to him dying in agony at Calvary? The vision in the film offers an alternative future for Jesus, one in which he gets married, has children, lives out his life in Galilee in domestic happiness.

But he didn't do that, and, as the film makes clear, Jesus stays on the cross and fulfils his vocation. He resists the temptation, to evade his calling, to evade suffering. The novel, and the film, are of course fictional; they are speculative works of the imagination; but the idea that Christ was tempted to come down from the cross and continue to live an earthly life, seems to me neither blasphemous nor heretical. As the letter to the Hebrews tells us, Jesus was tempted, as we are, yet without sin. Moreover this last temptation of Christ is not so very different from the first, in the wilderness, where after forty days of fasting Jesus is confronted by the devil, who dangles before him the possibility of taking an easy way, of being a Christ without the cross.

And here, in today's Gospel, we have what we might call the second temptation of Christ. Again, it is not so different from the last or the first. Jesus tells his disciples that he is to suffer and to die; but Simon, newly nicknamed Peter, refuses to accept such a fate for the Messiah: "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you!" The harshness of Jesus' response to Peter "Get behind me, Satan!" is surely because of the echoes of the first temptation in the desert. Jesus hears, in the voice of his friend, the same voice that whispered seductive words in the wilderness, holding out the prospect of a crown without a cross, of glory without pain, of victory without death.

It is the same temptation that Jesus faces and resists in the Garden of Gethsemane. "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not my will, but yours". If there is any way, other than the way of cross, to fulfil his calling, then Jesus will take it. He does not want to die. But there is no other way. Only the way of the cross can be the way of salvation, the way of the true Messiah. The world has suffered enough from those would-be Messiahs who achieve their fleeting victories through wielding power and inflicting pain

on their enemies. That is the human way, and the devil's way; God's way is the way of loving self-sacrifice and self-giving, for the sake of the other.

And what is true for Jesus is true for his followers. There is no way to glory, no way of obedience, that does not go by the way of the cross. At our baptism, we receive the sign of the cross on our forehead. It is a sign of belonging to Jesus, a sign of the promise that he is with us always, but it is also a reminder of our call as disciples, to walk in his steps, to take up our cross and follow him. May we be given the strength to resist the temptation to ever think that there can be another, easier way. Only the way of the cross can truly be the way of life.

### ***Affirmation of faith***

Let us declare our faith  
in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he was buried;  
he was raised to life on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
afterwards he appeared to his followers,  
and to all the apostles:  
this we have received,  
and this we believe.  
Amen.**

### ***Prayers of intercession***

#### ***Blessing and Dismissal***

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,  
to deny yourselves,  
take up your cross,  
and follow him;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit  
be among you and remain with you always.  
**Amen.**