The SUNDAY BEFORE LENT and ASH WEDNESDAY 2023:
Sunday 19th February – 25th February 2023

Greetings from Eileen

Dear Friends,

We continue to pray for the people in Turkey and Syria in their distress. Do consider responding to our **appeal for donations via Christian Aid and DEC** to support emergency services, provision of medical supplies and essential needs. We are truly thankful for the miraculous rescue of people and pray also for those who are injured, for medical teams as hospital services are extremely challenged there. If you're unable to donate electronically on the 2 websites, collections will be taken again this Sunday at our services in Winston and Gainford.

Everyone is invited to pray for Ukraine on the anniversary of the invasion, a year on 24th February. Here is the link to a prayer from Christian Aid: https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/prayer-ukraine#:~:text=We%20implore%20you%2C%20O%20Merciful,looking%20for%20mercy%20and%20compassion.

Gainford celebrated with Bishop Paul as the church and school became the **first partnership to receive the national Church of England Growing Faith Foundation Certificate**. The full church reflected the fruits of our partnership and many continued to celebrate in the exhibition and tea hosted by the children and staff in school. Here's a vignette from the service! https://youtu.be/XbSPWzGFHwQ

SERVICES this Sunday 19th February 2023

9.15am St Mary's, Staindrop – Service of the Word (Lay-led: The Worship Group)
9.30am St Andrew's, Winston – Communion (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)
10.45am St Mary's, Gainford – Communion with the Worship Band (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)
12.30 St Mary's, Staindrop – BAPTISM of Enzo Albert Metcalfe (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)

ASH WEDNESDAY 22nd February 2023

9.30am St Andrew's, Winston – Communion with Imposition of Ashes (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)

All parishioners from Ingleton, Gainford, Staindrop and Winston are welcome to this service

We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop

NOTICES:

- **AGM Churches Together in Gainford** with talk and hospitality: Tuesday 21st February 7pm at St Osmund's Church Centre. **Andy Mitchell from THE WELL FOODBANK will be sharing with us the work of THE WELL in West Auckland**. This year's CTiG Lent Lunches will be collecting for The Well.

- **LENT EVENTS:**
  - **Winston, St Andrew's, LENT LUNCH: Saturday 11th February 11am – 1.30pm in Winston Village Hall. Donations to WATER AID**
  - **Churches Together in Gainford Lent Lunches: Tuesday 7th March 12.30pm St Mary's Church; Tuesday 21st March 12.30pm St Osmund's Church Centre.**

Lent Study: During the period of Lent from this Wednesday 22nd February through to Holy Week (Palm Sunday being 2nd April this year), I encourage everyone to find moments of stillness and quiet to reflect on God's grace in Jesus' earthly ministry, a gift wholly given for each of us. There are many resources including The Archbishops recommended resource: 'Dust and Glory' produced by Bishop Emma Ineson for The Archbishops: https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/lent-holy-week-and-easter/dust-and-glory-resources-lent-2023
Dust and Glory encourages us to take a fresh look at the frustrations and failings that every day brings and, rather than pretending we can always avoid them, seek to learn from them and grow closer to God through them.

DIOCESE WEEKLY LENT PRAYER

Everyone is also invited to join by ZOOM during LENT WEEKLY Diocesan prayer meeting, each Monday, 9am to 9.30am. The themes of the meetings will follow those of the new Diocesan 'Called to Fruitfulness' Study Course:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87971742972?pwd=Ymx3d3UxQXJjUXVCeWMwWlNPY1hSdz09

Collect for the Sunday before Lent
Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

Post Communion Prayer
Holy God,
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ:
may we who are partakers at his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know his power to
change and save.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

First Reading: Exodus 24:12-18

12 The Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the
tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.' 13 So
Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. 14 To the
elders he had said, 'Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you;
whoever has a dispute may go to them.'
15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of
the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called
to Moses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire
on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud, and went
up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 17:1-9

1 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high
mountain, by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and
his clothes became dazzling white. 3 Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with
him. 4 Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three
dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' 5 While he was still speaking, suddenly
a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the
Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the
ground and were overcome by fear. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not
be afraid.' 8 And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until
after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'

Sermon, 2nd Sunday before Lent: Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop, 12th February 2023 (Genesis 1:1-2.3; Matthew 6:25-34)

We have all had reason for anxiety in the past week, the past year, and indeed we have probably carried anxiety for a while in recent years or even for longer. Like many of you or perhaps all of you, I have loved ones whose well-being have given cause for concern. For some of us, our loved ones are too geographically distant for us to be present in person. So, it feels difficult to assure ourselves of their well-being or to be at hand in their time of need. We also know that undesirable things can happen suddenly, which are not within our ability to prevent. Whether these be accidents, in the home, on the road, or just being anywhere; or bigger events such as has befallen Turkey and Syria; the case for anxiety seems unavoidable.

I am personally not of the natural disposition where nothing phases me. So anxious thoughts do assail me. And if I read the last part of our Gospel passage on its own, I'd find it disturbingly unhelpful:

'*"So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.*'

So, what is our Lord actually saying to his disciples, to us? Is he making light of the things of the world that stir in us anxious thoughts, or might he be rebuking us for lack of faith or trust in him?

This is not Jesus' first occasion of speaking to his disciples or to us about not being anxious. We are familiar with Jesus' assurances that the Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God; and that peace covers and settles our anxiety. On another occasion Jesus is asleep while his disciples are convinced they would die in the storm; and we know, all was well on that occasion. Yet we also know that Jesus' earthly life came to a nasty end – ultimately he was not delivered from death.

So what is Jesus saying?

The key words to our passage are right at the start: '*Therefore*', and at the end: '*So*'.

Before this particular section of Jesus' conversation with his disciples, he had taught them how to pray. He had directed them to the Kingdom of Heaven and to have confidence in eternal life. He had also said "*No one can serve two masters…either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth*". While our life is on earth and in the world, we will be minded about matters here. But there is something about fully realising that it is not our master, the world and earthly things are not our master, that brings us to what Jesus is referring to in our passage today.

Jesus says: "*do not worry about your life*" and do not "*strive for all these things*". He mentions that striving for these things is what 'the Gentiles' do, which refers to those who do not know about the Kingdom of Heaven, who do not believe in God and in God the Father who knows our needs.

I find it helpful that the Church lectionary theologians have given us our Old Testament reading from Genesis chapter 1 to be combined with the Gospel passage from Matthew 6. Our Genesis reading is long, meticulous, and rather detailed. It tells of how God created the world, and made humankind. And after God made everything and humankind '*God blessed them'* and '*said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.*"

God who created us, blessed our lives that we may have all we need for our earthly life. Of course, at that time of Creation, there was no separation of perfection on earth as it is in heaven. But despite the fallenness of humankind and corrupted world, God Almighty who created us in His image, and so us destined for life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Therefore, as we are people of faith, we do not deny God our maker and redeemer, and belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. Our lives are not limited to the constraints and cares of this world, nor are we only blessed by the creature comforts in this world.

And this is why, not lacking empathy, Jesus says: "*So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.*' If our outlook in life is earthward and limited to our worldly experience, indeed all we will see is trouble today and tomorrow. But instead, rest in our faith, in God who gave us what we do enjoy and the glimpses of awesome wonder. Ours is life in an eternal kingdom that God has prepared for us.

Amen