



## Sunday 25th April 2021 St George and St Mark

### Welcome

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

**All and also with you.**

Leader This is the day that the Lord has made.

**All Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

### Opening Prayer

**All God of our days and years, we set this time apart for you.  
Form us in the likeness of Christ so that our lives may glorify  
you. Amen**

### Hymn For all the saints

For all the saints who from their  
labours rest,  
who Thee by faith before the world  
confessed,  
Thy name, O Jesu, be for ever blest.  
Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress,  
and their might;  
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the  
well-fought fight;  
Thou in the darkness drear their  
one true light.  
Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship  
divine!  
We feebly struggle, they in glory  
shine;  
yet all are one in Thee, for all are  
Thine.  
Alleluia!

The golden evening brightens in the  
west;  
soon, soon to faithful warriors  
cometh rest;  
sweet is the calm of paradise the  
blest.  
Alleluia!

But lo! there breaks a yet more  
glorious day:  
the saints triumphant rise in bright  
array;  
the King of glory passes on His way.  
Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from  
ocean's farthest coast,  
through gates of pearl streams in  
the countless host,  
singing to Father, Son and Holy  
Ghost.  
Alleluia!

Laying the flag – Eric Rice, Keith Tarling, Martin Maguire (Royal Naval Association)

The persecuted church – Video from Open Doors

### Confession

**All** Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have lived at times as if we are ashamed to belong to your son .  
We are sorry and repent.  
Have mercy on us according to your love.  
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.  
Renew a right spirit within us  
and restore to us the joy of your salvation,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### Absolution

**Leader** May the Father of all mercies cleanse *you* from *your* sins, and restore *you* in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect (St George)

**Leader** God of hosts, who so kindled the flame of love in the heart of your servant George that he bore witness to the risen Lord by his life and by his death: give us the same faith and power of love that we who rejoice in his triumphs may come to share with him the fullness of the resurrection; 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

### Collect (St Mark)

**Leader** Almighty God, who enlightened your holy Church through the inspired witness of your evangelist Saint Mark: grant that we, being firmly grounded in the truth of the gospel, may be faithful to its teaching both in word and deed; 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

Everyday faith – Ketsiya Melamine – St Peter's

## Hymn      **God is our strength and refuge**

God is our strength and refuge,  
our present help in trouble;  
and we therefore will not fear,  
though the earth should change!  
Though mountains shake and  
tremble,  
though swirling floods are raging,  
God the Lord of hosts is with us  
evermore!

There is a flowing river,  
within God's holy city;  
God is in the midst of her –  
she shall not be moved!

God's help is swiftly given,  
thrones vanish at His presence –  
God the Lord of hosts is with us  
evermore!

Come, see the works of our maker,  
learn of His deeds all-powerful;  
wars will cease across the world  
when He shatters the spear!  
Be still and know your Creator,  
uplift Him in the nations –  
God the Lord of hosts is with us  
evermore!

Words by Richard Bewes  
Music by Eric Coates  
Music arranged by John Barnard

## Bible readings;

### *John 15:18-21 - Mark Lemprière, St Mark's*

<sup>18</sup>"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. <sup>19</sup>If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. <sup>21</sup>They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

### *Acts 15:35-end - Barbara Phillipps, All Souls'*

<sup>35</sup>But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

<sup>36</sup>Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." <sup>37</sup>Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, <sup>38</sup>but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. <sup>39</sup>They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, <sup>40</sup>but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup>He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

## Sermon by Rev Jonathan Thomas – Easy living?

Have you ever played around with your title by imagining what it would be like if you were Sir Jonathan, Lady Mary etc? Children often pretend to be a knight or princess and give themselves titles. Engaged women often use the title Mrs to themselves to get used to it, and us clergy, prior to be ordained, will imagine being called Rev (I still find it strange after 11 years!).

But have any of us ever thought of adding St to our names. St Clive, St Brenda etc. I presume most of us wouldn't be so presumptuous, although the bible does say we are all saints. However, the problem with being an official saint is that firstly you have to be dead and secondly it usually involves an unpleasant demise. So maybe not!

Today we are thinking about two saints who we celebrate this weekend: Our national patron saint George, whom we celebrated on Friday, and Mark the patron saint of one of our churches in the parish, who is celebrated today.

St George was born in the 3rd Century AD, rose quickly up the ranks of the Roman Army and became an officer in charge of 1000 men and a favourite of the Emperor Diocletian. However, Christians were growing in influence and Diocletian felt threatened by them. He issued an edict that all churches should be destroyed, scriptures burnt, and anyone confessing to be a Christian would lose their Roman citizenship or even their life.

St George was a Christian and was concerned for fellow Christians. In February 303 when in his mid 20s he was in the city of Nicomedia, Palestine, where the Emperor was. He saw the Emperor's edict plastered around the town and tore them down and with the courage of his faith went to see the Emperor. When he appeared before Diocletian George denounced him for his cruelty and injustice and made an eloquent and courageous speech, stirring his fellow soldiers who were listening. He declared he would only worship Jesus.

Naturally Diocletian was very upset by this, he tried to convert George to Roman paganism and offer him bribes if he would recant his faith. He put him in prison and tortured him hoping George would deny his faith in Christ. But knowing he wouldn't and would therefore die George disposed of his wealth by giving it to the poor and freeing his slaves. Diocletian had him beheaded on 23 April 303.

St Mark is best known to us as the writer of the shortest and earliest gospel which was largely based on Peter's account of Jesus' life, as Mark kept company with Peter. Mark was a Jew whose full name was John Mark

and was a relation of Barnabas. His mother Mary was the one who hosted the prayer meeting when Peter was in prison in Acts 12 where he went when miraculously freed.

Mark lived in Jerusalem and accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journeys to Antioch and Cyprus, but when they got to Perga, in modern Turkey, Mark returned to Jerusalem leaving Paul and Barnabas to continue. In our reading from Acts 15 today Paul regarded this as desertion, so when embarking on another missionary journey Paul refused to take Mark with them, although Barnabas wanted to. This led to conflict between Paul and Barnabas and a parting of their ways, Paul taking Silas with him, and Barnabas taking Mark.

However, it is clear that Paul and Mark reconciled as in Colossians 4:10 Mark is with Paul in prison in Rome and wants to send him on a mission to Colossae. Mark is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:11 when Paul sends for Mark who he says is useful to him.

Looking at these two saints who were committed followers of Jesus and thinking about my own experience I asked myself "is being a committed follower of Jesus an easy life?" I wonder what you would say. My answer would be both 'Yes' and 'No'.

I would say 'Yes' because when you follow Jesus you are living as God made you to live, there is an underlying peace, joy and sense of purpose in your life. Knowing Jesus as your saviour you have the assurance of the forgiveness of your sins, of knowing you are loved by the creator of the universe, that you can be yourself without having to try to impress God or anyone else. And generally making decisions in life is clear, if not easy, because you live according to God's word, and for George he could stand firm when pressured to renounce his faith, because he knew that was the right thing to do, even though it cost him his life. And there are many other reasons why I would say 'Yes', such as the love you receive from other Christians, a worldwide family of believers, where peace and reconciliation are hallmarks of relationships, as ultimately Mark and Paul experienced, despite the conflict we see in Acts 15.

On the other hand I would say 'No' to it being an easy life because being a committed follower of Jesus is costly. It's costly because you die to self-centred living. Your main aim in life is not to obtain maximum pleasure, money and status. That's not to say that you won't have those things and George had status, influence and money as a Roman Officer. But they are not your driving force. Living this way is hard because our 'selfish nature' as apostle Paul calls it, pulls us towards doing everything we can to make

life easy, comfortable and fun for ourselves, whatever the long term cost to ourselves and others.

And I would also say 'No' because as a follower of Jesus you are going against the grain in this world and likely to face persecution and opposition. In our reading from John 15 Jesus says his followers would be hated and persecuted, as he was, because we do not belong to the world. For George, and many Christians across the world throughout history, and even today as we saw in the Open Doors video, that meant imprisonment and even death. It often involves being hated, victimised, discriminated against, not being allowed to worship together. Most of us will not have experienced anything like that, but we may have experienced other forms of persecution which we find hard. I was teased as a child by my classmates in primary school because I wouldn't swear and when a teenager because I went to church. Some of you will have faced derision for going to church and believing in an unscientifically proven God. Others for standing up for justice in your workplace or family or a whole host of other reasons.

And it's also 'No', because as we see from Mark's situation in Luke 15 when Paul and Barnabas fall out over Mark, when you are a follower of Jesus you are passionate about serving God and that will lead to conflict not just with the world, but with Christians. We wish it were not so, that we could learn always to agree and live in peace, but when things matter deeply there will always be debate and disagreement about the right way to further God's kingdom. I hate conflict, but as I grow in leadership I realise it is unavoidable and often necessary and healthy, especially if people learn to disagree well and ultimately can forgive and restore relationships as Paul and Mark did.

Being a committed follower of Jesus is both easy and difficult as we have seen, and our two saints today give us an example to follow. Three things we learn from them to help us:

1. *Have a strong, living relationship with Jesus.* Both George and Mark clearly did, which gave them the strength they needed. Prayer is key here, spending time alone with God, so that you know his presence with you whatever you face and are not overwhelmed. Ketsi's testimony earlier when she faced racism bore witness to the strength her relationship with Jesus gave her to get through it. Being actively involved in church is vital too, where you can grow and be supported by others in your faith as we know Mark experienced being around people like Peter, Barnabas and Paul.

2. *Don't expect an easy life.* Expect that your service to God will take time, energy and money that will put you under pressure at times. Don't think a task is someone else's. God may well be asking you to do it, even if you lack confidence, but he will equip you with the resources you need and bless you through your obedience. Expect conflict and persecution as George and Mark did and prepare yourself emotionally and spiritually for it. If you face persecution because of your faith you are probably doing things right rather than wrong and as Jesus said in the beatitudes 'Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. And remember to love your enemies, pray for and bless those who persecute you as Jesus taught. Even though life may not be easy it should be fun and fulfilling and we do need to take care of our mind, body and spirit.

3. *Don't be quiet about your faith.* George was incensed at Diocletian's edict against Christians so protested to him and was arrested. Mark chose to put great effort into recording Jesus' life, teaching, miracles, death and resurrection so that over the coming centuries people like you and me could be inspired. Make it known to the people that you work with, are at school with, socialise with that you go to church and love Jesus, it is amazing what opportunities will arise from that. Now, more than ever, Christians in this nation need to share Jesus, invite people to church, pray for their friends to know Him.

We may think we can never emulate these great saints, that we don't have what it takes to be so dedicated to Jesus or courageous, but I don't expect George or Mark ever saw sainthood in their future. They lived close to Christ according to what God had given them and found Jesus carried them through, even unto death in George's case. One of my favourite verses that I recite when life is overwhelming are these words of Jesus in John 16:33. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

We are all saints in God's eyes so how about putting St in front of your name - St Jonathan - and let that inspire the way you live for Jesus and make a difference for God's kingdom. Amen

## Hymn      **Blessed be your name**

Blessèd be Your name  
in the land that is plentiful,  
where Your streams of abundance  
flow,  
blessèd be Your name.  
And blessèd be Your name  
when I'm found in the desert place,  
though I walk through the  
wilderness,  
blessèd be Your name.

Every blessing You pour out I'll  
turn back to praise.  
And when the darkness closes in,  
Lord,  
still I will say:

*'Blessèd be the name of the Lord,  
Blessèd be Your name.  
Blessèd be the name of the Lord,  
Blessèd be Your glorious name.'*

Blessèd be Your name  
when the sun's shining down on  
me,  
when the world's 'all as it should  
be',  
blessèd be Your name.  
And blessèd be Your name  
on the road marked with suffering,  
though there's pain in the offering,  
blessèd be Your name.

Every blessing You pour out . . .

*'Blessèd be the name . . .'*

You give and take away,  
You give and take away.  
My heart will choose to say,  
'Lord, blessed be Your name.'  
You give and take away . . .

*'Blessèd be the name . . .'*

Words and music by Beth Redman  
Words and music by Matt Redman

## Creed

**All**      **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 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.**



## Prayers – Geoff Pugh, St Peter's

St Georges Day, last Friday in the calendar, is a church saint day that we celebrate today, and there is just a little resonance with last weekend too, when the Duke of Edinburgh, consort for our Queen, and considered by many to be the grandfather of our nation, was laid to rest at Windsor in the vaults of – St Georges Royal Chapel.

Let us start our prayers this morning with a prayer for Her Majesty, our widowed Queen in her birthday week.

*Please join me with your response at the end of each prayer, I will say 'Lord in your mercy', you may say 'Hear our prayer'*

*Eternal God who rules all kingdoms of men on earth, we ask that you keep our sovereign lady Queen in good health and safety, and that she is comforted in her widowhood and old age through her faith in you, through her achievements on your behalf in her Commonwealth of peoples, through her example of Godly living in your service, and so will continue to shine to the glory to your holy name*  
*Lord in your mercy*

### **Hear our Prayer**

In his turbulent world with ever present tensions or conflicts between nation states and between peoples of differing religions, let us pray today for those who follow our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, yet who are enduring persecution, victimisation or acts of violence and destruction.

*Lord Jesus Christ, we are your family, and you call all of us to live in love as brothers. Help all your peoples of the world to overcome the barriers that divide us in our religions and cultures from one another. Bless every effort being made to bring peace and understanding where there is discord, so that all may learn your ways, and learn your will. In a short silence, please each pray quietly for at least one such area that concerns you, especially if it affects you or your family or someone you know directly*

*Lord in your mercy*

### **Hear our Prayer**

National and culturally driven conflicts past and present have probably directly affected most of us gathered here today. For some, with an armed forces services background directly, for others, perhaps through a relative, a father, uncle, aunt, grandparent, or through others known personally to each of us and who have served our country in various capacities in time or situations of conflict, or have been innocent victims of such conflicts.

*Lord Jesus, For St Georges Day, we remember them, and, as we still bask in the glory of the resurrection of your son, Jesus Christ, in this Eastertide week, we pray that we may always strive to know you better so that we can all meet again in your presence.*

*We know you do not love the strife of men, and yet would have us your servants strive for the faith of your gospel. May we always dwell in the power of your presence, be glad of heart and rest encouraged in your strength so that we may seek victory over evil where and when ever we find it.*

*Lord in your mercy*

**Hear our Prayer**

*Lord Jesus Christ, we think today, St Mark's day, of your servant the Apostle St Mark, whose symbol, a winged lion, shows us how your Gospel should be preached, with power, majesty and flying over all. We pray today that we may gain from your teaching, notably as recorded by St Mark and for your mission with us today, especially as espoused through those who gather at St Marks, Westfield*

*Lord in your mercy*

**Hear our Prayer**

For each of us watching the service online today, our church lives are still a significant bastion of day to day life in this country, even in these strange times affected by the pandemic, and we all have a role to play in maintaining our Anglican church.

*Heavenly Father, we pray for our spiritual survival and growth in the world of today so,*

*- That we your church will be true to the gospel and responsive to the needs of mankind*

*- That we your church will conserve what is good from the past yet reach out boldly to the future*

*- That we you church will continue to care for individuals, in our ever changing society*

*Lord in your mercy*

**Hear our prayer**

Finally, we pray for those who are ill, or suffering

*Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to your love and care those who are suffering in body, or mind, or spirit, especially so we pray for those who are known to us, whom we hold up to you in silence now.*

*And also we name Eileen and Peter Bliss, Patrick Chapman, Alison Cole, John Hunter, Lynda Kirk, Trevor Lloyd, Catherine McCormack, Olive Park, Joy Storkey and Mission Partner Malcolm Pritchard*

*In your goodness and mercy, grant them health of body, soundness of mind and peace of heart, so that in their revived wholeness of being they will glorify your name*

*Lord in your mercy*

**Hear our Prayer**

The Lord's Prayer

*Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence the prayer that Jesus taught us:*

**All 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**

Notices – see Notes and News

Hymn     **All my hope on God is founded**

All my hope on God is founded,  
all my trust He shall renew;  
He, my guide through changing  
order,  
only good and only true.  
God unknown,  
He alone  
calls my heart to be His own.  
Pride of man and earthly glory,  
sword and crown betray His trust;  
all that human toil can fashion,  
tower and temple, fall to dust.  
But God's power,  
hour by hour,  
is my temple and my tower.

Day by day our mighty giver  
grants to us His gifts of love;  
in His will our souls find pleasure,  
leading to our home above.  
Love shall stand  
at His hand,  
joy shall wait for His command.  
Still from man to God eternal  
sacrifice of praise be done,  
high above all praises praising  
for the gift of Christ His Son.  
Hear Christ's call  
one and all:  
we who follow shall not fall.

Words after by Joachim Neander  
Words by Robert Bridges  
Music by Herbert Howells

## Closing Prayer and Blessing

Leader Jesus, Lord of time,  
**All hold us in your eternity.**  
Leader Jesus, image of God,  
**All travel with us the life of faith.**  
Leader Jesus, friend of sinners,  
**All heal the brokenness of our world.**  
Leader Jesus, Lord of tomorrow,  
**All draw us into your future. Amen.**



Leader May the Father keep you in all your days.  
May Christ shield you in all your ways.  
May the Spirit bring you healing and peace.  
May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from you  
and pour upon you blessing and light.  
**All Amen.**

## Removing the flag –Royal Naval Association

### National Anthem

God save our gracious Queen  
Long live our noble Queen  
God save the Queen  
Send her victorious  
Happy and glorious  
Long to reign over us  
God save the Queen

Thy choicest gifts in store,  
On her be pleased to pour,  
Long may she reign!  
May she defend our laws,  
And ever give us cause,  
To sing with heart and voice,  
God save the Queen



Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

