

Our Sunday Service Together

August 29th 2021

Trinity 14



An Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, one God, who was, and who is, and who is to come, the Almighty. Alleluia

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

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

Silence is kept.

All: 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 Psalmody Psalm 45.1-2 and 6-9

My heart is astir with gracious words; as I make my song for the king, my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are the fairest of men; full of grace are your lips, for God has blest you for ever.

Your throne is God's throne, for ever; the sceptre of your kingdom is the sceptre of righteousness. You love righteousness and hate iniquity; therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.

All your garments are fragrant with myrrh, aloes and cassia; from ivory palaces the music of strings makes you glad.

Kings' daughters are among your honourable women; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading James 1.17-27

¹⁷Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.¹⁸ In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

¹⁹You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. ²¹Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

²²But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴for they look at themselves and, on-going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel Mark 7.1-8, 14-15 and 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, ² they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. ³ (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴ and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) ⁵ So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' ⁶ He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; ⁷ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines."⁸ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'

¹⁴ Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.'

²¹ For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, ²² adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

at the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

"For a time such as this", "right here, right now", "how can we sing the Lord's song in this strange land?"

The time is certainly changing as Jesus talks with Pharisees, with the crowd, and behind closed doors with his disciples. James is keen to remind the fledgling church in Jerusalem that the times have changed; and so should they be changed too – action always follows the heart, or should do.

Unfortunately, the way the lectionary selectors have chosen to chop Mark 7 into segments for us today makes it easy for anyone to think Jesus is bashing the religious, the Pharisees, anyone in fact who seems wedded to the 'traditions' of the people – but he isn't! Instead, we find him asking people to stop and reflect on their practices and their actions (just as James does). Jesus is challenging folks to look to the heart and purposes of God in Scripture, to think of the traditions they hold too, and to ask, not just what are they but when are they for; for what age and time.

We find as we look to scripture God had called the Jews to be his people, to be a nation, Israel, within his grace and blessing, and the food laws referred to in Mark 7 formed a part of defining who they were. They are the people's 'tradition', but more they are part of the received word of God. Jesus argument is that now a new age is coming, the age of the Kingdom of God is at hand. With it, the word of God is now come, not in the written traditions and law, or through the prophets, but is incarnate – living, breathing before them in Jesus himself. Jesus and his disciples act differently when it comes to what they eat, and who they eat with, not as a rejection of their Jewish traditions, of the law itself, but because they know the new age is come.

The age of preparing for the Messiah, the time of anticipating the Kingdom is at an end, and now in Jesus, God is calling all humanity to be his people, not just Jews, or a core holy minority of the people like the Pharisees, all of humanity is bade 'come'. The law is then fulfilled in Christ (its age of preparation is completed), the enmity between God and humanity is ended (at least from God's perspective, even if some will still rage

against the things of God) – all foods are consumable because all people are called and welcome!

James would remind folks of this, the age has come, the Messiah has died and been raised to life. Now the people of this new time are to live, not by the old religious practices, but as those who have been brought to a new birth through the 'living word'. And the new birth suggests new ways of living will be possible, with God and creation. The old age has past, its traditions are past, and the law has had its day. Now is a new age, now is a new time, with a new law written by the word now within, by the Spirit now alongside to give counsel.

“How can we sing the Lord’s song in this strange land?”, so sang the exiles as they were led to Babylon. And again after they returned, and in every age since. In many ways this is the heart phrase for all who walk the way of Christ, who follow each day. How in any age and time, can we, his people, live in the love of God in Christ Jesus and in faithfulness with the Spirit?

This is the challenge in all ages and places for all who follow Christ. It is our concern today as much as it has been for previous generations of followers. Our calling be the people of God is not changed, to be about love and faith remain today and always will do. However, as the ages change so the people of God are called to find time to ponder and reflect on how to sing the Lord’s song in that time. As we emerge into the strangeness of a post pandemic world, living alongside this virus, I wonder if we may find time to reflect and ponder how we might, in the new age, live within the love of God and in faithfulness to the Spirit.

The 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 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.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

God of justice, we pray for peace and stability across all nations. Guide all world leaders to challenge oppressive systems and govern with justice that seeks freedom for all. We pray for all lawyers, the police and all those who work to uphold the law in our nation.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of truth, we pray for our church across the world and within our own community. Strengthen us all to look outwards and to share the good news of your love. We pray especially for the work of food banks and organisations who tend the edges of society. Guide us all to see you in others that they may also see you in us. *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God our strength and our guide, we pray for all our young people as they look forward to new opportunities as universities, colleges and schools reopen. Strengthen in your hope all students, teachers and lecturers as they regather for the new academic year, guide them in new ways of learning and bless them with new friendships. *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God of compassion, we pray for those who are experiencing uncertainty or anxiety. We pray for all those who are isolated, for those who are lonely. We pray for all those who are sick in our community and all those who care for them and for all those who suffer the grief of bereavement. In the silence of our hearts, we pray for
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Jesus said "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another". Strengthen us to go forward in your love to follow your will today and always, *Amen.*

A Prayer during the continuing Covid-19 Pandemic

All: Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

All: Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living presence: Give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and truth; 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 forever. Amen

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen