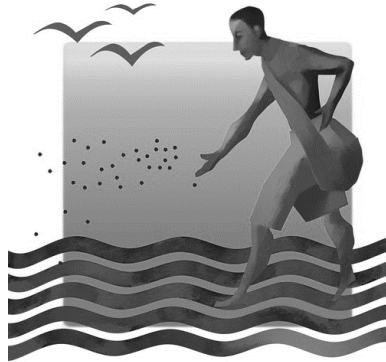


Our Sunday Service Together

Sunday July 12th 2020



Almighty and eternal God, revealed for all time and to all the world as one God, yet three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, living in the unity of love. We now join the Saints of the ages, together yet apart and 'make a Spiritual Communion, rejoicing in the grace of God come to us in fullness through Christ our Lord and Saviour, by the will of the Father and through the presence of The Spirit with us, now and for ever.

An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia! It is our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For you have revealed the glory of your eternal fellowship of love with your Son and with the Holy Spirit, three persons equal in majesty, undivided in splendour, yet one God, ever to be worshipped and adored. Alleluia!

Hymn The Spirit lives to set us free – walk in the light

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

God the Father forgives us in Christ and heals us by the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice, and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

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 65 *We say the psalm aloud*

1 In the Lord have I taken refuge; how then can you say to me, 'Flee like a bird to the hills,
2 'For see how the wicked bend the bow and fit their arrows to the string, to shoot from the shadows at the true of heart.
3 'When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?'
4 The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven.
5 His eyes behold; his eyelids try every mortal being.
6 The Lord tries the righteous as well as the wicked, but those who delight in violence his soul abhors.
7 Upon the wicked he shall rain coals of fire and burning sulphur; scorching wind shall be their portion to drink.
8 For the Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds, and those who are upright shall behold his face.
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 Romans 8.1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

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 Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23

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.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. ² Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶ But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ Let anyone with ears listen!'

¹⁸ 'Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the

path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²³ But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

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.

A Reflection for the day

Isaiah, in talking of God's possibilities to the people looking for hope in their future as they come to the end of Exile in Babylon talks of all flesh as grass. Grass scattered, growing and then disappearing, its place to know it no longer in contrast to the word of the Lord, that endures for ever for those who love and fear him (Isaiah 40 and 55). We have to wonder if this is the background to Jesus teaching of the sower? Could he be talking to the hopes of the people; could he be speaking prophetically rather than as a teacher?

If Jesus was seeking to be pastoral in this parable, well he may be missed the mark. The crowd gathered before him on the shore know that life is fleeting and a mixed bag with some who seem to flourish, others thwarted by circumstances, by society, by illness; some seemingly cut short before their time. He does not seem to offer them any solace or talk of a revolution to free them from their oppressors; I wonder how many left with heads bowed low in disappointment. Is this a common thing with Jesus and why we see the disciples seemly call him to one side so many times asking for some understanding of what he has just said? And what of the explanation Jesus gives to the disciples away from the crowd? Arguably it doesn't reveal Jesus as a moral story teller here but of a prophet, one like Isaiah. This is about bigger things; it is about the Kingdom of God!

Paul, we find continuing his teaching in Romans about what it means to be the people of Jesus, the disciples of Christ, the followers of the way. Romans 8 continues to explore, as we saw in chapter 7 last week, the sense that Jesus people are to live as it were in state of constant 'jet lag'; they, we, are of a particular time zone – the Kingdom of God, living within a different time zone – the world at large. In so doing the followers of Jesus are called not to re-set their body clocks to the worlds – to those of the flesh, but to show that in Christ there is the possibility the world might set its time clocks to that of the Kingdom; by living in the Spirit. For the things of the flesh will pass away, will be burned on the fire (here is the grass motif again) but the things of the Spirit that is now dwelling in the lives of the people of Jesus will endure for ever and for ever. For this Spirit is the author of life (see Genesis) and 'if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.'

And it is this Spirit that Jesus suggests he scatters like a sower upon the world, with all the associated possibilities! There is the possibility that it will never be received, never germinate. There is the possibility that it will flourish rapidly but wilt when the scorching winds of the world come to it. There is the possibility that it will grow and blossom only to be choked by the weeds the world allows to grow. And there is the possibility that some will hear and take head of the Spirit within and live in the time zone of the Kingdom, they will flourish as they can – there is no bench mark of achievement set by God save for faithfulness - be that 30, 60 or 100 fold.

In some ways we are leaving a form of exile as, individually, as a church community, as local villages, a nation and as a planet, we look to come out of lock down. The land before us will be very familiar but also different in

many ways. There is the possibility of flourishing, of thriving in this new context; there is also the possibility of being choked by ways of life which actually bring no life, of being scorched by the sun through failing to sink good roots. And there is the chance we might flourish, if we would listen and hear the words of the Spirit to us, and allow that self-same Spirit to transform our lives from one degree to another bringing forth the fruit of its presence in our lives - love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; 30, 60 or 100 fold.

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*

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

Lord of the harvest, make us fruitful in your ways and works
God you are our salvation; you are the hope of us all.

We pray for all who have unrewarding work to do, for all whose cries fall on stony ground, for who labour but whose fulfillment is frustrated, for all who are choked by the cares and riches of the world. We remember all who have lost hope of growing or achieving anything.
God you are our salvation; you are the hope of us all.

Help us to bring forth the fruits of your Spirit in our homes, our villages and our nation. May they become places where love, joy and peace abound. Bless those who during this time of pandemic have given of their all for the needs of others. We pray that society at large, that those in government will see and hear your words to heal the sick, set the captive free, to bring righteousness and justice to the land once more and live in the Lord's favour.
God you are our salvation; you are the hope of us all.

Lord, have mercy on all who have lost hope or vision. Protect all who are not at peace in themselves or at peace with the world about them.
God you are our salvation; you are the hope of us all.

We pray for all who are in sickness or adversity, for all who are tempted to give up, for all suffering from a breakdown, or unable to cope on their own.

God you are our salvation; you are the hope of us all.

We pray for friends and loved ones in sickness. Lord set our minds on the Spirit, on life and peace.

God you are our salvation; you are the hope of us all.

We give thanks that as you raised Christ from the dead you will give life to our mortal bodies. We pray for all who are renewed and refreshed in your eternal kingdom, and pray that one day we may share with them in that glory.

God you are our salvation; you are the hope of us all. Amen.

A Prayer during the 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, send down upon your church the riches of your spirit, and kindle in all who minister the gospel your countless gifts of grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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.