

Our Sunday Service Together

Sunday September 27th 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 When I survey the wondrous cross

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 25.1-9 *We say the psalm aloud*

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; O my God, in you I trust;

let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies triumph over me.

Let none who look to you be put to shame, but let the treacherous be shamed and frustrated.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;

for you have I hoped all the day long.

Remember, Lord, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.

Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions,

but think on me in your goodness, O Lord, according to your steadfast love.

Gracious and upright is the Lord; therefore, shall he teach sinners in the way.

He will guide the humble in doing right and teach his way to the lowly.

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

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 Ezekiel 18.1-4 and 25-32

The word of the LORD came to me: ²What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? ³As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

²⁵ Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶ When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ²⁷ Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. ²⁸ Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰ Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

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 21.23-32

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.

²³ When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' ²⁴ Jesus said to them, 'I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" ²⁶ But if we say, "Of human origin", we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.' ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸ 'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." ²⁹ He answered, "I will not"; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe

him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

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

We read of John the Baptist elsewhere in the gospels, calling the people to come back to their hearts true home, to God. Hearing the words from Ezekiel you would not be wrong in thinking that it was similar words John spoke. Words of challenge, words of warning, words which remind folks that in life there are consequences for actions.

There is a sense of the bizarre in the people's arguments with God. It seems that they are concerned God is happy to be gracious to any nation or people who would turn from their rebellion, from their sins against God. This is an affront to Israel, the nations should pay for their actions, how dare God be gracious to those who have a change of heart. It all sounds like last week's tales of Jonah; how dare God be gracious in these ways? But, it would seem, Israel thinks further that God should treat them differently, that there should be ready punishment for the gentile nations whilst abundant grace is their lot.

Two sons are asked to go do something by their father. One says not but later on does, the other says 'yes I will' but never does. Jesus asks those listening 'which of the two did the will of the father?' 'The first did', the people declare.

'Let's get to the heart of the matter', that is what any prophet, be they Ezekiel or John the Baptist, say to all who listen. Most often they say the heart of the matter is that the people have wandered from their true home in God. We hear that Israel should not lay claim to being God's chosen people because they have wandered and chosen false gods, false ideas and ways for life which have nothing to do with being God's people. The heart of the matter, Jesus tells all, is that those who may have lived in rebellion to God's ways are having a change of heart, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of the chief priests and elders who question Jesus.

I love the fact that Jesus does not say the elders or chief priests will not themselves enter the kingdom, but that these others will be there before them. Here we see again, the first will be last and the last first spoken of in last week's gospel. The leaders are quick to question motive, to question by what authority Jesus does and says things; if their hearts were in the right place then they would see before them 'God so loving the world'. They miss the wood for the trees, they ask about authority because in being so bound to the law they fail to see the heart of the author before them. They have lost sight of the enormity of God's grace and love for the people and fail to live in response for that. If only they would have a change of heart!

If we are honest we all lose sight of the wood for the trees at times. Be it religious duty, the demands of daily life, any number of things in reality, leave us forgetting the heart of the matter, that God is simply interested in our hearts. For surely Jesus has shown us the heart of the matter, that God loves each and all who would come to him in Christ and would be with them; be with us all, tax collector or elder, prostitute or priest!

The psalm for today starts simply and sums all up, 'To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; O my God in you I trust' Amen!

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*

Let us by prayer and intercession with thanksgiving make our requests to God.

Gracious God, we pray for peace, justice and reconciliation throughout the world.
We pray for the honouring of human rights, and for the relief of the oppressed.
We give thanks for all that is gracious in the lives of men, women and children.
Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for the renewal of the Church in faith, love and service.
We pray for Peter and Ruth our bishops and for the life of our parish.
We give thanks for the gift of your word, the grace of the sacraments and the fellowship of your people.
Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for our community and for all people in their daily life and work.
We pray for the young and the elderly, for families, and all who are alone.
We give thanks for human skill and creativity and all that reveals your loveliness.
Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for those who are in need; for the sick, sorrowful and bereaved.
We pray for all who bring comfort, care and healing.
We give thanks for human love and friendship and for all that enriches our daily lives.
Lord graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves with all our heart, and all for whom we pray, to your loving mercy and protection.
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: O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; 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.**

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.