

Our Service Together

January 23rd 2021

An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia, Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations and believed in throughout the world. 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

The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. 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 Psalms 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
One day pours out its song to another and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
They have neither speech nor language and their voices are not heard,
Yet their sound has gone out into all lands and their words to the ends of the world.
In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun,
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber and rejoices as a champion to run his course.
It goes forth from the end of the heavens and runs to the very end again,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.
The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever;
the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold,
sweeter also than honey, dripping from the honeycomb.
By them also is your servant taught and in keeping them there is great reward.
Who can tell how often they offend?
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins lest they get dominion over me;
so shall I be undefiled, and innocent of great offence.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.
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 1 Corinthians 12.12-31a

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' ²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, ²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But strive for the greater gifts.

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

Luke 4.14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. ¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

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

We live in a success oriented world; the Winter Olympics will be with us soon and there will be much celebration of the great, the good, the 'best'. In this country we celebrate the 'Corinthian Spirit'; sportsmanship conduct where a 'gentleman' (or woman) would never deliberately foul another to gain advantage. The Corinthian Spirit Paul addresses seems far removed from such laudable aims on the sports field.

Like today's world, Rome was filled with a quite different attitude. It was elitist, success driven and no one would look down on someone who worked their way to the top by treading on a few toes. It would seem that the church at Corinth is filled with this spirit, with people vying for the best position and some folks considering they were more worthy than others. It is in response to this attitude that Paul writes his letter.

However, we should not think this was just an issue in Corinth or Rome. Looking to the gospels we see that this seems to be a wider, worldly attitude that Jesus himself challenges. We read of him chiding Martha as she fears her sister Mary had a better position than her own. And when Peter comes and asks Jesus about the future of the beloved disciple he is blunt in his reply, 'what is that to do with you ... you follow me'. James and John's mother also fell into the world's concerns for prestige and position when she asked if her sons might sit on the left and right of Jesus when he was enthroned. Jesus' reply has echoed through the ages, 'the first will be last, and the last first'.

And so Paul talks to the church and poses questions about how they think of gifting and callings. He encourages them to strive to be the best they can be in themselves, but he challenges the temptation to think like the world about them. It isn't that he lowers the nature of apostleship or teachers, he reminds the church that all Jesus' followers are equal in calling, in the Spirit's equipping and essentially in their necessity for the functioning of the church's ministry.

He reminds them that when it comes to the society of Jesus' people, his body, the church, all are equally called, and equally needed. It isn't that one ministry role is more important than another; in fact, when the church is missing the least of all roles it is diminished as much as when the 'great' roles are missing. It is also not complete with just a few 'important' ministries exercised.

Do we think of some roles and vocations as being more worthy than others? When one part of the body is elevated above others, the whole is diminished.

Do we feel that our gifts are not of any use and think to leave everything to a few folks with 'job titles'? When parts of the body do not offer their gifts, but leave it to others, the whole ministry of the body is diminished.

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*

We pray to the one who created all things, who changed water to wine, and who transforms life, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We pray with thanksgiving for all who transform the mundane of our days into glories we rejoice in; for artists, craftspeople, writers and musicians.

Good Lord, transform us, that we may reveal your glory

We pray for those preparing for weddings this year; *Adam and Lindsey, Darren and Debbie*. May they find their union made in your sight is the foundation of peace, your Spirit the provider of patience and your grace to fountain of love for years to come.

Good Lord, transform us, that we may reveal your glory

We pray for your presence in our homes, transform them to become centres for love, joy and peace. We think at this time of the increased cases of domestic abuse, for those being hospitalised through violence in the home and for the work of safe hostels, social services and the police who respond to these situations each day. *Good Lord, transform us, that we may reveal your glory*

We pray for friends and loved ones and give thanks for all who have transformed our lives by their goodness. We think especially of those who nurture and teach children in our school and colleges. *Good Lord, transform us, that we may reveal your glory*

We pray for those places of deprivation and darkness that scare our nation. We give thanks for the work of Shelter, for the hope offered to those suffering from drug addiction and psychiatric conditions by Street Pastors and charity foodbanks. For the work of our fire and ambulance services who respond to all needs at every hour of each day.

Good Lord, transform us, that we may reveal your glory

We pray for the exhausted, hospital and NHS staff, local and national government officers. We think of those struggling to provide for their families and for businesses in trouble.

Good Lord, transform us, that we may reveal your glory

We rejoice Holy Lord that in you the best is always still to come. We give thanks for those who have stepped before us into that heavenly banquet and pray we too may be fit by you to join the celebrations of your Son or saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Collect

All: God of all mercy, your son proclaimed good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed; anoint us with your Holy Spirit and set your people free to praise you in 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.