

Our Service Together

3rd Sunday before Lent

February 13th 2022

An Acclamation for the Season

All: There is one body and one spirit. There is one hope to which we were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

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 Psalm 1 *We say the psalm aloud*

Blessed are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.

Their delight is in the law of the Lord and they meditate on his law day and night.

Like a tree planted by streams of water bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither, whatever they do, it shall prosper.

As for the wicked, it is not so with them; they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

Therefore, the wicked shall not be able to stand in the judgement, nor the sinner in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish.

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 15.12-20

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

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 6.17-26

¹⁷ He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰ Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ 'Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

²² 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

²⁴ 'But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ 'Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ 'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

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

As with all of Paul's epistles we only have one part of the conversation in 1 Corinthians; it would be so good to have the letter/report Paul is writing in response too.

What we do see is that there is a debate happening about the resurrection. This should not be a surprise to us, after all we have them today don't we so why should it have been otherwise back in 50AD? Maybe the surprise here is that we think they were all in agreement on matters of faith all of the time; clearly not and for good reason here. The resurrection is such a big, mind blowing matter that it has to raise questions for us; it is right and healthy if it does. Christianity is an enquiring faith, like Judaism before, we are a people of journey, encounter, discovery, assurance and perplexity.

The question our faith asks of us is whether we are prepared to be disciples, willing to be stretched in our understanding of God or simply church goers? Jesus is good at questioning, stretching us and drawing us into the bigger things of God.

The Corinthians are prepared to engage in this stretching exercise of discipleship with Paul; resurrection would have sounded strange to their gentile ears. For Paul the Jewish traditions accepted resurrection, but at the end of time. It was a distant hope to be longed for. Paul had found his faith stretched through the resurrection of Jesus; here was a first fruit, new life, forgiveness breaking through, as it were from that future back in time.

Jesus too points to the breaking in today of God's promised future for all.

There can be a temptation to look to something like the Creeds of the church and think that our faith is about jumping from one matter to another; from 'born of a virgin' to suffered under Pontius Pilate'. Doing so risks forgetting all that came in the middle, the healing, the works of justice, the bringing of forgiveness and life in the here and now. The creeds could be read as a 'one, two, three' in the same way resurrection can be seen as an end of time event.

But Christ is the first fruit of the Kingdom; the gospel does proclaim eternal life, but that life is a breaking through 'now' matter. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life to come both in the future, but also here and now. This is why we pray 'thy kingdom come and will be done, here in earth as in heaven' This is our tomorrow and our today, it is our hope to be realised and our calling to make manifest.

I wonder if we will let our faith be stretched by the difficult to comprehend ways of God. Might we find the resurrection of Christ fills us with hope for tomorrow and life for today? Might we be open to the transforming work of the Spirit changing us from one degree of glory to His final glory for us all. How might our walk as disciples in a faith that is very often filled with mystery beyond our present understanding be a hope and a light for others who long for the things of God?

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*

Blessed are those who put their trust in the Lord. He will keep them in his presence and his peace. Let us pray to the one who was raised as the first fruits of the kingdom to come.

Gracious God, we pray for your blessing to be upon your church throughout this your world. May we journey as your disciples, always in hope for our future in Christ and seeking to be your Kingdom come and will done in this age. *Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer*

Creator God, drive away despair from our politics, revive our dreams of justice and truth, and restore our passion for what is good and right. Establish your just and gentle rule throughout the world especially where there is conflict; where peace seems so far away and so many have lost everything, even the faint hope of a peaceful future. *Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer*

Father God, we pray for our church community, that each of us might make use of our individual talents enabling all to flourish as a witness to your grace and to your transforming work in our lives. *Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer*

Loving God, we ask for your healing touch on all who are ill or suffering. We especially pray for any we know who are experiencing emotional pain or are broken in spirit through personal or family problems. *Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer*

Merciful God, give courage and faith to those who are bereaved, that by casting their cares on you they may find the strength to face the days ahead. We especially hold before you the family of Greta Hanson and Jim Arnott whose funerals are this week. *Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer*

Everlasting God, send us out into the world, renewed by our worship and strengthened by our fellowship, so that we may be a testament to the Gospel of your son Jesus Christ, the first fruits of the resurrection to eternal life. *Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen*

The Collect

All: Almighty God, who alone can bring order to the unruly wills and passions of sinful humanity: give your people grace so to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, among the many changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; 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.