

Our Service Together

Lent 3 March 20th 2022



An Acclamation for the Season

All: This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son.
He is the sacrifice for our sins, that we might live through him.

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 Psalmody Psalm 63.1-8 *We say the psalm aloud*

O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul is athirst for you.
My flesh also faints for you, as in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.
So would I gaze upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory.
Your loving-kindness is better than life itself and so my lips shall praise you.
I will bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name.
My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips,
When I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night.
For you have been my helper and under the shadow of your wings will I rejoice.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Scripture Reading Isaiah 55.1-9

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.
³Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.
⁴See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.
⁵See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.
⁶Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;
⁷let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

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 13.1-9

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?' ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?' ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

⁶Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?"' ⁸He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

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

Jesus and Isaiah talk of choice and grace to us; in a twist to the usual expectation we find the Old Testament prophet sharing nice words rather than calling down judgment and fire.

Some found it easy, some still do, to declare God's judgment on folks and declare what is happening to them is because they are sinners; law breakers and God is punishing them. This is the background to the suggested questions posed to Jesus; but it doesn't feature in his answers, at least not the way we might think.

The suggestion is that some think others are sinners and that's why horrible things have happened, and they are blessed, clear so because life is good to them. Jesus calls out this false picture of life, of sin and especially of God. In Romans, St Paul reminds us of the reality that all have sinned and as such all have fallen short of the glory of God; of the calling of humanity to live in relationship with God and 'image' the divine within the world. Those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were not any more sinful than the people of Jerusalem who face a similar fate is they continue to look to their own ways to be rid of the Romans.

'Repent', is Jesus' call to the people; turn back to the way you are called to – live in relationship with God as His people and 'image' the divine in your humanity. In other words, be what you are created to be. And so he tells the story of another calling to be what you are supposed to be – the fig tree needs to be seen to be a fig tree, to both grow in the ground and blossom and bear fruit. So humanity is called to live and walk the planet and to blossom and bear fruit – love, gentleness, peace, patience. These are the attributes of God humanity is

called to bear the image of.

Isaiah asks us to see these attributes in God too; and the lack of them in humanity all too often. Here is a God of abundant grace, 'come and buy even though you have no ability to pay', and of patience, for what person would still reach out with love to the people of Israel who seem intent on looking for a different way, who are intent on rebellion always.

Why do you spend all your energy looking to buy the things that will never satisfy your hunger and thirst? Most of us would wash our hands of folks who keep ignoring the gift we have and running after a second class option; but not God. So the call to come back is placed on Isaiah's lips, the call to return to a true sense of identity and calling is spoken by Jesus.

It seems there has always been a choice for the people of God, to either walk with God and know the abundance of His grace or to try and make our own way, buy our own solutions and future and expend all we have on such ways. And the grace of God means the choice is always left to us with the reminder there are always consequences.

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*

Almighty and ever-loving God, you are more ready to hear us and forgive us than we are to come to you; but now we come in your grace and pray.

Lord we look for you, we long for you, our whole being thirsts for you and your love. Lord, open our eyes, awaken us to what is around us and make us aware of your coming to us. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We pray for those who nurture the young, those teach and equip others that they might flourish in their humanity. Give them wisdom to guide and patience to walk alongside those who learn the way to love and bring peace in the world. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

Lord, as you have given us this world to live in, help us to use its riches and resources with sensitivity. Bless all who work on the land, who supply our food and daily need. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We pray for those who lead communities and nations, may they know the path you call all humanity to in Christ; that of peace, of grace, of love and justice. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We give you thanks for our homes and our loved ones; make us sensitive to each other's needs and hopes.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.

We pray for those displaced from their homes, from their lands through earthquake, flood or war. Bless all who receive them with common humanity that they may find somewhere they can call home; even if for a short time. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We pray for those taken ill this day, those involved in accidents or facing operations. Be with those who minister healing this day. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

Lord, you are our helper and you protect us from all evil. We pray for all who face death today; for our loved ones departed, that you will bring them into fullness of joy in your kingdom.

Merciful Father accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

The Collect

All: Eternal God, give us insight to discern your will for us, to give up what harms us, and to seek the perfection we are promised in Jesus 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.