

Our Service Together

3rd Sunday before Lent

February 5th 2023

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 112.1-9 *We say the psalm aloud*

Blessed are those who fear the Lord and have great delight in his commandments.
Their descendants will be mighty in the land, a generation of the faithful that will be blest.
Wealth and riches will be in their house, and their righteousness endures for ever.
Light shines in the darkness for the upright; gracious and full of compassion are the righteous.
It goes well with those who are generous in lending and order their affairs with justice,
for they will never be shaken; the righteous will be held in everlasting remembrance.
They will not be afraid of any evil tidings; their heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
Their heart is sustained and will not fear, until they see the downfall of their foes.
They have given freely to the poor; their righteousness stands fast for ever;
their head will be exalted with honour.
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 1 Corinthians 2.1-12

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written,
'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him'—
¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

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.

'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴ 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷ 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

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 steps into the role of a prophet today, and not just any prophet, but that of Isaiah. The people of Israel have always had a calling, to be a beacon, to be a light, to be a contrast to the ways of the world. Israel has been called by God to stick out like a sore thumb and, like a city on top of a hill (like Jerusalem), and reveal to the nations of the world the true way to be human, to live in peace, to be in relationship with God. In living amongst the nations they were to be salt that gave true flavour to life, that changed the mundane and ordinary into something life giving; something people would want more of.

They have wandered from this calling! In many ways the people could be forgiven; keeping the law was hard and difficult; especially when the religious had added 'extras' to the original directions.

But Jesus is not here to cast judgement on the people; he is here to show them the way. They can have a righteousness beyond the religious – the Scribes and the Pharisees. The people can fulfil their calling as those created in the image of God and be fully human, and as the people of God called to stick out like a beacon to the nations showing they have found the way. Rather than judge and condemn Jesus comes to make all possible, to enable and to provide a way.

This is why Paul is so keen to shift the focus of the church in Corinth from the ways of the nations and back onto Jesus Christ himself. Anyone who has been on a boat entering harbour in the dark will have seen the marker buoys flashing red or green. These lights both tell of a safe depth of water for a vessel and also provide a channel that if followed will see the vessel safe into harbour. Jesus is for Paul the direction beacon, the guide to a safe channel and harbour. The church needs to focus on him and know the way. But there is more here! In bad weather, in low cloud, and aircraft is able to make a safe landing using direction finding equipment. The airport sends out hidden radio beams which both show the direction to take and keep a safe glide path to the ground – if followed all should be well.

Paul tells us that the human spirit knows full well what it is to be human, and the divine Spirit likewise knows the heart of God. Through faith in Christ he says, 'we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.'

No longer do we need to struggle to keep the law, for through Grace we know the ways of God for His Spirit is with us, in us. Now the church, be they in Corinth 2,000 years ago or here today is able to fulfil its calling and be light and salt. We are able to stick out like a sore thumb and show folks the way. We are able to make life palatable by being salt in the world. But we have to take the covers off – will we take the covers off and let the Spirit within guide, direct and shine through us?

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. *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.