

Our Sunday Service Together

April 30th 2023



An Easter Acclamation

Praise be to God in the highest. It is our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, almighty and eternal Father, and especially in these days of Easter to celebrate with joyful hearts the memory of your wonderful works.

For by the mystery of his passion Jesus Christ, your risen Son, has conquered the powers of death and hell and restored in men and women the image of your glory. He has placed them once more in paradise and opened to them the gate of life eternal.

And so earth and heaven resound with gladness, while angels and archangels and the powers of all creation sing for ever the hymn of your glory.

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

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 23 *We say the psalm aloud*

The Lord is my shepherd; therefore, I will not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.
He shall refresh my soul and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil and my cup shall be full.
Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.
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 Acts 2.42-47

The disciples devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

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 John 10.1-10

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

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

Time to be honest, when we hear things like – 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers', and 'All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need' – we get very jittery indeed.

When it comes to having all things in common we often find ourselves defensive, thinking the church is after all we have and hold dear. The thought of devoting our time to prayer, theology, and church services, possibly every hour of the day leaves us cold. After all that's what monks and nuns are for; it would be dreadfully boring for us. I am sure we much prefer Jesus' saying in the gospel today; 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly'.

In all of this I wonder if this shows how much we are people of our culture, people that distrust anything that sounds like Communism or that might leave us exposed to those who would call us religious nuts. I wonder also, if it shows a gap in our appreciation of the culture in which the early church existed.

Many had said over the decades that the folks back then were deluded, thinking that the world was coming to an end, so they sold everything and gave it away. Here we are 2 thousand years later, and Jesus still has not returned.

However, what they really believed was not that the world was coming to an end but that Jesus had finished the old order of things on the cross and begun something new through the resurrection and started to renew the world. So they prayed your Kingdom come and will be done, not in a one-day future event, but now, in the very day and time they lived in. And, as there always is with Jesus, there is more. Jesus had also begun a new community, a new family under God and so he calls his disciples brothers and sisters, and directs us to pray to 'our' father!

This is indeed a new thing he has brought into being, this is the church! On the cross Jesus had brought an end to the indebtedness of sin and with it a new pattern for living with God and each other was possible. Thus we not only pray 'Our Father' but continue 'your kingdom come on earth as in heaven'; 'forgive us our debts in the fashion we forgive the debts of others'. And more we are defined by a command 'love one another as I

have loved you, for by this all shall know you are my disciples'.

This was, and is still a new pattern for living life in all its fullness. It enables the free and easy coming in, and going out, of the good pastures; that is the life-giving pastures of God's very presence; in Christ we have the way!

Being a family under God, with a command to love meant they did what they could for those of the family in need. Being set free from religious obligations to atone for sin, to be accepted by God left them able to devote time and energy to the good things of the community, to prayer, to both learning and living out the teachings of the Apostles, they broke bread to remember what made all things possible and were in fellowship; brothers and sisters of this new counter-cultural fullness of life that Jesus had begun.

The task of every generation of believers has been to work out how, within their local context, they too can be people of this new way. To ask 'how might we devote ourselves to being His people, to using the freedom we have been gifted to live in fellowship, to pray, to give thanks for His works in breaking bread, and in loving one another so that all might have life in its fullness?'

The world watches closely to see what happens when wandering sheep, brought home by the Shepherd's love, then start to live by the same love's pattern!

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*

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we come to you, true guardian of our souls.
Keep your Church firmly focused on you and your Kingdom.
Draw us more closely in unity and fellowship in your name.
The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we come to you, our true defence.
Give us courage to place our trust in following your way of peace...
Draw the nations closer in a commonwealth of shared humanity.
The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we come to you, true owner of all wealth.
Open the hearts and purses of all, that as we have richly received, so we may be generous in our giving...
Grant us the grace to liberate others and raise those who are oppressed.
The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we come to you, with the injured and the weak.
Protect and hold in your love all who cry to you in their need...
Revive us in your mercy.
The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, you lay down your life for our salvation.
Gather us in our final hour to your eternal fold...
As you know us, so may we hear you call us by name in your Kingdom.
*Goodness and loving mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen*

The Collect

All: Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above, where he 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.