

# Our Sunday Service Together

## May 14<sup>th</sup> 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 66.8-18 *We say the psalm aloud*

Who holds our souls in life and suffers not our feet to slip?  
For you, O God, have proved us; you have tried us as silver is tried.  
You brought us into the snare; you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.  
You let enemies ride over our heads; we went through fire and water;  
but you brought us out into a place of liberty.  
I will come into your house with burnt offerings and will pay you my vows, which my lips uttered  
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.  
I will offer you fat burnt sacrifices with the smoke of rams; I will sacrifice oxen and goats.  
Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul.  
I called out to him with my mouth and his praise was on my tongue.  
If I had nursed evil in my heart, the Lord would not have heard me,  
But in truth God has heard me; he has heeded the voice of my prayer.  
Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, nor withheld his loving mercy from me.  
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 17.22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. <sup>23</sup> For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, <sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. <sup>26</sup> From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, <sup>27</sup> so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. <sup>28</sup> For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring."

<sup>29</sup> Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. <sup>30</sup> While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

*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 17.15-21

I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. <sup>20</sup> I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

*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

John begins his gospel with a great poem about the immense cosmic divine nature of God, and of the love that compels the very being of God. And then he drops the big twist, that this love compelled God, who is all holy and for many a mystic presence beyond connection, to become, not close to us, not walking beside us, but one with us – Emmanuel, in all of our un-holiness! This is a game changer if ever there was to be one in faith, in life; that God so loved the world he sent his Son.

It is this being one with us in our humanity that is at the core of Jesus' prayers to the Father in our reading today. Jesus knows he is to return to the Father and has concern for his people, and for the work he has begun through his life, death and resurrection. Jesus does not seek a 'plucking out' of our habitat, the world, instead he looks for a way we can live in our 'natural environment' that is safe from the things which would bring alienation between humanity and God, and enmity between human beings.

Sanctify them, enable them, with the same Spirit that has enabled me in the world is the essence of his prayer. This is another huge thing, for in essence Jesus prayers for a restoration of humanity, a redemption to what was intended when the 'breath of God', the Spirit first entered Adam entered humanity. Enable them to live in your love and purpose as you have enabled me and my ministry, your ministry Father to love the world may continue; as you sent me so I send them. Sanctify them, so that they bear the seal of the Spirit and can never be lost, our destiny in Christ is secured.

Being secured, being redeemed means there is no longer any need to works of acceptance before God, no working to be declared righteous, instead Christ's people are set free to live and work for his praise and glory. Paul has come to know this, that he is one with God in Christ, through the presence of His Spirit. He no longer has to work for his salvation through the Law and is now free to live as one who is redeemed; and he can't but tell others about it, wherever he finds himself.

Today we see he has arrived in Athens. If Rome was the empire's capital of government, rule and might,

Athens was the empire's capital of learning, literature, and culture. Wherever Paul finds himself he has to talk faith to someone; be that within his business as a tent maker, in folk's homes, in the synagogues or here in Athens in the empirical centre of religious and philosophical debate.

I suspect when we hear of is exploits and look at him debating with the great scholars of Athens we think, 'that is above my pay grade'; I think that for sure! But then I do see an encouragement and general principle which is fit for all our 'pay grades'. In very simple terms Paul takes any moment to reveals to folks the faith he holds and he does this as best he can within the place he finds himself. In simple terms he lets his faith out of the bag and let's God do the rest!

This is the sending Jesus prays to the father for, that those he has redeemed through his living, giving, Spirit directed love would do the same too; love as he has loved because the Father loves too. This is the simplicity of our faith, to be open to the father's love for us and to be moved by the Spirit to love as we have been loved!

## 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*

Let us pray to the Lord, who is our refuge and stronghold.

For a world where division and distrust reign supreme, bring your compassion to the hearts of leaders, grace to lawmakers and love of neighbour to all. *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us*

For the health and well-being of our nation, that all who are fearful and anxious may be at peace and free from worry: *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.*

For the isolated and housebound, that we may be alert to their needs, and care for them in their vulnerability: *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.*

For our homes and families, our schools and young people, and all in any kind of need or distress: *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.*

For a blessing on our local community, that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship, where all are known and cared for: *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.*

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God. Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

## The Collect

All: God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;  
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