

Our Sunday Service Together

17th September 2023

15th Sunday after Trinity



An Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
one God, who was, and who is, and who is to come, the Almighty.
Alleluia

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 103.8-13

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness.

He will not always accuse us; neither will he keep his anger for ever.

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he set our sins from us.

As a father has compassion on his children, so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him.

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 Romans 14.1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. ² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵ Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷ We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written,

'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' ¹² So then, each of us will be accountable to 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.

The Gospel Matthew 18.21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' ²² Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³ 'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." ²⁹ Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

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

Rev. John Webb writes

The real challenge of our faith is applying general principles to particular situations. It is easy to agree that in an ideal world we should all love our neighbours, but the problem comes when we try to put it into practice. In our readings for to-day both St Paul and Jesus are facing such real-life problems in first century Rome or Palestine. These examples show that the situation they were addressing was very different from 21st Century Somerset.

I can't help smiling at St Paul's apparent dismissal of vegetarians or vegans as simply weak – 'the weak only eat vegetables'! This is because St Paul is referring to a very specific situation. At that time much of the meat available in the markets might have been sacrificed to alien Gods so the only way for people to avoid such contamination would have been to avoid meat altogether which meant only eating vegetables – nothing to do with our vegetarians or vegans!

The story which Jesus told in the second reading is again set in a society which is very different from to-day. Talk of selling slaves and their families or being in prison and tortured for debt is entirely at odds with society as we understand it to-day. But we can imagine the reaction Jesus parable would have provoked. Anyone hearing it would have been horrified at the massive ingratitude of the first slave who had been forgiven so much but wouldn't forgive so little. Then Jesus applies the parable to his hearers and by extension to each one of us. We have all received generously of the grace of God. Life itself, the love of friends and family, support and comfort in times of need, and forgiveness for the many ways in which we have fallen short. This would be expected to provoke a generous response.

Jesus reminds us that we have all failed and we all need forgiveness. In the Lord's Prayer we pray 'forgive us our trespasses(sins) as we forgive those who trespass(sin) against us'. But it's not easy as I'm reminded when I see interviews on the television with those who have lost loved ones in violent incidents and say that the perpetrators should be given 'a full life sentence without parole' or

'lock them up and throw away the key' or even 'bring back the death penalty'. I understand their pain and suffering but pray that they may find ways to forgive and overcome the natural urge for revenge or recrimination. By contrast I am uplifted by those generous souls who express forgiveness for those who have deeply harmed them echoing the words of Jesus on the cross 'Father, forgive them'.

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*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

We pray for Bishops Michael and Ruth and all the diocesan staff as they respond to recent changes. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for world leaders, that they may forgive past wrongs, seek reconciliation and go forward in peace. Especially we pray for the leaders of Ukraine and Russia that a just solution may be found for their dispute, and for the peoples of Ukraine and Russia that they may become good neighbours to each other. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for our King, Prime Minister, members of parliament and local councillors that they may have the Wisdom of Solomon. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for our schools, colleges and universities as they start the new academic year. And we pray particularly for all young people who are uncertain of their future and seek the way forward in their lives. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may serve Christ in one another and seek the common good. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering, dying and those who mourn and we give thanks and pray for those who care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for evermore. Amen.

The Collect

All: God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; 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