

Our Sunday Service Together

24th September 2023

16th 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 145.1-8

I will exalt you, O God my King, and bless your name for ever and ever.
Every day will I bless you and praise your name for ever and ever.
Great is the Lord and highly to be praised; his greatness is beyond all searching out.
One generation shall praise your works to another and declare your mighty acts.
They shall speak of the majesty of your glory, and I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
They shall speak of the might of your marvellous acts, and I will also tell of your greatness.
They shall pour forth the story of your abundant kindness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
The Lord is gracious and merciful, long-suffering and of great goodness.
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 Philippians 1.21-30

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

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 21.3-32

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' Jesus said to them, 'I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "Of human origin", we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.' So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not"; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

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

Equity is at the heart of God's Kingdom!

There is an unfortunate use of the word 'idlers' in the Matthew reading (again English does not always have a word to use in translating Hebrew or Biblical Greek). For the hearer of the original text the word 'idle' would have simply described those without work for the day. Was this due to laziness, or might it be that they simply missed out on being hired. Was it they were renowned slackers and so ignored, or was their lack of a job that day for another reason. We do not know, but the way the story is told by Jesus we are not supposed to judge them for not working – our protestant work ethic northern European societal background would wish to say that everyone who isn't working must be 'work shy'.

Not so, they want to work and the moment the vineyard owner says go, they do so. There is no argument about 'there is only an hour's work of the day left and I will not earn enough'; they go. Rather than work shy, these folks are probably desperate for work and what it brings them – a chance to show their ability, their worth, the hope they can be recruited another day and by other people.

I suspect, if we are honest, we join with the aggrieved in the line to be paid at the day's end, who worked all day for the same wages as those who went at the end. It simply does not sound fair that all should be treated like this; but each person made a contract with the vineyard owner to go work, what is paid to each person is up to the vineyard owner; it is his money!

Here is the Kingdom of God – the grace of God is not earned, it is not dependant on how many good things you have done, it is not transactional. God treats all with equity within His generous grace; the first will be last and the last will be first and all will be welcomed!

In the prayer Jesus gave us to say we simply ask 'Give us this day our daily bread', rather than 'I have done these good things God, I am in credit with you today, now pay out according to what I have earned'. All are in need of daily life giving sustenance, all are in need of grace, dignity and the Kingdom is built on each equitably having the opportunity to receive the grace and love of God.

Our challenge is to take the opportunity to receive the grace of God when it is before us, and more so, never to think we are more worthy or another is impossible to receive God's gracious love in Christ!

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

God our Father, your kingdom embraces the whole of creation. Guide your church throughout the world to assist in your harvest and speak your truth into areas of doubt. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith, and for all Christian charities, who take risks to bring your word into places of violence and oppression.
Lord of faith and trust, help us to trust in you.

Lord, you search the secret motives of our leaders to reveal hypocrisy and virtue. Pour out your spirit of integrity on all world leaders. Grant us all the wisdom to discern your voice and the courage to follow your will.
Lord of faith and trust, help us to trust in you.

Lord, you see fully into our hearts and know what we can become. We pray for those who affirm and encourage others, especially teachers and those who care for young and vulnerable people.
Lord of faith and trust, help us to trust in you.

Lord, you know our needs and concerns before we ask. Hear us as we bring before you all who are sick or in special need...
Bless them and fill them with your healing strength.
Lord of faith and trust, help us to trust in you.

Lord, there is no darkness that can extinguish your eternal light. In this faith we entrust to you all who have died...
Raise us with them to your eternal kingdom.
Lord of faith and trust, help us to trust in you.

The Collect

All: O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; 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