

Our Sunday Service Together

22nd October 2023

20th 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 Psalm Psalm 96.1-9

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord and bless his name; tell out his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations and his wonders among all peoples.
For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; he is more to be feared than all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are but idols; it is the Lord who made the heavens.
Honour and majesty are before him; power and splendour are in his sanctuary.
Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; ascribe to the Lord honour and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; bring offerings and come into his courts.
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth tremble before 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 1 Thessalonians 1.1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

²We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

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 22.15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶ So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' ²¹ They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' ²² When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

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 came from Nazareth, a known town within a belt of towns with a reputation for activism, for rebellion against the Romans and their empowered local rulers – the saying 'nothing God comes from Nazareth' was used for good reason.

If the Pharisees and Herodians can just get Jesus to say something that had the faintest smell of insurrection, then they would have him bang to rights before the Romans. Or better still, could they get Jesus to discredit himself before all of his followers by being either heretical or blasphemous?

Jesus responds, not with words of insurrection or blasphemy; his answer is unanswerable and all they can be is amazed. 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'

Many have used these words to try and place a division between state and church. However, to think Jesus makes any such division, any suggestion that Christians are to separate themselves from life in the world is to both miss what his incarnation is all about, and also our calling as his followers.

For the zealous Jew handling the coin of Rome was a dirty business. Each coin bore an image of Caesar, who was regarded as a son of the Gods; one to be worshipped. This was idolatry, plain and simple and to handle the coinage and all it represented was defiling. However, societies and systems of state are never as clean cut as this, there is complexity – bills need to be paid, and money is required in the form of tax. Sadly, in all societies taxes are used for both good and for ill by those in government. What would happen to the good, to the things that are of God for human flourishing, when all tax is withheld? Better to be involved in the world, to seek out the possibilities for transforming and changing things – so give to the emperor what is his, and to God what is God's.

Paul writes to the Thessalonians and rejoices in their faith and their journey so far; even with troubles it has brought them. He rejoices that they have turned from their idolatry to the true God revealed in Christ Jesus, in the gospel they have received. They show it is possible to handle and use the coin of the empire and not worship Caesar, not to engage in idolatry, but instead to know that 'the Lord your God is one Lord' and to worship him alone with heart, mind, soul and strength.

Here are Jesus words to the Pharisees and Herodians put into practice by those who have heard his call to follow. Here are people putting behind them all their idols and focusing on one God, one Lord, one faith. They do so whilst living within society and in so doing witnessing to the world about them that there is a way they too can live.

Here are Jesus words to us, a calling of the ages, to put away all of our idolising and worship God alone. To the world what is necessary to enable state to function. As we work our way through living in this world I wonder how are we doing at being not of the world, involved in its idolatry. How are we involved in bringing a different way for taxation to be spent for human flourishing? How are we, like the Thessalonians, living as symbols of the hope the word seeks for another way; for the way?

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*

Lord of Lords, King of Kings, so move the hearts and minds of the leaders of nations that we would see mercy, grace, provision for all in need and peace. We pray for your peace in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, in Gaza and Israel. *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.*

Gracious God, we pray for your church throughout the world, that your way may be known upon earth, and your saving power among all nations. We pray for all church leaders and all those who are seeking new ways to live and tell the story of Jesus in changing times. *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.*

God of compassion, the Canaanite woman's persistence led to Jesus's blessing. Challenge the boundaries we set to our charity and concern. Grant that we may all rejoice in your love and share it.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.

God of hospitality, you set a place for everyone at your table. Open our hearts to embrace those who are easily excluded and despised. We pray for peace and unity among all people and across nations.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.

God of healing, at your word, the girl was released from her distress. Grant your healing love to all who are weighed down with sickness or anxiety. We pray especially for ... *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.*

God of hope, you bring life to all who call upon your name. Draw into your family all who have died and be with those who are bereaved....
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.

The Collect

All: God, the giver of life, whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church:
by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ and make us eager to do your will, that we may share with the whole creation the joys of eternal life; 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