

Our Service Together

Lent 3

March 3rd 2024



An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, as a mother feeds her children at the breast you feed us with the food and drink of eternal life: help us who have tasted your goodness to grow in grace within the household of faith. 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 19 *We say the psalm aloud*

The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
One day pours out its song to another and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
They have neither speech nor language and their voices are not heard,
Yet their sound has gone out into all lands and their words to the ends of the world.
In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun, that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber
and rejoices as a champion to run his course.
It goes forth from the end of the heavens
and runs to the very end again, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.
The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever;
the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold,
sweeter also than honey, dripping from the honeycomb.
By them also is your servant taught and in keeping them there is great reward.
Who can tell how often they offend?
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins lest they get dominion over me;
so shall I be undefiled, and innocent of great offence.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.
Glory be 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 Corinthians 1.18-25

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

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 2.13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' ¹⁹Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' ²⁰The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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

Trainee Priest Farhad Chermahini writes

God proved His love on the Cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, 'I love you.' – Billy Graham

Our reading from 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 and John 2:13-22 invites us to re-evaluate our lives in the light of the Cross of Christ. The Corinthian church missed the very point of what the cross of Christ stands for, LOVE. As a result, they broke up into groups against each other. Some thought they were better than others spiritually. Others were taking each other to court instead of solving problems in a Christ-like manner. Yet others were misusing the shared meal occasions and excluding others. What did St Paul do as their founding father? He called them to the cross where Christ, though he was rich... became poor, and died the death of a criminal that Corinthians (and by extension us) might be rich through his poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Apostle John makes that point even clearer in John 2:13-22. People who travelled from a long distance to come to Jerusalem for the annual feast of Passover needed to buy animals to offer to the priests as their sacrifice. But the family of the High Priest had opened up shops and were charging people with outrageous prices for the animals. To force people to buy their sacrificial animals from the temple instead of bringing their own, they told people what they brought was disqualified because of physical defects. The Law required pilgrims to offer animals without defects and when the priests disqualified the offering, there was no alternative for the pilgrim but to buy what the priest was providing.

This was only one side of the problem. The other problem was that where the high priest had set up his extortionist business was the court of the Gentiles: the area of the temple where Gentiles were to worship. So, the business set up by the high priest's family overcharged the Jewish pilgrims, a practice the Law forbid (Leviticus 25:14), and excluded the Gentiles for whom a court was made to come and worship. Love for the pilgrims and the Gentiles moved Jesus and he made 'a scourge out of cords, and drove them all out of the temple,' an act that contributed to his crucifixion.

The Corinthians, by contrast, prioritised their personal preferences, and possibly gain, as the High priest did,

and broke up the body of Christ.

What do all these mean for our 21st-century life? In some cases, we might need to prioritise our own self-care to ensure those who rely on us have our best: love seeks the good of others. In other cases, we might need to act on behalf of those in our communities who are exploited or excluded. Through prayerful self-examination God will show us what is right for each person, only 'let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25)' who preserves the unity of the body of 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*

Almighty and ever-loving God, you are more ready to hear us and forgive us than we are to come to you; but now we come in your grace and pray.

Lord we look for you, we long for you, our whole being thirsts for you and your love. Lord, open our eyes, awaken us to what is around us and make us aware of your coming to us. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We pray for those who nurture the young, those who teach and equip others that they might flourish in their humanity. Give them wisdom to guide, and patience to walk alongside those who learn the way to love and bring peace in the world. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

Lord, as you have given us this world to live in, help us to use its riches and resources with sensitivity. Bless all who work on the land, who supply our food and daily need. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We pray for those who lead communities and nations, may they know the path you call all humanity to in Christ; that of peace, of grace, of love and justice. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We give you thanks for our homes and our loved ones; make us sensitive to each other's needs and hopes. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We pray for those displaced from their homes, from their lands through earthquake, flood or war. Bless all who receive them with common humanity that they may find somewhere they can call home; even if for a short time. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

We pray for those taken ill this day, those involved in accidents or facing operations. Be with those who minister healing this day. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.*

Lord, you are our helper and you protect us from all evil. We pray for all who face death today; for our loved ones departed, that you will bring them into fullness of joy in your kingdom.

Merciful Father accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

The Collect

All: Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
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.