

Our Sunday Service Together

May 5th 2024

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 98 *We say the psalm aloud*

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things.
His own right hand and his holy arm have won for him the victory.
The Lord has made known his salvation; his deliverance has he openly shown in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered his mercy and faithfulness towards the house of Israel,
and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
Sound praises to the Lord, all the earth; break into singing and make music.
Make music to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the voice of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn sound praises before the Lord, the King.
Let the sea thunder and all that fills it, the world and all that dwell upon it.
Let the rivers clap their hands and let the hills ring out together before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
In righteousness shall he judge the world and the peoples with equity.
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 10.44-end

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

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 15.9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹² This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

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

Last week we heard the Ethiopian Eunuch ask 'what is to prevent me from being baptised', today Peter asks everyone present, 'can anyone withhold baptism from these who have received the Holy Spirit as we have?'

The Greek verb used repeatedly in these chapters here in Acts is *kōlyō* which can be translated as "prevent," "withhold," or "hinder". Crucially, its use in these chapters comes with a nullification; nothing, and no one can impede God's outreach to all people across any of the conventional physical, social, and territorial boundaries of the world.

We try to, churches try to, communities try to, but if the book of Acts tells us one thing it is that God's mission in Jesus Christ is expansive, inclusive of all who would come to Christ, and try as much as we may wish to – the Spirit will blow wherever it wishes, and alight on whatever soil will receive it to flourish and bear fruit.

The 'circumcised believers' were astounded that the Spirit had been poured out, not gently sprinkled, dripped, but poured out – liberally, abundantly, brazenly by God! I wonder who we would be astounded to see God abundantly blessing with His Spirit? Would we tut, would we say 'no that is impossible for look they are sinful, unwashed people' or would we take Peter's approach?

There is no hindering God! What then are we to do? Peter shows the way. First we need to discern this is God at work and affirm it, welcome it, and then join in with it. The image of a sail boat comes to mind here. The crew notice the wind blowing and then have a choice, either they keep the sails down and go nowhere in a hurry, or raise them and enjoy the journey. Peter says, I feel a breeze blowing we need to raise the sails and see where God takes us.

In our gospel we find Jesus talking about the people of God through the motif of the vine (he began this in the previous verses of the chapter). God's people, Jesus disciples need to be connected to him, the vine. We are to be branches grafted such that one is part of the other and vice versa, with no distinction to be made. This oneness of vine and branches is revealed as the branches bear the vine's fruit.

But what is the fruit? It is the same expression of God's love and justice for the world that Jesus himself has flowing through his being. 'As I have loved you, so you are to love one another'. The life force of the vine is to course through the branches and bear fruit in the same manner as his life does. As Jesus gives his life over fully to the loving purpose of God for the world so too are the branches to be wholeheartedly given over to

loving with God's love; heart, mind, soul and strength you might say! Jesus said he only ever did as he perceived the Father doing through the Spirit abroad in the world. Jesus could see the wind of the Spirit at work and was moved to action. In Acts Peter, and all the disciples, are beginning to learn to be on the lookout for the breeze of God's Spirit and allow this to move them. As we will see at Pentecost this same Spirit alights on all believers as it alighted on Jesus; this is the life of the vine which flows into the branches.

Peter, Phillip, all of the disciples come to see that God's Spirit is with them, flowing with the love of God in Christ for the world. They also tell us there is no impeding this work; and so we might as well hoist the sails, enjoy the journey and let the life of the vine we have been grafted to flow through us and bear fruit to the glory of God.

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