

Our Sunday Service Together

August 25th 2024

13th Sunday after Trinity



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 Psalms 84

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

My soul has a desire and longing to enter the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young: at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

Blessed are they who dwell in your house: they will always be praising you.

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion,

Who going through the barren valley find there a spring, and the early rains will clothe it with blessing.

They will go from strength to strength and appear before God in Zion.

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; listen, O God of Jacob.

Behold our defender, O God, and look upon the face of your anointed.

For one day in your courts is better than a thousand.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.

For the Lord God is both sun and shield; he will give grace and glory; no good thing shall the Lord withhold from those who walk with integrity.

O Lord God of hosts, blessed are those who put their trust in you.

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 1 Kings 8.22-30 and 41 to 43

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. ²³ He said, 'O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ²⁴ the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. ²⁵ Therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, "There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me." ²⁶ Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David.

²⁷ 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! ²⁸ Have regard to your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; ²⁹ that your eyes may be open night and day towards this house, the place of which you said, "My name shall be there", that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays towards this place. ³⁰ Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray towards this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling-place; heed and forgive.

⁴¹ 'Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name ⁴² — for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm — when a foreigner comes and prays towards this house, ⁴³ then hear in heaven your dwelling-place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

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 6.56-69

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.' ⁵⁹ He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' ⁶¹ But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³ It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵ And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

⁶⁶ Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

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

'How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!', so says the psalmist. Solomon and the people finally celebrate the temple's construction as the house for God's dwelling that King David had enthused about building and, well God moves in.

Sadly, the lectionary misses out the verses which talk of the great cloud of God's presence descending and filling the temple as the Ark of the Covenant is brought inside. The cloud, reminiscent for the Israelites of the pillar of cloud and flame that accompanied them through the wilderness years as they sought the promised and preferred land in which they were to dwell in peace with God – we would all do well to lament the lack of peace and division in that land today!

Solomon acknowledges that God is in reality dwelling 'in the heavenly places', yet also, somehow present and accessible on earth. The people of Israel can come and worship and pray to God who is in the otherness of the heavenly realm, yet also very present in the real, blood and guts world that people experience each day. However, this is not exclusive to Israel, to the people of God, but a possibility for the foreigner who would come a pray. Solomon petitions that God would hear all who come to His presence and pray and would – 'then hear in heaven your dwelling-place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you', that God would be glorified through that.

Here is the basis for the prayer Jesus gave, here are the opening lines, God in the heavens, like a father to all people, whose name is to be glorified and whose promised and preferred future is sought on earth, in the blood and guts life of humanity as it is within the wisdom and love of the heavenly.

'How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!' Jesus takes us to new possibilities when it comes to God's dwelling with humanity, and with it a new possibility for knowing God's promised and preferred future for all humanity come in earth as it is in heaven. Jesus himself models all of this, through Mary fully and deeply human and from the Spirit God presence, His wisdom and love dwelling 'in' the soil of Adam – heaven and earth one!

Jesus makes a startling suggestion, something which sees many turn and walk away, that folks ingest his body and blood; as they once consumed manna from heaven and lived, so now they are to consume the bread and blood he brings. To many it must have sounded like cannibalism and, as good Jewish folks, they walked away. However, Jewish temple practice had consisted of sacrifices offered for forgiveness and in thanksgiving, and as much as the offerings were burnt to God a portion was also consumed by the people. Each week, as the Sabbath supper was consumed, the people remembered God's deliverance into a promised and preferred future place of dwelling in peace with God, and ate lamb offered hastily whose blood then covered the door of each house and death passed over.

'Are you to going to walk away?', Jesus asks the disciples. 'No', says Peter for you have the words of eternal life. Peter can see that Jesus is not talking of cannibalism or setting up a weird cult with Judaism. Jesus talks of his messianic sacrifice that is to come, his defeat of death, his fulfilling of God's promised and preferred future for all humanity, his opening a way into a dwelling in God's peace, love and wisdom and of God's presence with all of humanity. It is his sacrifice; it is his offering of himself that he calls people to receive.

The gospel writer is keen we should know this and, 'manna like', receive each day the bread of heaven (more of the Lord's prayer here). That we should consume, ingest like bread and wine, taking into our lives Jesus' sacrifice and be transformed by this bread, becoming as he was 'the place wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling'. To be people who both pray the words 'we give you thanks and praise for feeding us with the body and blood of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and offer you our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice, send us out in the power of your Holy Spirit, to live and work to your praise and glory' and see them fulfilled!

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, as you love us, help us to love one another. Give to your church a burning zeal through your Spirit and keep us ardent in our spirits. *Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.*

Lord, we pray for peace and unity in your church. Increase our fellowship with one another and our openness to others of your church not yet gathered with us. Give us courage to share your love for this world, to tell of our lives with you, that the faintest whiff of faith in others may be fanned into flame for your glory. *Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.*

We pray for peace in our hearts, our community, in this nation, and across your world, that as much as it may be possible for us we may live in peace with all people. We pray for peace keeping organisations, for NGOs, for the United Nations. We pray for police and probation services. We give thanks for all who offer and work for peace in this world. *Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.*

May our homes be places of peace and love. We pray for those caught in domestic violence, homelessness, unemployment and spiralling debt. Be with our local foodbank and increase people's generosity to their work. But as we pray this we ask that the systems of injustice, poor decisions by government and the greed of many would be turned by your love to the ways of your kingdom. *Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.*

We pray for all not at peace, for broken relationships, the broken hearted and broken in spirit. For those who suffer from a breakdown in wellbeing, for all being affected by hatred or revenge. *Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.*

We hold before you those sick in body, mind or spirit. Those facing operations or end of life care. Be close in peace and through doctors and nurses bring healing. *Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.*

Be with those who mourn the loss of a loved one at this time. Lord, when you come in your glory, make us to be one with you and the saints who are now at peace.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, the prince of peace. Amen.

The Collect

All: Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, 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