

Our Sunday Service Together

Sunday November 3rd 2024



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

God the Father forgives us in Christ and heals us by the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice, and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

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 24.1-6

The earth is the Lord's and all that fills it, the compass of the world and all who dwell therein.

For he has founded it upon the seas and set it firm upon the rivers of the deep.

'Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, or who can rise up in his holy place?'

'Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, who have not lifted up their soul to an idol, nor sworn an oath to a lie; 'They shall receive a blessing from the Lord, a just reward from the God of their salvation.'

Such is the company of those who seek him, of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

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 Revelation 21.1-6a

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

'See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'⁶ Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

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 11.32-44

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' ³⁷ But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would

see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

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

It is hard when we read the words of John's gospel not to place our own feelings about the bereavements we have experienced in life on to the characters in the story. We know the background. For some reason Jesus delayed coming to the aid of his friend when the sisters, Mary and Martha send word. When Jesus does get moving he doesn't journey all the way instead staying a short way from the house. When he does arrive it is too late, Lazarus is dead and buried.

Whilst not featuring in our text today Jesus has already encountered Martha, who says things bluntly 'if you had been here, my brother would not be dead'. Reading her words and the directness of them and her confronting Jesus it is hard to not think she is really angry with Jesus; the text doesn't actually say so. We empathize with Martha, after all I am sure have all asked the same questions of God; 'why did you not act, how could you let my loved one die?' Anger is a very normal emotion to have in times of grief.

Mary too asks the same question of Jesus, although it is more a statement. Mary falls on her knees; her energy is spent as she weeps. Who hasn't found grief energy sapping and tears, well they just do not seem to stop. The crowd about them whilst weeping now pass their judgment on Jesus; 'he clearly loved Lazarus so why did he not do anything, after all he bothered to heal others from their ailments', or words to that effect.

As they all approach Lazarus' tomb, unlike these attendees to the sisters' grief who merely weep, Jesus cries; and more the words suggest he stands stopped in his tracks by the emotions coming over him and himself expresses a sound from within his anger, a snorting, growling sound is what the Greek suggests to us. We see here a sympathetic and empathetic Jesus, a human being who mourns *for* loved ones who have died and *along with* other loved ones who remain. Jesus does not ignore or remain detached from the very real suffering Lazarus endured and the grief his community experiences. Instead, Jesus mourns too

Now, at the tomb Jesus asks for the stone to be removed and it seems Martha ministers to his grief. I paraphrase but it sounds to me as if she was saying, 'it is OK Jesus, do not worry, whilst our brother is gone from us, it is only for a time because he will be raised and come back to us at the end of the age'. It is as if she wants to give Jesus some of the hope she holds to, and with it also says she does not hold anything against him for not being there; even if she can't understand why he did not make the effort.

Is it that in that moment of shared hope, in His receiving from Martha, that Jesus says 'I told you, with your belief, that you would see the glories of God'; and he then takes action. He cries out and calls Lazarus forth from the grave, the grip of death is nothing at this moment and His friend steps forward into the light. Here is John's good news, in Jesus the power of sin and death are no more – He is the resurrection and the Life, to the glory of God.

I do wonder if this might have been a gift to Jesus also, as he journeys soon to his own death. Does he have a glimpse and a reminder again of both his calling and also the result of his work? We are not explicitly told so, this is my reading into things, taking encouragement and hope myself – mind you is that not what the gospels are supposed to gift to us!

Sickness, sin, old age all happen, as do death and grief. However, they are not the victors, they are not the end of things for Christ Jesus is the resurrection of God and he will call each and all as he did Lazarus to come forth, be untied and to go into the life his gives.

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*

Jesus our exalted Lord has been given all authority.
Let us seek his intercession, that our prayers may be perfected by his prayer.
Jesus Christ, great high priest, living for ever to intercede for us:
pray for your Church, your broken body in the world ...
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, King of righteousness, enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high:
pray for the world, and make it subject to your gentle rule ...
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, Son of man, drawing humanity into the life of God:
pray for your brothers and sisters in need, distress or sorrow ...
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, pioneer of our salvation, bringing us to your glory through your death and resurrection:
pray for all who are dying, that they may trust in your promises ...
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, Lord of all things, ascended far above from the heavens and filling the universe:
pray for us who receive the gifts you give us for work in your service ...
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, first-fruits of the new creation, keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace,
until you bring the whole created order to worship at your feet;
for you are alive and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Collect

All: Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those inexpressible joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; 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.