

Our Service Together

2nd Sunday before Lent

February 23rd 2025

An Acclamation for the Season

All: There is one body and one spirit. There is one hope to which we were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

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

The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. 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 Psalm 37.1-11 and 39-40

Fret not because of evildoers; be not jealous of those who do wrong.
For they shall soon wither like grass and like the green herb fade away.
Trust in the Lord and be doing good; dwell in the land and be nourished with truth.
Let your delight be in the Lord and he will give you your heart's desire.
Commit your way to the Lord and put your trust in him, and he will bring it to pass.
He will make your righteousness as clear as the light and your just dealing as the noonday.
Be still before the Lord and wait for him; do not fret over those that prosper as they follow their evil schemes.
Refrain from anger and abandon wrath; do not fret, lest you be moved to do evil.
For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait upon the Lord shall possess the land.
Yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; you will search for their place and find them gone.
But the lowly shall possess the land and shall delight in abundance of peace.
But the sinners shall perish together, and the posterity of the wicked shall be rooted out.
The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.
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 Genesis 45.3-11 and 15

Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?' But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come closer to me.' And they came closer. He said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. ⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, "Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰ You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty."

And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

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.

'But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² 'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷ 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.'

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

Today we hear of two men who completely buck the expected norms of their day; possibly ours too.

Joseph has been sold by his brothers into foreign slavery, maybe we can pause for a moment and think on how that must have felt to him. How would it feel to you to be so rejected by your family, not simply ignored or have a punch up, but sold into slavery in a foreign land? How should Joseph feel and respond and deal with his brothers when he sees them approach.

Well his brothers give us a clue for how someone would usually deal with the situation to hand, especially if they were now the most powerful person in the land save for Pharaoh himself. No one would have thought less of Joseph he had welcomed his father as if coming home and thrown his brothers into the darkest hole to be found in Egypt.

But he doesn't, in fact he does the opposite. He welcomes and ensures that amidst the famine that covers the whole region his father and brothers are kept alive, fed and watered – they would not perish.

Joseph's justification for his actions is that whilst they might have meant harm God had meant good to come from their actions all along. How do we react when folks act when situations go south, when it seems all is against us? Joseph would coach us to look for God's presence and God's providence in all things.

Jesus to stands against the prevailing culture of the Roman Empire which espoused doing good to those who do good for you, love your neighbour who loves you; out gift your friends.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them". That is the acceptable ethic of the day.

The implication is that anyone can love those who love them. Anyone can lend to someone from whom they expect repayment. That kind of love and lending is a transaction. You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours. That is our society today, a transactional ethic!

A closer look at such transaction-based behaviour reveals the problem: In such a world, what you do dictates what I do. When we return hate with hate, the original hate has won! It inspires and directs our actions.

This is not to be! In the reign of God, what we do is not directed by what others do to us. In the reign of God, what we do is a response to the God who alone fills us, the God who “is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked”. This sounds just like Joseph God too!

It would be easy in our very individualistic culture today to assume these directions apply to individuals in their ‘private’ lives. Of course there has to be individual responsibility and exercise of faith, but the Christian faith is a corporate, a family matter. As such Jesus’ ethics are a corporate community matter also.

This means the church itself is called upon to both verbally and in an incarnate, enfleshed manner to proclaim that sexual abuse is not acceptable, that physical and mental abuse is not acceptable, neither is theft, knife crime, bigotry and hatred, online vitriolic condemnation of neighbours, despising of the poor, rejection of the less able, the sick and the least in society. And when we are attacked for doing so, challenged for our refusing to live by the ethics of the age, we do more of it, speak more words about it and in doing so though naked and bruised we are a church that reveals the truth, shames the guilty and is able to rejoice in knowing this is both God’s grace and that the kingdom of God is at hand.

In today’s time may the church, nationally, internationally and here in our locality find her voice again.

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*

Gracious God, we pray for your blessing to be upon your church throughout this your world. May we journey as your disciples, always in hope for our future in Christ and seeking to be your Kingdom come and will done in this age. *Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer*

Creator God, drive away despair and division from our politics, revive our dreams of justice and truth, and restore our passion for what is good and right. Establish your just and gentle rule throughout the world especially where there is conflict; where peace seems so far away and so many have lost everything, even the faint hope of a peaceful future. *Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer*

Father God, we pray for our church community, that each of us might make use of our individual talents enabling all to flourish as a witness to your grace and to your transforming work in our lives.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God, we ask for your healing touch on all who are ill or suffering. We especially pray for any we know who are experiencing emotional pain or are broken in spirit through personal or family problems.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God, give courage and faith to those who are bereaved, that by casting their cares on you they may find the strength to face the days ahead. *Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer*

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and always. Amen

The Collect

All: Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things, 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.