

Our Service Together

3rd Sunday before Lent

February 16th 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 1 *We say the psalm aloud*

Blessed are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.
Their delight is in the law of the Lord and they meditate on his law day and night.
Like a tree planted by streams of water bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither,
whatever they do, it shall prosper.
As for the wicked, it is not so with them; they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked shall not be able to stand in the judgement,
nor the sinner in the congregation of the righteous.
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish.
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 Jeremiah 17.5-10

Thus says the Lord:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. ⁶They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

⁷Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.

⁸They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. ⁹The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse— who can understand it?

¹⁰I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.

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 Luke 6.17-26

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰Then he looked up at his disciples and said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ 'Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

²² 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

²⁴ 'But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ 'Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ 'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

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 easy to think that a prophet is proclaiming God's judgement all the time, especially when you hear the word 'cursed' used. But often, certainly here in Jeremiah today, we find instead of judgment the prophet is simply stating what God sees as the obvious result of actions being taken; what we might think of as common sense.

Jesus too, in this 'sermon on the plain' declares God's blessings and in contrast to curses, 'woes' for what God knows will be the consequences of certain actions. Jesus has been teaching and healing all who have come to him on the plains. He is amongst the people on level ground and he will 'level' with them on life from God's perspective in the words he will speak.

In this context, Jesus speaks blessing. To the poor belongs God's own realm; here in this moment is 'kingdom come on earth as in heaven. The hungry will not be hungry for long, but will be satisfied with true bread for life. Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning; and that joy extends to embrace those who are excluded, reviled, or defamed by virtue of their connection to Jesus. These rejected ones, whom others have tried to cut off, have a belonging that is deeper than anything that the people around them could withhold.

This is hope realised, this is God's realm manifest, God's ways over and above the world's. This is not a spiritual hypothesis, rather it is God's word in flesh; it is real life and Jesus speaks to the poor and the hungry, with the news that their material needs will be supplied. And more, whilst the poor and hungry are despised by the world about them, God honours them completely and will see them 'raised up'. In short, whilst the world may suggest that they have been forgotten or forsaken, they are not forgotten by God!

Of course society would tell us otherwise, suggest even that we disregard the words both Jeremiah and Jesus speak as nonsense, because the words don't stand up to reality. When are the poor and hungry anything but a cause for sadness and a burden to all? We need to be fed, not go hungry, we are to successful and honoured for that success. These things 'fill us up' and the world offers them in spades and it is easier to place your bets on success in them. No matter how hope filled Jesus' words are, some in the crowd would have placed their trust in the world; and as it was then, so it is today!

Maybe this is why, along with the blessings we have to hear of 'woes' (not curses, but warnings!). The contrast of the 'woes' against the 'blessings' is to remind us that certain things are worthy of our trust, and other things are sure to betray it. We hear a lot these days, especially from politicians about 'common sense' and the need to place our trust in that 'common sense'. It makes 'sense', it is 'common sense' to be self-reliant, to despise being poor, going hungry, to tear down and to destroy those different from us. With the beatitudes, Jesus announces another sense, God's sense which is of ultimate trustworthiness. By contrast 'woe betide' all who trust in the world and its ways, for these will rust, decay and pass away leaving the 'full' hungry beyond ever feeling satisfied and the rich holding that which can never be spent.

In the end we are called to follow Jesus in His sense, in God's take on reality – are we ready to?

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*

Blessed are those who put their trust in the Lord. He will keep them in his presence and his peace. Let us pray to the one who was raised as the first fruits of the kingdom to come.

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 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*

Everlasting God, send us out into the world, renewed by our worship and strengthened by our fellowship, so that we may be a testament to the Gospel of your son Jesus Christ, the first fruits of the resurrection to eternal life. *Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen*

The Collect

All: Almighty God, who alone can bring order to the unruly wills and passions of sinful humanity: give your people grace so to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, among the many changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; 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.