

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 5th July 2020 Trinity 4

*At the beginning of our services in church today we will light a candle,
you may wish to light a candle at home too.*

Christ yesterday and today, **The beginning and the end,**

Alpha and Omega, all time belongs to him, and all ages; **To him be glory and power, through every age and for ever. Amen.**

May the light of Christ, rising in glory, banish all darkness from our hearts and minds. Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

Everlasting God, we give you thanks that our Lord Jesus Christ was raised gloriously from the dead, crushing the power of sin and destroying the sting of death. May we, and all Christ's people, shine as lights in the world to the glory of God the Father. **Amen.**

The light of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Greeting: "I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations; therefore the people will praise you for ever and ever." From Psalm 45 v 17

Introduction to confession: Seeing we have a great high priest, who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, and make our confession to our heavenly Father.

Prayer of Confession: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own individual fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.

Absolution: Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect: O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not our hold on things eternal; grant this Heavenly Father, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

1st Reading: Romans 7:15-25a

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 11. 16-19, 25 – end

‘But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.” For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!” Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.’

At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

Reflection

When we meet Jesus in the gospel today he is fulfilling the discernment of those Old Testament writers who had waited on God and put their trust in him completely. The image is of a leader who is totally in touch with ordinary people and their everyday lives and leads with integrity and openness, not tied up with bureaucracy and the busyness of domination and threat. Unpretentious and unimpressed with the worldly idea of wealth and power.

God’s kingdom is nothing like the earthly temporary and fickle ideals, but everlasting, for eternity, steadfast in all its goodness. Jesus’ heart goes out to all those who are weighed down with what’s going on in their lives. His welcome is nothing to do with domination, or strict rules which terrify with their potential for failure. Jesus turns up, open and unarmed offering relief and rest for tired and weary souls by them becoming joined, or ‘yoked’ with him in his life in the living God.

In comparison, we may be feeling bogged down by rules and restrictions, we’ve certainly seen our fair share of guidance and regulations, especially our churchwardens, and perhaps we’ve had our fill of stipulations just this last week, for when it comes to opening our churches safely. You may be involved in other jurisdictions, depending on what you’re engaged in at the moment, through work, or other personal appointments, or in your role as carer of someone else. Ultimately, we all know that these things are not meant to try our patience, they are actually an attempt to keep us all as safe as possible, to minimise the risks, to guard us against disease.

And what about the selfish behaviour we’ve been witnessing around us, those who don’t wish to stick to the rules, who think the rules don’t apply to them. Isn’t this what Jesus’ ironic little parable is all about? Jesus clearly knows this type of person well, they will only play their own game and even then, only, if they get the main part. When their fellow playmates, in this case; John and Jesus, try to initiate a game, they won’t play. You can almost hear their comments as they “call across the market place” – ‘I don’t like that game’, ‘I didn’t make it up’, and ‘I don’t like it, it’s a silly game.’ ‘Your game is too sad’ they tell John, ‘Why can’t we play a happy game? Someone always has to die in your game.’ And ‘Your game is too noisy’, they say to Jesus, ‘I don’t like that kind of cake’, or ‘you’ve got more squash than me!’

That spoiled, tantrum throwing child is only one half of today’s story though – we see the other child in verses 25-7.

This child is excited and curious and wondering what life is meant to be. This child knows he or she has a heavenly Father who is there, ready to be part of every moment. This child has not been left alone to get on with life, to sort things out for him or herself, but instead the Father is there to play along too. To

be present every step of the way. Reassuring, allowing the child to take their own direction, of course, but also sharing, enjoying and rejoicing in the imagination and creativity of his child.

This relationship is amazing, the relationship we can have with God is awe-inspiring. The picture we have before us today is of a God who knows our deepest needs, is ever-present, wherever we are and reassuring us to relax back into His open arms.

Whether you are attending a church service this morning, or for whatever reason you may be listening from home or reading these words, my hope is that those of us who are burdened and heavy laden will be able to put our complete trust in God for the future, not just now, but for all eternity. My desire is that you are able to take up Jesus' invitation: **"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."**

An Acclamation of the Christian Way

As we follow the Way of Christ, we affirm the presence of God among us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God calls us to share in worship. Jesus said, where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share in prayer. *Jesus said, remain in me, and I will remain in you.*

Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share the Scriptures. *Jesus met his disciples on the road and opened the Scriptures to them.*

Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share in service. *Jesus said, as you do it for the least of these, you do it for me.*

Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share the good news. *Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations.*

Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

Prayers of Intercession (based on those written by Susan Sayers)

To all who are weary from carrying heavy burdens in life, Jesus offers rest and unending, gentle relief, let us pray to God now:

Holy God, we pray that your Church may always be open to receive your love; keep us clear of arrogance, complacency or self-righteousness; let us come humbly and simply into your presence and wait on you, knowing our dependence on you, and rejoicing in it.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Holy God, we pray for our church leaders, for Archbishop Justin, Bishops Nicholas and Karen, for Archdeacon Penny and Rural Dean David, for Jane and the ministry team and for all churchwardens across the Bride Valley.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Holy God, we pray for Queen Elizabeth, for all world leaders and governments, for the strength of authority comes not through force or domination but through co-operation and mutual respect; we pray for greater consideration of the needs of one another and of our planet, and a desire to right past wrongs and injustices.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Holy God, we pray for a growing maturity in our thinking and our loving that enables us to be childlike; we pray for healing of all the damage that prevents us from growing up; we pray that the children of this community may be helped to grow strong, and we thank you for all we learn from them.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Holy God, we pray for all who cry out for rest and relief, all who are carrying heavy burdens that weigh them down, all whose poverty denies them the chance of healing, all whose wealth denies them the chance of knowing their need of you.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Holy God, we pray for the families and friends of those who have died recently, be especially close to them in their grief.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Holy God, we thank you for everyone working for the NHS, as today marks 72 years since it began, we are particularly grateful at this time for all who continue to courageously and selflessly serve their community as carers and keyworkers.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Holy God, our Father, we thank you for your gentleness and humility, which puts our pride and vanity to shame. Teach us to trust more and more in your truth, discarding what the world considers essential and rejoicing in your freedom.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

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.**

Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil.

**For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, forever and ever.**

Amen.

Final Prayer

Almighty God, we praise you for the many blessings you have given to those who worship you in this house of prayer: and we pray that all who seek you in this place may find you, and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, may become a living temple acceptable to 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.**

Blessing

Christ, whose glory is in the heavens,
fill this house and illuminate your hearts; and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**