

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 6th September 2020

13th Sunday after Trinity

To prepare ourselves for our worship, we reflect on the day and on our relationships.

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What will I try to do differently in future?*

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

The Lord wants us to be a community reconciled in love. Let us call to mind the sins that damage our unity

Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of sin and division.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

You reconcile us to one another and to the Father.

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

You gather the nations into the peace of God's kingdom.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect (special prayer for today)

Almighty God, you search us and know us: may we rely on you in strength and rest on you in weakness, now and in all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

READINGS

Romans 13:8-end

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 18:15-20

'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

REFLECTION

I was reminded recently how many children have what we, as adults, call 'an imaginary friend'. Whilst we can't see this 'person' who generally has a name, their own likes and dislikes, and often needs their own place at the table or on the sofa, they are unquestionably real to the child. It matters not whether the child is with friends or family, or whether they are playing by him or herself; their 'friend' is always with them, and shares the child's thoughts, feelings and emotions.

During the past months, as our lives have been changed by social distancing, self-isolating and a plethora of ever-changing rules governing what we can and can't do, we have all been in need of a special friend - whether we are on our own or with others.

When two or three people gather together to pray, to study the Bible, or to talk about their faith and how they are going to spread the Gospel, they gather in the name of Jesus. When we sit with an elderly or sick relative, when we offer support to someone, when we fervently pray for their wellbeing and for our own, Jesus is there with us. He promised that he will be right there in the midst of the group. He is with us.

Jesus is with us when we come together to worship him in church or chapel; whether there are only two or three people there or a large number. And yet, sometimes we get carried away with what we are doing; we make ourselves, our music, our enthusiasm the centre of our time together, and forget that Jesus is there with us. He is not some distant figure sitting by the altar, he is there in our midst helping us with our worship, feeling our pain, exulting in our joy, pardoning our sins, and joining in our prayer.

So how does this work at this time when so many people are unable to attend corporate worship, either because they are still shielding or because their place of worship cannot open safely?

Jesus is close to us, also, when we pray on our own. He, himself went off on his own to pray, and he is no less present with us when we pray alone, than when we pray with friends in church.

Sometimes we have that soul-deep certainty that Jesus is there with us as we pray, and listening to every word we say. At other times we may be finding it hard to pray, and our prayers feel cold and without emotion. We should, however not be put off by this; we *know* that Jesus is with us, loving us, whether we feel it or not, because that is what he promised.

Whatever our circumstances, whether we can attend public worship in person, or whether we join in with services on the phone, the television or radio, we need to remember that Jesus is with us at all times. We need never be lonely because we are never alone. The simple childlike faith that we have an invisible friend can carry over into adulthood without any intellectual dishonesty. The only difference being that **Jesus is real**. Why not try it now, close your eyes and feel his presence. He is with each one of us now.

And so, we pray:

**Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.
Be with us today, as we offer ourselves to you.
Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves,
and keep us in your care. Amen**

Unchanging God, change us from the heart until the whole Church awakens to your love that reaches out, nurtures and celebrates, neither holding back from what is difficult, nor rushing in where angels fear to tread. We pray for sensitivity and courage.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Almighty God, give us such love for your world that we pray with longing and desire, 'Your kingdom come.' Give our leaders the grace to see their work as service and their role as stewards; and sharpen both the recognition of needs and the commitment to just provision.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Merciful God, break all habits of destructive behaviour in our homes our families and our friendships. Develop our ability to celebrate what is good and face what is not with honesty.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Healing God, lay your hands on those who suffer in body mind or spirit, so that they may know the support of your presence and find wholeness and peace in your love. We pray especially for those whose loneliness has been made worse by Covid-19. May they know your presence at all times.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Eternal God, in your unchanging love receive all those who have died in faith, that they may rejoice in you for ever.

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

Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us

**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**

*We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to
be with us now*

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

We pray God's blessing on each other

**May we walk without fault and act with justice.
May the words of our mouths and the thoughts of our hearts, win favour in
the sight of God.
May the Lord keep us safe, and help us to rest in his presence.**

**And may the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us, and those whom we love and pray for
this day and for evermore.
Amen**

