



Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity 27th September

Father God, help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Hymn 570: Praise the Lord

Welcome

The Lord be with you,
and also with you

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Prayer of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,**

through our own deliberate 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

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

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**

Gloria

**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.**

Collect for today:

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; 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.

New Testament Reading: Philippians 2: 1 - 13

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.

Hymn 590: Seek Ye First

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 21: 23 - 32*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ “‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. “Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Rebecca Herrick

“My granddaughter got 3 A*s in her A Levels” “Really? Mine got 4A*s”

“I got a promotion at work this week” “Really? So did I, and a pay-rise too”

“My son got a new scooter for his birthday” “Oh we got our son an electric one for Christmas”

“Nah nah ne nah nah, I’m better than you!”

Whether it’s over a coffee, at work, at the school gate or in the school playground, we have all had those kind of conversations. People have always been trying to outdo each other from the beginning of time. Think of Cain and Abel! In the time of Jesus, the Chief Priests and teachers of the law, thought they were it, that they were the best. Jesus and his teaching threatened that. The leaders had already decided they would kill Jesus, because they could not tolerate the message he was preaching and living. As Jesus teaches in the temple, they approach him. “Who gave you authority?” They can’t stand that he has authority over people, far outreaching their own authority; it extends over sickness and death, over the elements of all creation, over the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus typically answers their question with one of his own. If they believed John the Baptist, they would know who Jesus was – the promised Messiah – but if they said John was lying, the leaders were afraid they would lose their own authority and that played into their insecurities. They wanted to be the ones with the authority. They wanted to be the best, not this man Jesus.

Jesus tells them a parable. We know from earlier in Matthew’s gospel that Jesus told parables, so that those with open hearts and minds would know more of Him. The Chief Priests hearts may have been hardened to what Jesus was trying to say, yet Jesus still offers the leaders the opportunity to change. Many start life living their own way, not God’s way, then their eyes are opened to Jesus and they choose to follow him – to go and do the Father’s work in the vineyard. Others, like the Chief Priests and leaders, sometimes very publicly say they believe in God, say they trust in Jesus, but they don’t live that way, they don’t repent and believe in Him. The leaders of the time outwardly lived as they thought God required and as a consequence thought themselves better than the mere sinners around them, who couldn’t possibly be good enough for God. But Jesus was there to preach a different message, one of justification by faith, repenting and believing, not justification by works. The perception of being better than others is turned on its head, where being the least, being humble is key.

Those who believe in Jesus are challenged to live a life that echoes Christ “who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the nature of a slave”. In Roman times, slaves were nothing, the lowest of the low. Crucifixion, one of the cruellest forms of execution, was reserved for criminal slaves and others like them. Christ was humble even in his death, the death of a slave, not of a King.

In the letter to the Philippians, Paul says that this is the attitude those of us who truly live to follow Jesus should also have. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves”. What does it mean to be humble? I have to confess to resorting to an internet search, as my own definition was a little hazy! Humility is not about being self-deprecating or always putting ourselves down when others praise us. It is easy to think that

humility is the opposite of pride – not being proud of ourselves or the things we do – but that is not the case. Instead from a place of security in our selves and in who we are in God’s eyes, beloved children of God, it is putting others first, loving one another and our neighbours. It is being willing to serve others. As Paul says, “looking not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others”. It is the outworking of God’s love shown to us, as we love others.

But how do we do this practically? Inherently we are all selfish people, we all want to be better than others, even if we pretend to ourselves we don’t. We all miss opportunities to serve others, because we are too busy with our own lives and our own worries. The good news is if we believe in Jesus, we don’t do it alone. His Holy Spirit lives in us, guiding us, helping us, encouraging us, as we pray to be more like Christ. CS Lewis in his book “Mere Christianity” provides another practical suggestion and that is to pretend to be Jesus, not with some God-complex on our shoulders, but as a child pretends. My children currently like pretending to be dogs for my youngest to pet and lead around. They mimic a dogs actions and responses when she tells them what to do. Likewise we also can try to mimic Christ’s responses in the ebb and flow of daily life. By knowing more of Jesus through prayer and through God’s word, we can learn to align our attitudes with those of Christ.

Living life in this way, unites us as the body of Christ. Paul calls us to be “like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose”. As a church it can be easy to become divided, as we get frustrated with one another when things aren’t the way we’d like them to be. It can be easy to think our way is the best way, and even easier to get grumpy when others think they know better. But ultimately we are all striving for the same goal, expressed so wonderfully by Paul, “that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” That should unite us, even when we differ in opinions, as we strive to live humble lives that reflect Jesus to those around us.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers: Sue Lowdell

Let us pray:

Dear Lord Jesus, we bring to you our loved ones. For many of us there is fear, doubt and uncertainty just as there was for your disciples. You came to them, risen, alive, to offer them peace. Thank you that your peace reaches out to us today even in life's fiercest storms. May we all know that we are always held in the embrace of your love. **Amen**

Merciful God, with autumn now upon us and the days becoming shorter and colder, we pray for our country and our Queen. We pray for the areas in the country where the numbers of those infected with coronavirus, are beginning to rise again. This year has brought reflection on how we live our lives; we have had to look closely at what we do, where we travel and how we interact with each other. We may have to continue to live a little differently for a while longer yet and this is hard: please help us dear God to find a way through; to support one another, to keep hopeful and to trust in You.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Compassionate God, you love the whole world, and we pray for everyone and everything in the world: people, animals, insects, many of whom are in peril and coping with extreme weather at this time of year; hurricanes; floods and fires. We pray for the charities and agencies helping families who have lost everything as a consequence. We pray for all those who are ill with Covid-19 and other serious illnesses, including those undergoing treatment for cancer and heart disease and for those who suffer from stress and depression; may they all be comforted, and with care, made well. We pray for the people of Beirut, Syria, and Afghanistan and for all those fleeing war, conflict and poverty; for those who have been arrested and imprisoned for their religion, and for demonstrating against regimes in countries where there is little evidence of democracy.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Creator God, we pray for the conservationists and volunteers who have been trying to save the pilot whales washed up on the coast of Tasmania. Many have not survived and the reason for this event is not known, but it is nevertheless a tragedy and we give thanks for those who are dedicated to helping all God's creatures.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray for all the churches in Sawston: The Free Church, the Catholic Church and Christchurch. We pray for the congregation at St Mary's and St Peter's and for our Readers, Jose and Sara and our Reader in Training, Rosey; for Sally; our Churchwardens, Marian and Andy and for the members of our PCC, and we give thanks for Petra and her family. We pray for USPG, our overseas charity until the end of September: USPG believes today's major challenges cry out for words and actions that express a love and solidarity that goes beyond national boundaries.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for the villages of Sawston and Babraham: for the streets in which we live; for all the local shops, including the Post Office and the Health Centre and all the staff that work in them. They have been essential during these past few months and we are so grateful that we have them near, saving us from having to travel far for the things we need.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Dear Lord, we pray for those whom we know who are ill at this time; please give them ease and comfort and we pray and give thanks for Mary's continued recovery.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all those whose loved ones have recently died: we remember Anthea and we pray for her family and friends. Please give comfort to all those who are grieving, and we remember too, those we have loved and lost.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the gift of this new day, this autumn day. The sun maybe lower in the sky and beginning to lose its warmth, the rainfall is increasing, and the shadows are lengthening, but we know that the everlasting light of your presence, dear Lord, will keep us warm and fill our hearts with love for you and each other, now and forever, Amen.

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

The Peace:

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn 104: Christ Triumphant

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

Hymn 66: Be Still and Know

Remembering the Lord's Supper:

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 252: The Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ. Amen

If you have any prayer or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact
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