



Thursday 23rd July Holy Communion

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

Prayers 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 us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us 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.

Collect

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding: pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; 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**

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 2:1-3, 7-8, 12-13

The word of the LORD came to me: "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "This is what the LORD says: "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them," declares the LORD.

I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable. The priests did not ask, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who deal with the law did not know me; the leaders rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols.

Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:10-17

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to

Glory to you, O Lord

The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Revd Alan Partridge

See then in your minds eye the crowd, there by the lake, growing by the minute, old and young, those critical, those friendly, those wondering what ever it is all about! The crowd is so dense that Jesus gets into a boat and they push off and float there with the tilapia fish swimming around the boat. Have you seen a tilapia fish? I have, and they are very bony, eating them takes concentration!!

Now concentration is needed in these chapters of Matthew. The “arable parables” they are called! But in fact they are snapshots of the kingdom of heaven. The precious pearl; the kingdom is so valuable its worth all you’ve got. The great net, the great tree, the birds of the air; the kingdom is all embracing universal, small silent beginnings lead to greater things. Seven parables are told adding up to a bigger picture, indeed the biggest picture beyond our thought. Always hold the big picture in your minds eye, in your prayers, never let anything prevent God unfolding it in you and then through you!

The parable makes this huge truth receivable. Over 2000 years this image has stuck, the sower and the seed. What a picture! Toddlers in play groups love to plant their little cress seeds on a flannel. They watch them grow in excitement and wonder as the days go by. Have you tried an avocado stone in water?

Jesus tells this story. Was there a sower at work on the hillside above the lake? It is very probable. They know in a way we do not about the problems of sowing. They knew about the hard ground, the path way v4, or v5 shallow soil underlay of rock. Go to the West Bank today, see this for

yourself. The rocks appear on the surface, the soil is shallow seeds spring up, but are plants scorched in the sun, or the inhospitable ground? Verse 7 weeds and thorn bushes run riot, no glyphosate for them, will you pull up the thorn bushes? Where are my gardening gloves!

Even the children would understand the images Jesus uses here, v8 the good deep rich soil, plenty of moisture, well-tended, and its bumper crop. Receivable form you see, silent quiet tiny beginnings, and it answers the question as to why God's kingdom, such good news, is not uniformly successful on all fronts.

It is Gods seed, Luke 8:11 says it is God's word, we can join in, but He gives growth, so the seed is God's word and the sower is God himself in his son, Jesus. A sower, some seed and the soil of human hearts, a snapshot, that's it. God's kingdom and its working. Receivable for **whoever** is in the crowd. But now the disciples want to know more, they question Jesus, which leads to a prophecy, verses 10-17, have a look.

The prophecy makes the truth believable. The disciples want to know, why teach in parables, why not deliver a lecture? Christ's reply in verse 11, the secret is given to the disciples, not to them, the crowd. It points to a pattern that is there in scripture, that the truths of God are best understood from the inside, by this who have been introduced to the life of discipleship. John 3v3 remember what Jesus tells Nicodemus? You must be born again. They cannot perceive, understand the kingdom of God. They don't understand what it is all about, but if they do then their capacity to receive more of God (v12) will grow. They take hold of what they can understand of God's word, they own it, they allow it to work a change in them, then it will grow.

If on the other hand, we reject it, even what we have understood, then even that amount will seem irrelevant to the reality of their lives. So the telling of parables was a good way of sifting out the true seeker after truth from the casual listener. So Isaiah 6:9-10 ever seeing but too insensitive to take it in. They would hear the words but nothing really hit home. The reason is that their hearts have become calloused, hardened, their eyes are closed. This quote from Isaiah puts the crowd of Jesus' day in perspective. It makes the truth believable, we know this truth, we meet it, some will receive others will not. The parables were not to stop people from understanding the truth but to act as sieve. You see to understand God's truth in the bible is a matter of the heart, rather than the head, of course the head plays a big part too! But the inward disposition is what really counts; are you a seeker after truth, do you really want to know God, to be exposed to His truth?

Parables check out, how much do you want to hear? This explains verse 9 "he who has ears let him hear" and verse 16 "blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear". They stand on the inside and can listen to the words of Jesus, his teaching.

Lastly the postscript v18-23 makes it achievable, that is the seed of God's word producing a bumper crop, (v23) to hear the word, to understand it in bible terms is to understand it, to own it obey it, to make it part of the way you think, so our life is shaped by it. The good soil, that is us. There is no fatalism here, some hearts are hard, some are not. No not at all, see verse 9 "He who has ears let him hear", Luke 8:18 Jesus says "Therefore consider carefully how you listen." Do we want to know? Its no good us saying "oh I heard the message", (v4) all of them hear the word, (v19) when anyone hears the message and does not understand it does not receive it, the evil one comes and snatches it away, the seed was sown on hard soil. Some of the hardest soil is in the hearts of those who sit in church Sunday by Sunday, are they obeying what they hear? Is our lifestyle even beginning to be changed? Do we make a response, or is it that we come, we hear but nothing is going to happen? Why? Because our hearts are and will remain shut. V20-21 shows

us the shallow heart. The soil is only superficial, underneath is an impenetrable layer of unresponsiveness. We may flirt with the message of Christ but when adversity strikes we are off, never really seen Christ at all, never took it in, did not really want to, no root verse 21, the house on the sand had no foundation here no root. The next category is that there is no fruit, the listener is diverted from the main priority of discipleship by numerous priorities, the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, these things deflect the listener or the reader.

Then the good soil prepared. God's word is taken in and it changes our lives. The shut heart, the shallow heart, the choked heart, and the changed heart or the receptive heart. We are all probably in one or other of those categories.

The parable makes it receivable, the prophecy makes it believable and the postscript makes it achievable, a bumper crop. Yes you can meet people who have been changed by their reception of the bible and its truth as sown by the only farmer there has ever been our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

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

The Peace

The peace of the Lord always be with you
And also with you.
Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you
and also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation. You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour. His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death. And so we gladly thank you, with saints and angels praising you, and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; and as we obey his command, send your Holy Spirit, that broken bread and wine outpoured may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends and, taking bread, he praised you. He broke the bread, gave it to them and said: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine. Again he praised you, gave it to them and said: Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did, in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross. Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation, we proclaim his death and resurrection until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith

Christ has died

Christ has risen

Christ will come again.

Lord of all life, help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth. Look with favour on your people, gather us in your loving arms and bring us with all the saints to feast at your table in heaven. Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father, for ever and ever. **Amen**

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.

The Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread.

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you and his blood which he shed for you. Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

We do not presume to come to this your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen

Prayer after Communion

God of our pilgrimage, you have led us to the living water: refresh and sustain us as we go forward on our journey, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Through him we offer you our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **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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