

Sunday 16 May 2021

The Seventh Sunday of Easter



Sermon © Pete Haslam.

Prayers of intercession © Lay Anglicana.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included at the end.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 One Church, one faith, one Lord [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The Welcome

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

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia

The Preparation

**All 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.**

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.’

And 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.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Therefore, 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.

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.

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.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This version of the Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,

**Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the Seventh Sunday of Easter

Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and know your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred and twenty people) and said, 'Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.'

So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.' So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.' And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. *Acts 1:15-17, 21-16*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Third Letter of St John

If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. *1 John 5:9-13*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 My Jesus, my saviour

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said, '[My disciples] do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. *John 17:16-19*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

The Acts of the Apostles, the first works of Church history, was not written simply to remind us of what happened to the early church and when they happened. These events were preserved because they shed some light on ways that the Church can faithfully respond to its ever-changing circumstances. So what we have in the Acts of the Apostles is not only a recital about the past, but a guide book to the future. This is certainly the case with the story set before us on this final Sunday of the Easter Season. This story fits the pattern of crisis and response.

What's the crisis? The death of Judas and the vacancy this leaves in the number of the twelve. A full complement of twelve disciples is considered of vital importance, not as a practical matter, but as a reminder of Israel's twelve tribes and the twelve patriarchs for whom they are named. The claim of the Christian community is that it is a new and reformed Israel. Having its own dozen patriarchs are, at that time, an important part of its claim.

What's the response? Matthias is elected to fill the empty place, thereby restoring the apostolic group to their full strength of twelve. We have here a foundation text for the idea of apostolic succession, in other words, the Church in every age as a community in continuity with the earliest disciples.

But something more is happening here. We have a crisis and response pattern that can be applied to numerous circumstances in the life of a Christian community. Consider how it might have happened otherwise. Judas betrays Jesus, then later dies (apparently by his own hand). A space is empty among the twelve. The early Christian community, a group of some 120 people, could respond differently than they do. They could spend their time preoccupied with the failures of Judas. They could fragment into parties that would eventually oppose one another. They could become stuck, waiting passively for the next one of the twelve to go the way of all flesh. Any of these responses is possible given human nature and how groups function. What they decide on is a different option. Peter has a big say in this. He stands up and makes a speech summarising the situation and proposing a course of action. That speech occupies most of today's reading from Acts. But even this most brilliant of speeches is worthless unless people choose to act upon it. Peter manages to strike the right chord. He urges that someone be found to replace Judas. That person must fit certain criteria. What's needed is somebody who has followed Jesus since the earliest days and who can testify to the reality of his resurrection. The community responds by putting forth not one candidate, but two. Through prayer and the casting of lots, one of them is chosen, Matthias. And so the crisis is resolved.

But yet there is the possibility that Peter's proposal could be shouted down or condemned by silence. There could be no candidates to put forward, or those suggested could decline the honour. These things are known to happen in human groups ... especially at PCC meetings!

But instead Peter exercises leadership by proposing a solution to the community's dilemma. The community responds, not simply with verbal assent, but with two qualified candidates willing to serve. A process of choosing is set in place which has been blessed by community prayer. The result is a crisis resolved. So whatever else is happening in this text, I dare to say is that a principle is at work here that

can benefit the Church in every generation. Here's how I would try to express that principle: faithful response to a crisis involves bringing forth additional expressions of ministry. Sometimes, this seems obvious, but putting it into practice, it may not be obvious. In practice, groups and individuals often resort to other options, including those I mentioned earlier as refused by the original Christian community. These options include blaming somebody, becoming fragmented, and staying stuck. Each of these is a way of helping a crisis go from bad to worse. Each one is popular among individuals and groups.

Instead, those 120 Christians gathered together to exercise some trust in the God who raised Jesus from the dead and is not finished with any of us yet. They recognised themselves as a blessed community possessing gifts waiting to be put to use. They remember what God has brought them through already, in the light of which this deployment issue doesn't seem insurmountable. And so they respond to Peter's proposal. They put forth not just one qualified candidate, but two. They respond faithfully, leave the rest to God, and the result is a new twelfth apostle.

As we hear the story in Acts, it seems as though both Matthias and Justus step forward at this moment, urged on by those around them. They are not mentioned previously in the New Testament and they are not mentioned ever again. They simply come forth at the right time, when additional expressions of ministry are needed. At times of crisis, the Church needs additional forms of ministry. Do we dare to ask for such help? Do we dare believe God intends to provide it?

We might well recall the Old Testament story about the prophet Elisha, whose city was surrounded by the great army of a hostile king. Elisha's attendant was distraught about this, fearing the worst, but the prophet told him, 'Don't be afraid; for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed for his attendant. Lord, 'please open his eyes, that he may see.' So the Lord 'opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha' [2 Kings 6:15-17.]

So may we recognise that horses and chariots of fire surround us; additional forms of ministry waiting to be called when required? For whatever the crisis, far more numerous than the forces of destruction are the forces aligned with God. His horses and chariots of fire are always there on the mountain of our lives. AMEN

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray to the Lord, who calls us to be one in him, and one with him.

The Church of Christ Lord, we thank you for the inestimable blessing of the incarnation of your Son. We cling to the comfort and reassurance that a living and loving relationship with him can bring us to a relationship that we value above all else. But as we gaze upwards, anchor us back to earth through the songs of the sorrowing, the faces of the hungry, demanding some practical demonstration of our love. As you have reached into our depths and drawn us to yourself, so make us open, freely to let you go; that you may return in unexpected power to change the world through us, in your name.

Lord, as you have entrusted us with your work on earth

All make us worthy of that calling.

Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority Lord, inspire those who have power over the lives of others not just to find out what needs to be done, but to see that it is: not just to make promises, but to keep them. And, just as we wish this for those who wield great power in the world, help us also, within the limits of our own circumstances, to fulfil all that we undertake to do. Then, with your help and in your name, we can rebuild the world based on fairness and justice for all.

Lord, as you have entrusted us with your work on earth

All make us worthy of that calling.

The local community Lord, as you sent twelve disciples out into the world to spread the gospel, so we need small groups of people to spread a sense of belonging within our communities. Sustain and nurture, we pray, those that already exist and inspire others to form. Then together we can defuse any disharmony as it arises, and support one another in a virtuous circle of affirmation, grouping and re-grouping like the living organism that it is.

Lord, as you have entrusted us with your work on earth

All make us worthy of that calling.

Those who suffer Lord, you have asked us to cast all our anxieties on you because you care for us. And you have warned us of fiery ordeals ahead. Give us the strength, we pray, to withstand the trials that we may be asked to endure. And be with us when we call upon you for help for those who suffer, whether that be ourselves or those whom we love. Give us, through your Son's ascension, a new perspective on our usual limitations, the glory of a life set free from fear.

Lord, as you have entrusted us with your work on earth

All make us worthy of that calling.

The communion of saints Lord, we thank you that at the last you have promised to set us free to know you, and to be known. Completely accepted in your love, we shall rest in you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Lord, as you have entrusted us with your work on earth

All make us worthy of that calling.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord.
Alleluia.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 [One thing I ask](#)

([please click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

HYMN 4 [Seek ye first](#)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

God the Father,
by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.

All Amen.

God the Son,
who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory,
give you joy as you share the Easter faith.

All Amen.

God the Holy Spirit,
whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples,
empower you and fill you with Christ's peace.

All Amen.

And the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All 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,

**All 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:

All Christ has died.
Christ is 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.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.**

Breaking of the Bread

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

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

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin 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.

All 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.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Eternal God, giver of love and power,
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:
confirm us in this mission,
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All 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.