

**Friday 31 March 2023**

# John Donne



John Donne was born in about the year 1571. He went up to Oxford when he was fourteen, studied further at Cambridge, and perhaps on the Continent. He was brought up a Roman Catholic, was sceptical about all religion as a child, but discovered his Christian faith in the Church of England.

He was eventually ordained and later became Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. Much of his cynicism dissolved and he became a strong advocate for the discerning of Christian vocation, and in particular affirming his own vocation as a priest, loving and loved by the crucified Christ.

The people of London flocked to his sermons. He died on this day in the year 1631. His love-poetry and religious poems took on a renewed life in the twentieth century; and his place both as a patristic scholar and as a moral theologian are confirmed by his prolific writings and the publication of his sermons.

**Sermon** © Revd Denise Owen.

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**Prayers and litany** by John Donne

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear 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 Glory be to God the Father** (please 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.**

### 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.**

In sorrow for our sins and with faith in his mercy,  
let us turn to the Lord,  
for with him there is mercy and plenteous redemption.

**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.**

**This Gloria is normally omitted during Lent**

### **The Collect for John Donne**

Almighty God,  
who enlightened your Church  
by the teaching of your servant John Donne:  
enrich it evermore with your heavenly grace  
and raise up faithful witnesses  
who, by their life and teaching,  
may proclaim the truth of your salvation;  
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

**All**    **Amen.**

## First reading

A reading from the Second Book of Moses called Exodus

The Lord said to Moses, 'Go down [the mountain] at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

The Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation.'

But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, 'O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, "It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth"? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, "I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever".' And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

*Exodus 32:7-14*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

My friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see The Day approaching.

*Hebrews 10:19-25*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Let the Son of God enfold you** [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## **Gospel reading**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said, 'If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?' *John 5:31-end*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## **Sermon**

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

Have you heard the expression 'No man is an island'? It's the first line of a poem by John Donne, and it continues the words, 'No man is an island, Entire of itself'.

Gendered language aside (by 'man', I take Donne to include women too), it's

actually quite a powerful statement. It's a powerful statement in general, but in the context of the Church it speaks volumes. This isn't one of Donne's overtly religious poems but, as a Christian who wrote poetry, it is possible to read Christianity into what he wrote, even in the more 'secular' poems. As Christians, as the Church, we understand ourselves to be part of a community, much more than a community in fact, we understand ourselves to be members of God's family.

This phrase can seem like a platitude at times. Yes, the Church is the family of God, but so what? We may call ourselves sisters and brothers, but what difference does that make to me or to you? Well, go back to those short lines from Donne, 'No man [No one] is an island, Entire in itself': turn those words into an image of the Church. The Church is the people of God gathered for worship, or scattered in their various callings throughout the week, and without each of those people the Church is diminished and degraded, and in turn each person of God is diminished without the others. We can only be ourselves and live as people of faith if we are in communion with other people of faith. One of the joys of the Church is that it is properly catholic—that it includes people from every and all backgrounds, places, ages, abilities, social position ... you name it and that person has a place in the Church, God's family.

This statement doesn't mean that we have to get on with everybody in the Church, or even like or approve of them, but it does mean we are duty bound to love them and when necessary, forgive them, and let them love and forgive us. It also means that we can't be Christians in isolation. We are not 'islands', and we are not 'Entire' or complete without others. Neither does it mean we need only associate with other Christians: we are called to be out in the world being the light of Christ to everyone we meet. Being the light of Christ in the world is a challenging task for many reasons, but that is what we as Christians are told to be.

Is it really possible to keep that light shining brightly and confidently in the world, in our daily lives, if we don't feel ourselves to be supported and loved by our sisters and brothers in the Church? And equally, do our sisters and brothers in the Church not need our support and prayers as they take the light of Christ into the world? We are only 'Entire of [ourselves]' if we are part of something bigger, the Church, and the Church is not 'Entire of itself' if we are not participating in gathered worship and prayer.

I've sometimes heard people say, 'I'm a Christian, I believe in God but I don't go to Church', well, NO, a Christian is someone who values and loves other Christians and wants to be with them whether we like them or not. A Christian is someone who values and understands their need of a visible gathering together of God's people, God's family, and knows that if they or someone else isn't there in Church

then they and the Church are not 'Entire'. There are of course perfectly good reasons why people are unable to meet together such as illness, infirmity, etc., but beyond that we are in danger of becoming barren and dreary 'islands' if we don't connect to the mainland the Church regularly. The Church is where the 'Communion of Saints' is formed, grows, learns, and meets with the living God. This is what we take with us as we walk out of the Church door, and we know that we're not alone in the task of Christian living because the sisters and brothers we have been worshipping and praying with are doing the same. A Christian can't be an 'island' and can never become 'Entire' or complete without other Christians.

Amen

## Litany

A twenty-eight part [litany](#) by John Donne

## 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 and hymns of intercession

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening  
into the house and gate of heaven,  
to enter into that gate and dwell in that house,  
where there shall be  
no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light;  
no noise nor silence, but one equal music;  
no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession;  
no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity:  
in the habitations of thy majesty and glory,  
world without end.  
Amen.

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,  
Which was my sin, though it were done before?  
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,  
And do run still, though still I do deplore?  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won  
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?  
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun  
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun  
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;  
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son  
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;  
And, having done that, thou hast done;  
I fear no more.

Thou hast made me, and shall Thy work decay ?  
Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste ;  
I run to death, and Death meets me as fast,  
And all my pleasures are like yesterday.  
I dare not move my dim eyes any way ;  
Despair behind, and Death before doth cast



Such terror, and my feeble flesh doth waste  
By sin in it, which it towards hell doth weigh.  
Only Thou art above, and when towards Thee  
By Thy leave I can look, I rise again ;  
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,  
That not one hour myself I can sustain.  
Thy grace may wing me to prevent his art  
And thou like adamant draw mine iron heart.

Merciful Father,

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

## **The peace**

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and may the peace of the Lord be always with you.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 Blessèd assurance**

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

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## **The Dismissal**

God grant you grace to be good servants of Christ Jesus,  
nourished on the words of the faith  
and on the sound teaching that you have followed;  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 Faithful one**

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

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ. Amen.**

# 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.**

It is truly right and good,  
our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For he has named his Church  
the salt of the earth and light of the world;  
a city set on a hill which cannot be hidden.  
Within this faithful company  
your servant John Donne became a learned teacher  
through the gifts of the Holy Spirit of Christ,  
that all might welcome his teaching as your gift,  
a beacon on the path of holiness  
that leads to eternal life.

As now we celebrate his memory  
we join with angels and archangels  
and all who have served you on earth  
and worship you now in heaven  
to raise our voices and proclaim your glory  
for ever 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 John Donne and 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**

God of truth,

whose Wisdom set her table

and invited us to eat the bread and drink the wine of the kingdom:

help us to lay aside all foolishness

and to live and walk in the way of insight,

that we may come with John Donne to the eternal feast of heaven;

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.**