

Sunday 10 September 2023

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity



Sermon © Gareth Farnon-Jones.

Prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

All the hymns are hosted on YouTube. Please click on the links to hear them.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [All hail the power of Jesu's name](#) (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.

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 Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

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 Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty God,
whose only Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence:
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth;
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 Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

The word of the Lord came to me: O Mortal, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one of their number as their sentinel; and if the sentinel sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people; then if any who hear the sound of the trumpet do not take warning, and the sword comes and takes them away, their blood shall be upon their own heads. They heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; their blood shall be upon themselves. But if they had taken warning, they would have saved their lives. But if the sentinel sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any of them, they are taken away in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at the sentinel's hand. So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give

them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, 'O wicked ones, you shall surely die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: 'Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?' Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel 33:1-11

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

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 neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; 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 armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Romans 13:8-14

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [Freely, freely, you have received](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said, '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.'

Matthew 18:15-20

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Conflict and the need to find resolutions are nothing new and were certainly the case during the time of Christ as we have just heard. Last Sunday as you may recall we heard the passage where Christ rebukes Peter for being a stumbling block.

Between that passage reading and the Gospel that we have just heard is a short chapter, it is the parable of the lost sheep, where Jesus tells us that God rejoices more over the one sheep that was lost and then found than over the ninety-nine that never strayed. I mention this as it helps to put some of today's reading into context. Let's look a little closer at what Christ said and, more importantly, what the message was that He is telling, not only to the disciples but also to us.

The passage begins by giving us the means to end a conflict that we might have with somebody within the church.

Christ prompts us to show humility, to discuss the matter in private, do not publicly berate or argue with someone. The words from scripture are 'to point out the fault'. This very sentence needs to serve as a reminder to all of us, just because we see something as wrong, we need to remember that the other party may not realise that they have done wrong in some way. By heeding this advice, we have the opportunity to approach them in private, in a spirit of Christian unity we allow

the other party to recognise that you feel aggrieved, it can remain as a private matter between only the two of you. I used the term 'Christian unity' specifically because we are talking about disagreements between members of the church, members of Gods flock.

The scriptures then remind us of the virtue of doing this, if we are listened to then we have regained that one—this is the context that I mentioned, regaining a lost sheep, returned safely to the flock, and a cause for rejoicing.

The passage continues, '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'. But why would we need two or three others to present, to be witnesses? Jesus, as a Jew talking to Jewish people, is quoting Deuteronomy 19:15, that more than a single witness must be sought. St Paul reminds of this in a letter to his deputy, Timothy (1 Timothy 5:19) never accept any accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Why then does scripture instruct us that we need more than one witness to resolve a dispute? This is so that we can be seen to be fair, to be careful in our deliberations and not act on the evidence of just one person. We need to involve other viewpoints and not just our own in order to arrive at a just outcome.

Having more than one witness prevents gossip from spreading and also prevents the matter being purely personal, thereby safeguarding people from rumours.

Additionally, involving other people should serve as a reminder to all of us that we, as a community, have a duty to ensure that all of us have a chance to be heard and make our feelings known. Involving several people allows for a variety of opinions and possible solutions.

The reading continues by giving us the following instruction:

If the offender refuses to accept the outcome from several witnesses then the whole church is to be involved. And if they are still unable to accept the decision of the whole church then 'let such a one be to you as a Gentile or a tax collector.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus called Matthew when he saw him sitting in a tax collectors booth. Following that Jesus is rebuked by the Pharisees for eating with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus's response to this was 'Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick'. Jesus is telling us that the people who really need to be shown love and understanding are the outcasts and the unloved. Similarly, Gentiles are people outside of the church.

So when Jesus instructs us to treat someone from within the church who for whatever reason will not listen or accept a solution to an issue then we are to treat

them as outsiders, outsiders who need to be shown Christian love and compassion, not to be isolated or scorned but worthy of needing and receiving our love.

Today's reading continues: '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'. But what does this 'binding' and 'loosing' mean, and how does it apply to us? Earlier in Matthew's gospel, Peter is given the Keys to the Kingdom and tells him that whatever he binds on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever he loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

By talking of binding and loosing, Jesus is telling us that when we make decisions, we do not expect God to react to them or follow them. Rather, when we make decisions, we are fulfilling God's word, God's will. What we do on earth has been ordained from heaven by the will of our Lord. As Christians it is our duty to ensure that the things we do and the decisions that we make are in line with the teaching of Christ, we are acting in the very name of the Lord. So the decisions we make are binding, bound by God, He, who has ordained all things.

Today's gospel concludes with the following verses:

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.

In the previous verses we received instructions from Christ on how to resolve disputes within the church. These closing verses encourage us that when we as a collective body have make a decision in God's name then it is God and God alone who will deal with the consequences.

There is a lot to understand from such a short piece of scripture today. So, let's summarise what we have understood from today's Gospel reading. Seek to settle a dispute within the church privately. If this does not work seek two or three other members of the church to help you to try to settle it. If there is still no resolution, then it must be brought to the attention of church leaders.

And as a final act, if there remains no way of overcoming this stumbling block then they must be removed from the congregation. But, and a very important but, removing someone doesn't mean to isolate or ostracise them, it means that they need to be the focus of love and compassion and prayer until they hopefully can return to God's flock.

In this passage, then, Jesus has given us practical advice in how to overcome disputes between people. Imagine using this process in other areas outside of the church, maybe in the place where you work. Surely, such good advice is worthy of our praise! 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

in your love. Help us to grow into a phrase from your scriptures, that 'Perfect love drives out all fear.'

Lord, in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Loving Lord, we pray for your Church. We ask that you will help us to forgive and be merciful; that you will help us to grow in humility and accept the forgiveness of others, and thereby generate a Church of power and great holiness.

Lord, in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Loving God, Lord of life, we pray for the world. We ask that you will help the down-trodden and inspire those with power to use their influence for good.

Lord, in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Loving Saviour, we pray for our friends, families, neighbours and colleagues. As we picture them in our mind's eye, we ask that you will touch their lives at their point of greatest need.

Lord, in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Dearest God, we pray for those who have died; especially, for those who've died today, died alone, or died unprepared. We ask for your comfort on those who grieve and mourn, that you will give them the comfort that comes from knowing you.

Lord, in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Turn your eyes upon Jesus (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

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 the Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Shine Jesus shine (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.

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

Lord God, the source of truth and love,
keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
united in prayer and the breaking of bread,
and one in joy and simplicity of heart,
in 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.