

Friday 6 October 2023

William Tyndale



William Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire in about 1494. He studied first at Magdalen Hall, Oxford then in Cambridge. He was determined to translate the Scriptures from Greek directly into contemporary English but was hindered by the Bishop of London. He settled in Hamburg in 1524 and never returned. The Church attacked his translation as 'subversive' when copies first arrived in England in 1526. William spent the rest of his life revising it, but also wrote many other theological works.

William was arrested in 1535 and imprisoned in Brussels on a charge of heresy. He was first strangled and then burnt at the stake on this day in 1536. His last words were, 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes.' The prayer was answered: Tyndale's work became the working text for those who produced what was to become known as the *Authorised Version* of the Bible.

Many parallels link William to his hero, St Paul: both were evangelists; the Scriptures became the centrepiece of their message; both suffered greatly for their mission. Indeed, Tyndale's last letter to his friends reads like a ghastly and heart-breaking echo of St Paul's [last letter to St Timothy](#).

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[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 [Veni sancta spiritus](#)

([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.

The saints were faithful unto death
and now dwell in the heavenly kingdom for ever.
As we celebrate their joy,
let us bring to the Lord our sins and weaknesses,
and ask for his mercy.

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 William Tyndale

Lord, give to your people grace to hear and keep your word that, after the example of your servant William Tyndale, we may not only profess your gospel but also be ready to suffer and die for it, to the honour of your name; 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 Proverbs

Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: 'To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live. O simple ones, learn prudence; acquire intelligence, you who lack it. Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right; for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. They are all straight to one who understands and right to those who find knowledge. Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.'

Proverbs 8:1-11

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Second Letter of St Paul to Timothy

All who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. *2 Timothy 3:12-17*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 The Lord is my light

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.

'They 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 17:6-8, 14-19

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

William Tyndale revolutionised the way we, in England, read and understand the Bible; driven to spread the Gospel in the best way that he knew how, Tyndale was a man of words and language.

Words are strange things when you really think about it: each letter sits in a specific sequence to make up a word and is recognised to have a particular meaning. Each letter can be pronounced in different ways depending upon how it is written, and what it is being used for. In fact, if we are going to look at the power of words, then we need only turn to the Gospel of John 1:1–5:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the Life was the light of men.

Jesus is *the Word*. Words are one of our primary ways of communicating and so to say that Jesus is the Word is to say that He communicates with us, He understands us, and He understands all things because He made all things. What He had to say was vital. Paul puts it this way in today's reading from Timothy: *'from childhood you have known the sacred writings (words) that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus'*. What Jesus had to say to us enabled us to have salvation.

However, there is a problem and that is language. There are thought to be 6500 languages in the world (the most recognised word of all is apparently 'huh'. It is recognised as having the same meaning and spelling in 32 countries and so it's the word that more of us on the planet have in common). Lots of languages have some words in common but to learn to speak and read in another language is no easy thing.

According to Genesis, at one time the whole of humanity spoke just one language. However, humanity began to build great understanding and decided to build a tower so high, that it would reach the highest heavens. They did not seek to do this to praise God, but rather to glorify their own abilities and so God tore down the tower (of Babel) and divided human speech into languages.

In the 1500's it was common-place for Mass to be delivered in Latin. It wasn't until 1544 that a set of Liturgy was written in English, and so people had to trust that the translation by the Priest was true and authentic.

Imagine the Priest standing in front of his flock reading the words of today's collect in Latin: *'Lord, give to your people grace to hear and keep your word'* How would we hear and keep the word if we had no idea that was what we were being

asked to do!

Today's proverb would also make little sense: '*Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right; for my mouth will utter truth.*'

The Proverbs personify wisdom as a woman. She is to be sought and understood at all costs but how to do that when Priests were speaking to us in Latin? In real terms language was being used by the church, to repair that curtain torn in two on the day Christ was crucified and to build again, a barrier between God and His people. Priests once again performed that function and, once again, the 'everyday' man and woman needed to go through the barrier to understand God.

However, one humble invention became the means of change—the printing press! Now the spoken word was to be overtaken by the written word. William Tyndale knew the power of the written word. William Tyndale, along with his contemporaries, knew that words and language were being used to retain power and restrict the poor. And this was especially evident within the Catholic Church. Latin was spoken and words were chosen specifically and carefully to get across the Catholic doctrine.

John Wycliffe was one of Tyndale's contemporaries. He helped to make the Bible accessible to all people, no matter how rich or poor they were, by translating the Bible into English. But it was Tyndale who, in 1526 published the first complete Bible using the new printing press. This meant that the Bible was not only now in the English language, but it was also affordable!

However, once more people could read and understand the Bible, they decided that the Protestant Church was more appealing and they began to leave the Catholic Church which, although not the trigger for the English Reformation, was certainly a turning point in the movement. Soon the Protestant doctrine overtook that of Catholicism in England.

The Catholic Church was a powerful enemy though and Tyndale fled for his life, to live abroad. Bibles had to be printed abroad and smuggled into Britain but by 1536 there were thought to be 16,000 copies in England alone. Tyndale's Bible was the first ever to be mass produced and it contained an epilogue explaining Luther's radical theology of justification by faith alone. Catholicism taught that justification could be bought, literally, with the payment of priests who would pray for your forgiveness. Catholics also, fundamentally, believed that justification was to be gained by good works rather than by faith alone.

Tyndale used words carefully to promote a Protestant theology. For example, he swapped the word 'charity' for the word 'love' when describing 'Agape' as this took the emphasis away from doing good works and he switched 'do penance' to 'repent' when describing the meaning of *metanoieite*.

So many people have made their mark in the history of the English Reformation but, to the Christian living in England at that time, few can have made such a big impression as William Tyndale. It is difficult for us to understand how amazing it would have been to finally own a readable Bible, but the Proverbs of the Old Testament placed so much emphasis upon 'understanding' for a reason. William Tyndale gave the English-speaking world an amazing gift. He opened up the wonders and richness and depth of the Bible to families everywhere. Imagine, for the first time being able to read, or have read to you in English, the words of Jesus in today's Gospel reading,

For the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you

For the first time you would be able to be sure of the meaning, of the power of these words, and you would be able to share them and keep them as Christians have always been called to do. Jesus is telling us that His Word comes from God and that when we receive (understand) them, we will know the truth!

William Tyndale risked so much to enable the 'everyday' man or woman to know the beauty of the Bible. Like so many of the characters within it, Tyndale's journey was not straightforward; he made powerful enemies and risked a great deal for his cause.

In my September sermon I said that the most powerful and important word ever spoken was Saint Mary's 'Yes'. It sparked the conception of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and words do indeed have the power to do amazing things when used for the right reasons; they can build peace, express love, be given in devotion to God, but they can also be used to hurt and to wound. Words can be political; they can bring down governments and start wars.

Words are knowledge, and knowledge, as they say, is power. Power doesn't have to mean a domination of others; power can come in many different forms and the power to understand the sweeping beauty of the Bible is unmatched in its ability to change lives. Next time you open your Bible, think of the sacrifices men and women like Tyndale underwent so that you can read it and understand ... and then sit back, take a deep breath, and open yourself up to its breathtaking Glory.

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

We pray for strength to follow Jesus.
Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.'
Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Unless you change
and become humble like little children,
you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.'
Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Happy are the humble;
they will receive what God has promised.'
Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Be merciful as your Father is merciful;
love your enemies and do good to them.'
Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Love one another, as I love you;
there is no greater love than this,
to lay down your life for your friends.'
Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Go to people everywhere
and make them my disciples,
and I will be with you always, to the end of time.'
Saviour, we hear your call.

All Help us to follow.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Once we were far off,
but now in union with Christ Jesus we have been brought near through the
shedding of Christ's blood, for he is our peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Your word is a lamp unto my feet

[\(click on this link to\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

God give you grace to follow his saints
in faith and love and steadfastness
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 Thou whose almighty word

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

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 indeed right and good,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For following the example of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,
your holy martyr William shed his blood for the glory of your name.
His death reveals your power made perfect in our human frailty.
You choose the weak and make them strong
in bearing witness to you
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
With joyful hearts we echo on earth
the song of the angels in heaven
as they praise your glory without end:

**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 William Tyndale 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

Lord God, who gave us this holy meal
in which we have celebrated the glory of the cross
and the victory of your martyr William Tyndale:
by our communion with Christ
in his saving death and resurrection,
give us with all your saints the courage to conquer evil
and so to share the fruit of the tree of life;
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.