

Friday 27 October 2023

Alfred the Great



Silver penny of Alfred the Great

Alfred improved the degraded coinage he inherited on coming to the throne and was the first British ruler to mint pennies. He called them 'denarii' after the money handled by Jesus in the Gospels, which explains why our old currency had the symbol 'd' for pence.

Alfred was born in 849. He was the king of the West Saxons and effectively ended the constant threat of Danish dominion in the British Isles. He came to the throne at the age of twenty-two and, after establishing peace, set about bringing stability to both Church and state. He gave half his income to found religious houses which themselves acted as Christian centres for education, care of the sick and poor, and respite for travellers. He attended worship every day and himself translated many works into the vernacular. He evolved a legal code based on common sense and Christian mercy. If contemporary records are correct, his life was marked by the compassion of Christ.

He died on this day in the year 899.

Sermon © Revd Denise Owen.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

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 Jesus' 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 has called us to follow Christ,

and has formed us into a royal priesthood, a holy nation,

to declare the wonderful deeds of him who has called us out of darkness
into his marvellous light.

Let us confess the times when we have failed to heed this call.

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 Alfred the Great

God, our Maker and Redeemer,
we pray you of your great mercy
and by the power of your holy cross
to guide us by your will and to shield us from our foes:
that, after the example of your servant Alfred,
we may inwardly love you above all things;
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 Second Book of Samuel

Now these are the last words of David: the oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favourite of the Strong One of Israel: the spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land. Is not my house like this with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?

2 Samuel 23:1-5

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the First Letter of St John

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever.

1 John 2:15-17

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 All heaven declares

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Pilate summoned Jesus and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.'

Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate asked him, 'What is truth?'

John 18:33-37

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

‘Do not love the world or the things of the world.’ These are words from the First Letter of St John, quoted above. Think about them. The more I think about them, the more counter cultural and counter intuitive they seem. Surely as Christians, our commandment is to love first God, then God’s people, then the things of God including creation and the natural world. Well yes, but of course the ‘world’ mentioned in this letter is the world of material wealth, power, influence, popularity, acquisition of possessions and the rest. These worldly things were incredibly important and much sought after at the time St John was writing. The Roman Empire and its citizens loved show and magnificence and all the trappings of wealth, and of course this world view spread to the people the Romans had conquered. Shows of wealth, entourages of hangers on, expensive fashions and jewellery and all the things we associate with the rich and famous, and social media influencers today, were just as attractive two thousand years ago, so for St John to write those words about not loving the world and the things of the world, was incredibly radical then, and I would argue still is.

They are a reminder that the teachings of Jesus, although based on the teachings inherited from the Old Testament and very familiar to us, are ‘not of this world’, by which I mean they run counter to what appears attractive and popular and desirable. I wonder whether you would consider yourself materialistic? Perhaps not, but I certainly look at myself sometimes and wonder if my lifestyle really reflects my Christian faith and the priorities that should follow.

You will have read the short introduction to Alfred the Great at the beginning of this service, and can make the connection between what we know of his life and the short passage from John’s letter. Alfred the Great was an Anglo-Saxon king who famously, and sadly apocryphally, burnt the cakes because his attention was on his duty as a king to defend his people and not on baking. He established monasteries, promoted learning, visited Rome and codified laws. In other words, he took his responsibilities as a leader of people seriously, and did all he could to promote the welfare and security of those he ruled. He was, of course, motivated by his deep and well-informed Christian faith. He didn’t use his kingly authority to pursue the ‘worldly’ treasure that St John warns us against.

We are, of course, not kings! Neither, I assume, do we feel we have authority and power over others as a king has. Nor do we, most likely, have access to the opportunities to acquire wealth in the way that kings and other world leaders have, but that doesn’t mean we should rest on our laurels. A Christian shouldn’t say, ‘I don’t

do that' and leave it there.

The temptations of the world, and of advertising are all about us, and who among us can say we never buy anything we don't really need? Or, indeed, that we regularly and seriously consider how we dispose of our income. Jesus frequently spoke about money, power and influence, and he very rarely spoke to kings and earthly rulers. He wasn't so much saying give your money to God or the Church, but rather consider what is important to you, consider what you value. In a way, this is a part of us monitoring our spiritual health. Our spiritual health and well-being involve not only our prayer lives, but rather our prayer and spiritual lives should influence the rest of our lives and lifestyles. These things clearly influenced King Alfred and how he governed, spent his time and spent his money.

I hope I'm not making tangential links between us, Alfred and St John, but isn't how Christians interpret the world and our own lives based on scripture, tradition (Alfred) and in this case our own experience? Aren't the readings we use and the stories from the past meant to inform our own way of living and our own understanding of the faith?

Alfred was a man of authority and wealth who held a sincere faith, and who followed the precepts of that faith closely, allowing the teachings of Christ to inform his decisions about his own life and the lives of his people. In this way he is an example to all of us. I've drawn out what struck me most about his life and today's readings. I wonder what stands out for you today? 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

We pray for the flourishing of God's gifts to his Church, saying:

Jesus, Lord of your Church,

All in your mercy hear us.

God our Father, you give us gifts that we may work together
in the service of your Son:

bless the leaders of your Church,

that they may be firm in faith,

and humble before you.

Jesus, Lord of your Church,

All In your mercy hear us.

Bless those who teach,

that they may increase our understanding,

and be open to your word for them.

Jesus, Lord of your Church,

All In your mercy hear us.

Bless those who minister healing,

that they may bring wholeness to others,

yet know your healing in themselves.

Jesus, Lord of your Church,

All In your mercy hear us.

Bless those through whom you speak,

that they may proclaim your word in power,

yet open their ears to your gentle whisper.

Jesus, Lord of your Church,

All In your mercy hear us.

Bless those who work in your world today,
that in the complexity of their daily
lives they may live for you, fulfil your purposes,
and seek your kingdom first.

Jesus, Lord of your Church,

All In your mercy hear us.

Bless those who are uncertain of their gifts
and those who are powerless in this world's eyes,
that they may be made strong in your gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, Lord of your Church,

**All hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy for ever.
Amen.**

The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 All creation worships you

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

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May the boldness of the Spirit transform you,
may the gentleness of the Spirit lead you,
may the gifts of the Spirit equip you
to serve and worship God;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 [All I once held dear](#)
[All I once held dear](#)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)
(different version)

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, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
And now we give thanks, most gracious God,
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses
and glorified in the assembly of your saints.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
We, your holy Church, acclaim you.
In communion with angels and archangels,
and with all who served you on earth and worship you now in heaven,
we raise our voice to 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 Alfred the Great 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

Blessed God,
help us, whom you have fed and satisfied in this eucharist,
to hunger and thirst for what is right;
help us, who here have rejoiced and been glad,
to stand with those who are persecuted and reviled;
help us, who here have glimpsed the life of heaven,
to strive for the cause of right
and for the coming of the kingdom of Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

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.