

Sunday 29 October 2023

Bible Sunday



Sermon © Gareth Farnon-Jones.

Prayers of intercession © John Birth.

Liturgy © 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 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.

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 word of God is living and active.

It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

All is open and laid bare before the eyes of him
to whom we give account.

We confess our sins in penitence and faith.

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 Bible Sunday

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
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 Nehemiah

All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose.

They read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.' So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, 'Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.' And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 8-12

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Colossians

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Your word is a lamp unto my feet

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

When the Pharisees heard that [Jesus] had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He said to him, ‘ “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ‘What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?’ They said to him, ‘The son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
‘Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet’”?

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?’ No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Matthew 24:30–35

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Before I begin, I wonder if you could help me, my wife gave me a shopping list so that I could pick some things up on my way home today and I’ve used the list to make a few notes. Can you help me to remember, please, a tin of peas and some carrots. Thank you.

As Christians we all follow God’s commandments, don’t we? We all know them well. And that we keep them. I’d like to think that nobody in this place has murdered anybody. And I would also like to think that we are not thieves, and here we are on the sabbath keeping Holy Day.

So, as Christians we're doing alright, were following the ten commandments that God gave to Moses. We have heard in the Gospel reading that both the Sadducees and the Pharisees had tried to find a way of getting Jesus to say something that could land Him in trouble with the authorities, something they could use against Him. Time and again He was able to give them answers that couldn't be construed against Him. Think of Jesus's reply regarding the coin, 'pay unto Ceasar what is Ceasar's and pay unto God what is God's.'

In a final bid to trick Him, one of their experts in the law asks 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

Why did they ask Jesus this particular question? The Jewish scholars of the time had recorded 613 separate commandments from God. They hoped Jesus would pick something that could then be used against this unknown troublemaker, for that is how they viewed Jesus.

Jesus once again answers in a way they did not expect. He says to them,

The greatest commandment is this, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets".

Jesus's reply is familiar to us all, we hear it at the start of our worship just as we have done today. In Judaism they have recite a prayer containing these words every morning called the *Shema*, it is so important to them that they cover their eyes whilst they recite it to avoid any earthly distractions. Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy where Moses is instructing Israel in God's laws.

The Pharisee that asked Jesus this question may have been motivated by the wish to catch Jesus out, to get Him to say something that could be turned against Him.

But the actual question he asked is worth revisiting. 'Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' or put another way 'What is the most important thing that God wants us to do?' When rephrased like this, the question has a slightly different tone to it. Put in the simplest of terms, God the Creator is asking us to love His creation. So the Bible tells us to love God and to love our neighbours.

That shouldn't be too difficult should it? We are all familiar with love. We love many things, chocolate maybe, holidays, our friends and our families. But surely our love for a piece of chocolate is different than the love we have for our partner or our children? In the original Greek that the bible was mainly written in there are four different words for love, we don't have time to look at them all right now

but the love that we are concerned with this morning is called agape. It is the highest form of love, probably best summed up in 1 Corinthians 13 by St Paul:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

It is this highest, purest form of love that Christ commands us to honour God his Father with and to show to Gods people, our neighbours. At a time when our news is filled with so much killing and hatred, all of us will do well to keep these commandments.

This morning's gospel not only relates to Jesus answering questions but concludes with Jesus asking one himself. He now questions the Pharisees, asking them 'What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he? The Pharisees' reply is that the Messiah is the son of David. This must have seemed a pretty safe answer because, even today, Jewish belief says the Messiah will come from David's line, a descendent of King David. But Jesus then quoted Psalm 110, 'The Lord says to my lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool'. Jesus then continued by saying 'If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son'? The gospel passage concludes by saying 'No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.'

In this short reading from Matthew's gospel this morning we have heard how Jesus not only evades condemning himself from hostile questions but answers by giving us all the greatest and most importance guidance from God himself. He then perplexes the Pharisees with His own question that they give up and begin to find other ways to entrap Christ.

Before I finish can any of you please remind me what I need to get from the shops? So, we can remember such mundane everyday items such as peas and carrots, how much more important it is to remember those commandments that our Saviour has taught us:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest of the commandments. And a second is like, it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

AMEN. 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

Your Word reveals to us a simple truth,
that sin entered this world through human folly,
in believing we could be like you,
and permeated history through envy, selfishness and greed.
Yet sin, which holds us tight within its grasp,
cannot resist a heart that is touched by your grace through Jesus Christ,
cannot contend with Living Water pouring into hearts and souls.
Your Word reveals to us a simple truth,
that sin is defeated,
and we can become the people we were always meant to be,
by your grace through Jesus Christ.

Your Word is a lamp unto our feet

All Lighten our journey of faith.

The seed of your Word,
scattered on fertile ground,
germinates, takes root,
puts forth branches beneath which no weeds can grow,
and then flourishes, blossoms,
and brings forth fruit!
For the beauty of your Word,
sown in hearts and souls,
and a wonderful harvest to come,
for such divine nourishment,
we praise you, Creator God.

Your Word is a lamp unto our feet

All Lighten our journey of faith.

Your word,
that lamp for our feet,
reveals to us the stony ground we often tread upon,
where, stumbling in our weakness,
we reach out a hand for you to hold,
asking simply that you lead us once again to firmer ground,
toward that rock upon which our journeying began,
where, in safety we can rest awhile.

Your Word is a lamp unto our feet

All Lighten our journey of faith.

You have called us to be your people,
to follow where you lead,
be obedient to your word and bring your Good News
wherever we might go.
Forgive the impatience and lack of faith which causes us to stumble,
preferring our way to yours,
relying on human wisdom rather than the truth
which comes from you.

Draw us back into your arms,
as prodigals to our Father and grant us patience,
perseverance,
and a child-like faith in our journeying with you.

Your Word is a lamp unto our feet

All Lighten our journey of faith.

This world tempts us
to believe the wisdom that comes from human minds,
to have faith in no other thing.
But we have glimpsed the Truth revealed in Scripture's words,
and we shall worship the Lord our God,
and serve him alone!
This world tempts us to believe we have control of our destiny,
and have no need of the Divine.
But we have felt the touch of Christ upon our hearts,
and we shall worship the Lord our God and serve him alone!
Your Word is a lamp unto our feet

All Lighten our journey of faith.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver
The peace of the Lord be always with you,
All And also with you.

**HYMN 3 Jesus loves me, this I know
 Veni Creator Spiritus**

**(click on this link to hear the hymn)
 (Gregorian chant)**

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

Go now in peace,
knowing that you have been born again,
not of perishable seed, but of imperishable,
through the living and enduring word of God;
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 We have a Gospel to proclaim [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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 joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For he is your eternal and creative Word,
through whom all things came into being;
the Word made flesh who dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth.

He fulfils the Law and the Prophets,
dying for our sins and rising again
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He stands among us in his risen power,
opening to us his living word,
and making himself known in the breaking of the bread.

Therefore with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your great and glorious name,
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 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 all grace,
your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry
with the bread of his life
and the word of his kingdom:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your true and living bread;
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.