

Sunday 21 January 2024

The Third Sunday after Epiphany

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Sermon © the Revd Robin Wilding.

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 [Amazing love \(what love is this\)](#)

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

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.

By the mercies of God,

let us confess our sins and present our bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and acceptable to him,
which is our spiritual worship:

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

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for the Third Sunday after Epiphany

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;
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 First Book of Moses called Genesis

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said,

'Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
maker of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!'

And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.

Genesis 14:17-20

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from Revelation of St John the Divine

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out,

‘Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready;

to her it has been granted to be clothed

with fine linen, bright and pure’—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.’

The angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are true words of God.’ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ *Revelation 19:6–10*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night

[\(click here to hear\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’

Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, ‘Now draw some out, and take

it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.'

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. *John 2:1-11*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

John sees this wedding and what happened there as really important in his task to show us who Jesus was. He describes it as the first miraculous sign. But at first sight it seems all rather strange and odd.

Marriage celebrations were major social undertakings in Israel at this time. The whole community comes together to eat and dance and sing with the couple who are the stars of the show—seated under an awning ('his banner over me is love'—as Song of Songs puts it). And it lasted for days. Jesus is invited but, in the midst of the joy, social disaster and disgrace looms because the wine is running out. And Jesus does this miracle that saves the hosts dignity and makes sure that the couple's time is not ruined—but if that's all it is then it is definitely peculiar—a small personal miracle without cosmic significance.

The Messianic Banquet

High in the expectations of the coming of the Kingdom is that there will be feasting and it's couched in marriage terms (Song of Songs is seen partly in these terms by the Jews) the celebration of the fulfilment of the relationship between God and Israel.

When Mary his mother comes to Jesus to say that the feast is running out of wine what Jesus says to her is 'Mum this is not my feast, it's not my time, I'm not the host this time—but it's coming.' When he goes ahead and does it, it is as a sign of what is to come.

The wine of the Kingdom: Jesus acts

The jars mentioned here are the receptacles for the washing of guests and the fulfilment of any ritual washings, so somewhat larger than a simple bucket. The law and the rules must be fulfilled so first Jesus gets them to top up the jars to the brim.

Note that the word used for drawing water here has the implication of ‘from the well’. The best reading is not that the water is now drawn from the jars but instead the well is revisited and the water then drawn is the miraculous wine. And it’s not your basic plonk, after all by this time everyone is ‘warmed up’, instead it is the best, the finest, the most wondrous wine imaginable.

And the significance of all of this? Firstly, Jesus ensures that the provisions of the law and the rules are filled to the brim. God provided the rules and they are good but actually they only truly deal with the outside, they leave us with the appearance of being cleansed but does nothing about the root causes.

But Jesus now sends them back to the well, to the source and what comes back is transformed. The Messiah offers not rules to keep, or the appearance of being right before God, but the reality of joy and wonder, the heart of the matter my heart and your heart is dealt with. Not rules but joy, not personal failure but acceptance and freedom won by God on our behalf. Not water but wine.

So here is John’s first sign of the kingdom—Jesus is Messiah who comes to save his people, to bring in his kingdom. Are we in or out?

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 coming of God's kingdom.

You sent your Son to bring good news to the poor,
sight to the blind,
freedom to the captives
and salvation to your people:
anoint us with your Spirit;
rouse us to work in his name.

Father, by your Spirit

All bring in your kingdom.

Send us to bring help to the poor
and freedom to the oppressed.

Father, by your Spirit

All bring in your kingdom.

Send us to tell the world
the good news of your healing love.

Father, by your Spirit

All bring in your kingdom.

Send us to those who mourn,
to bring joy and gladness instead of grief.

Father, by your Spirit

All bring in your kingdom.

Send us to proclaim that the time is here
for you to save your people.

Father, by your Spirit

All bring in your kingdom.

Father, use us, unworthy as we are,
to bring in your kingdom of mercy, justice, love and peace.
Empower us by your Spirit and unite us in your Son,
that all our joy and delight may be to serve you,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Christ is our peace.

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

The old has passed away: behold, everything has become new.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 One shall tell another ([Come on in and taste the new wine](#)) ([click here](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

Christ our Lord,

to whom kings bowed down in worship and offered gifts,

reveal to you his glory

and pour upon you the riches of his grace;

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 Come down O Love divine

Come down O Love divine

Come down O Love divine

[\(please click here\)](#)

[\(different version\)](#)

[\(saxophone instrumental\)](#)

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

Almighty Father,
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world:
may your people,
illumined by your word and sacraments,
shine with the radiance of his glory,
that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed
to the ends of the earth;
for he 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.