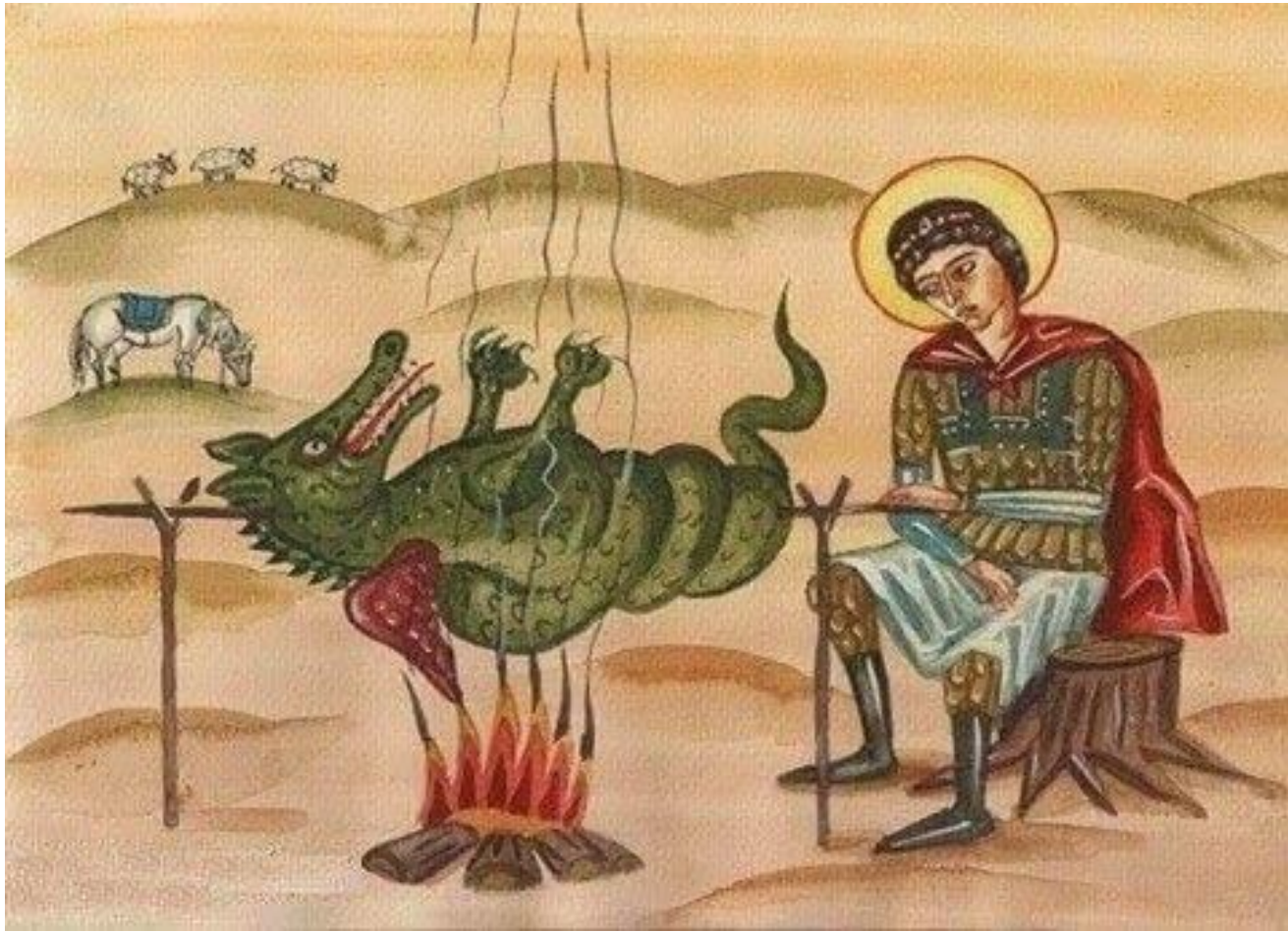


Tuesday 23 April 2024

St George



St George was said to be a soldier living in Palestine in the fourth century. He was martyred at Lydda in about 304 at the beginning of the Diocletian persecution. He became known as ‘The Great Martyr’. There were churches in England dedicated to George before the Norman conquest.

The story of his slaying the dragon is probably due to his being mistaken in iconography for St Michael, himself usually depicted wearing armour; or it may again be a mistaken identity representing Perseus’ slaying a sea monster—a myth also associated with the area of Lydda.

George replaced Edward the Confessor as Patron Saint of England following the Crusades, when returning soldiers brought back with them a renewed cult of St George. Edward III made St George patron of the Order of the Garter, which seems finally to have confirmed his position.

Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops’ Council.

Prayers of intercession © Education Priest.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

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

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,
<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

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.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

HYMN 1 Praise to the Lord!

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

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

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 St George

God of hosts,
who so kindled the flame of love
in the heart of your servant George
that he bore witness to the risen Lord
by his life and by his death:
give us the same faith and power of love
that we who rejoice in his triumphs
may come to share with him the fullness of the resurrection;
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 Maccabees

Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame. Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions. And so observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in him will lack strength. Do not fear the words of sinners, for their splendour will turn into dung and worms. Today they will be exalted, but tomorrow they will not be found, because they will have returned to the dust, and their plans will have perished. My children, be courageous and grow strong in the law, for by it you will gain honour.

1 Maccabees 2:59-64

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Revelation of St John the Divine

War broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell therein! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!’

Revelation 12:7–12

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

**HYMN 2 Sweet hour of prayer
Purify my heart**

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

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, “Servants are not greater than their master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.’

John 15:18–21

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Just outside Homs in Syria is a small, forlorn tomb. It is not well kept and in truth needs a signpost as much as renovation. It's the final resting place for the mortal remains of St George. Strangely enough, there is a second tomb to St George in Lod ('Lydda'), Israel, which also contains a sarcophagus traditionally believed to contain St George's remains. It's better known than the tomb in Homs but has an even smaller claim to authenticity so, in truth, it might be safer to say we don't know where he is buried. Nor do we know where he was born, when he was born or, indeed, when he died. (Some websites say 23 April 303 AD but this date was chosen some centuries later.) In fact, we know essentially nothing about St George except that he lived part of his life in Palestine during the fourth century, possibly as a soldier but, even then, legitimate doubts take over.

But we know many legends about George. The most famous concerns his slaying a dragon, which is clearly allegorical because dragons do not exist. Some say he was a soldier in the Praetorian Guard protecting the Emperor but, again, this idea is a late tradition. Some Islamic sects claim George was a Muslim despite his living many centuries before Mohammed which, again, cannot be true. Having discounted almost everything we 'know' about George, we are left with very little.

All that we know is likely and none is certain. His name is Greek, which would not be unlikely in Palestine at that time. And he was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is said to have died for his faith, which (given the history of that region at the time) seems a grisly likelihood.

Nevertheless, many people revere George. Indeed, a great many countries claim him as their own; he is patron saint to England, of course, but he is also patron saint to many other countries including Portugal and Ethiopia, former nation states such as Genoa and Venice, and (maybe obviously) to Georgia, in the former Soviet Union, which is named after him. Why, then, do we even remember Saint George?

The word 'saint' means 'holy', 'set apart', and 'committed'. George was a saint because he gave his life to the Lord Jesus. In a sense, his anonymity makes it easier to regard him as a genuine saint than if he was famous, because it reinforces the idea that his discipleship was conducted without fanfare or outward show and, in that respect, followed Jesus' instruction in Matthew 6 to 'worship/pray in secret'.

That George was a disciple, yet we do not have records or stories about his actions, suggests his discipleship was not really about 'doing' for Jesus but about 'being'. To use a useful phrase from long ago, he had an *interior* life, by which is meant he conducted much of his faith in secret (as is wise in times of persecution). His faith was expressed in worship, prayer, and love conducted without outward show: it was done for God and with God as the principal focus and never for earthly show or human praise. Only God, his family, and closer friends would have known.

It all means that George was poor in spirit—the phrase comes from the Beatitudes in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). The term 'poor *in spirit*' means a person has removed much of the exterior parts of their life, excavating to remove whatever is superfluous, to make space for God. They are literally poor in their own spirit in order to be rich in God. John the Baptist phrased this approach well when he prayed, asking that, 'He [Jesus] must increase and I must decrease' (John 3:30).

Having removed so much of self, what little remained was more likely to be of God. Viewed this way, it explains why, when people saw him, they would have gained an impression of someone gifted in the ways of godliness and spirituality; in truth what they saw was God living inside him, so they would have also seen love and joy and peace, which are often called the fruits of the Spirit.

Those who looked at St George saw saintliness because they saw God in him. They would not have revered him if they had seen only George. Maybe that is why God allowed his final resting place to become forgotten, together with his dates, statistics, likeness, or anything tangible because all of these would be a distraction from the likeness of God he lived for.

And we are each called to be a saint in much the same way:

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

For Saint George and all who battled for Christ:

For martyrs known and unknown.

We praise you, O God.

All We acclaim you as the Lord.

For all whose task it is to battle for truth:

For journalists, scientists and philosophers.

We praise you, O God.

All We acclaim you as the Lord.

For all who battle for justice for the poor, the oppressed and the victimised:

For all who work to free those condemned to death.

We praise you, O God.

All We acclaim you as the Lord.

For all who battle for peace in places of conflict:

For all who restore relationships and bring reconciliation.

We praise you, O God.

All We acclaim you as the Lord.

For those who battle addictions and dependencies:

For all who fight to live freely and unafraid.

We praise you, O God.

All We acclaim you as the Lord.

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 [O the bitter shame and sorry](#) (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
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Jubilate, everybody!

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

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ.

Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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 George 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

God, who gave us this holy meal
in which we have celebrated the glory of the cross
and the victory of your martyr George:
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.