

Sunday 3 October 2021

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity



Sermon © Pete Haslam.

Prayers of intercession © Revd Paul Monk.

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.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

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

Introduction and welcome

HYMN1 [Love divine all loves excelling](#)

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

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 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

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 the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

God, our judge and saviour,
teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love,
that we may live each day
with confidence in the salvation which is given
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the First Book of Moses called Genesis

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.' So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.' Therefore a man leaves his

father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die".' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.'

He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.'

The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.'

To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'

And to the man he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, "You shall not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the

ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'

The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. But someone has testified somewhere, 'What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honour, subjecting all things under their feet.' Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, 'I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.' *Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN2 [Flesh of my flesh](#)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All Glory to you O Lord.

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. *Mark 10:2-16*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Today's Gospel passage catches our attention because it addresses marriage and divorce in a way that's unavoidable. Preaching about divorce and marriage is like running through a field of thorns. Why? Because maybe there are some of us here today, who are married, some who are divorced, possibly divorced and remarried, or people who may get divorced at some future time, and those people who have been treated shabbily by churches due to their marital difficulties, people whose lives and families and friends have been hurt by the pain of divorce. It's everybody's issue, indirectly or directly.

But let us look at the Gospel reading again, and find: good news for a world that's broken and in pain. The discussion gets started because some of the Pharisees are out to get Jesus. They want to trap him in his words, and therefore destroy his credibility. The issue they raise is a controversial one at that time: whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife. Now the authorities differed on this question. Some

allowed divorce only in instances of adultery. Others allow divorce for the slightest of reasons. But note how the issue is framed: 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' It gives no consideration to the possibility of a wife divorcing her husband. That would be out of the question. Men here have all the power.

Jesus knows this question is not an honest inquiry. These Pharisees are not interested in learning his opinion, but in testing him, defeating him. He responds to the question with a question: What did Moses command you? In other words, how does the Law of Moses read, the law you hold in such high regard? Jesus knows the answer, of course, and so does everyone within hearing distance. It's what we call today a 'no-brainer'. And so the Pharisees shoot back the correct reference: Moses allows a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her. The reference here is to Deuteronomy 24. It's arguable, to say the least, that Moses is giving permission to divorce. What he does instead is to recognise that divorce happens and to set forth norms regarding certain types of re-marriage. Moses acknowledges that divorce happens here in this world. The acknowledgement found in Deuteronomy is turned by these particular Pharisees into *permission* for divorce. But remember, here we are not talking about an equal rights model of marriage and divorce, but a system where men have all the power, where the sexes are treated unequally, and where a divorced woman has very little hope for the future. A situation we still hear and read about in today's world.

So rather than endeavour to trap Jesus in his words, these Pharisees could have sought to learn something from him. Rather than raise questions about divorce, they could ask advice about how to live faithfully and well within marriage. What an opportunity they miss! These Pharisees get the reference right, but get the spirit wrong. And Jesus lays into them. 'So you give me that Deuteronomy passage as permission for divorce, with its demand that the paperwork be in order? Moses would never have written that, but he accepted divorce happening anyway, due to the hardness of the human heart in this world!'

Jesus' reaction is as though he thumps a finger against the sternum of each of those Pharisees and says: Don't you get it? Your hearts are hard! If human hearts were not hard, then marriages would work, and Moses wouldn't have written about what happens when they do not! Jesus addresses each one of us and says the same thing. Don't you get it? Your hearts are hard! And He's not just challenging the divorced in the world. He's challenging every last one of us, even if we have been married happily for six days to six decades. The divorced are not to be regarded as some pariah class different from the rest of us. The problem of the hard heart is not limited to divorced people, but is common to us all. In some it becomes manifest in a marital break-up. In others it shows itself in a marriage that

remains together but is lifeless. In still others hardness of heart appears in a failure to forgive our friends, in a judgmental spirit toward our children or parents, or any of the other forms of sin in which we humans become trapped. The divorced are not worse and not better than the rest. We all find ourselves in the same place: outside the gates of Eden. But then Jesus stops talking about hard hearts. Instead, he takes us by both hands and looks at us with an expression of compassion, hope, and remembrance. He calls us back to a time before the invention of power games, whether the sexism of his own period when men called the shots about marriage and divorce, or today's equal-opportunity destructiveness where either partner can damage the other. Jesus, looking at us with that expression of compassion, hope, and remembrance, calls us back to a time before time, back to when our home was the garden, back to the intention of God at creation. God made them male and female. Delightfully different. Wonderfully equal. Intended to be one flesh. No hardness of heart. No games, no secrets, but naked and unashamed.

We read in Genesis that the woman was made from the man's rib. It's said in Jewish tradition that the reason for this peculiar procedure is that woman and man might be intimate and equal. Woman was not made from man's head, so that she should be superior, nor from his feet, that she should be inferior, but rather from a bone near his centre, near his heart, that the two might be equal and intimate. Just as a couple can draw strength from remembrance of their early days together, so all of us can discover again the mystery of marriage by recalling God's original intention: that all couples are made in the divine image and meant for one another in a relationship of equality and intimacy.

Yes, of course, there are some marriages that are dead from the start, and others that die along the way. There are people who simply marry the wrong partner, and spouses who have the right to escape what has become of marriage when their safety or sanity is threatened. But in other cases, divorce happens because people see marriage like those opponents of Jesus did: as a power relationship, as a problem that divorce can solve, where an insane consumer culture leads people to treat as disposable not only houses and cars, but also spouses and families. That's not it! Marriage is not a problem to be solved. It is a mystery to be lived. It is not a business deal subject to a cost-benefit analysis. It is a means by which a couple can participate in the kingdom of God—and do so in the comfort of their own home!

Some of the male contemporaries of Jesus saw their wives as merchandise—property. It is dubious progress that now both wife and husband can regard each other in that belittling way. Instead, each spouse is to be to the other's joy and challenge, cross and crown. If you are married, God has given you your spouse not so that you can experience mere consumer happiness like the owner of a new

appliance. If you are married, God has given you your spouse so that together you can taste (in your human way) something of the joy of the marriage between God and creation, Christ and the church, the Lamb and his bride.

In our time we know too well that a broken marriage can seem like the road to hell. May we not forget that God's abiding intention is quite the opposite: marriage is intended as a road to heaven, not a problem, but a holy mystery, not a mere happiness, but a divine joy. 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

These prayers are inspired by Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. **Matthew records it in chapters 5–7 of his Gospel.**

Jesus taught that his disciples how to pray (**Matthew 6:5–13**). Teach us how to pray, keep reminding us to pray. Help our relationships with you to grow.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Jesus taught that we are we will see God if we are pure in heart (**Matthew 5:8**). Make us pure so that we can see you as you really are. Heal in us any ideas and images

of you that are false and unworthy.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Jesus taught that he came to fulfil the law (*Matthew 5:17*). Lord, we ask you to empower us to live lives that are worthy of the Gospel and forgive us when we do not.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Jesus taught that we should not store up treasures on earth (*Matthew 6:19*). We pray for the world and our relationships with it. Teach us how to live with fewer possessions, and help those in the world who have too little.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Jesus taught that we should be salt and light (*Matthew 5:13*). We pray for our Christian witness and for those who see us.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Jesus taught that we should love our enemies and pray for those who despise us (*Matthew 5:44*). We pray for our enemies and those who do wrong. Help us grow in love, and give us the courage to take our love to the loveless.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

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.

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 among you and remain with you always.
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 Before the throne of God above ([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.

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

We praise and thank you, O Christ, for this sacred feast:
for here we receive you,
here the memory of your passion is renewed,
here our minds are filled with grace,
and here a pledge of future glory is given,
when we shall feast at that table where you reign
with all your saints 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.