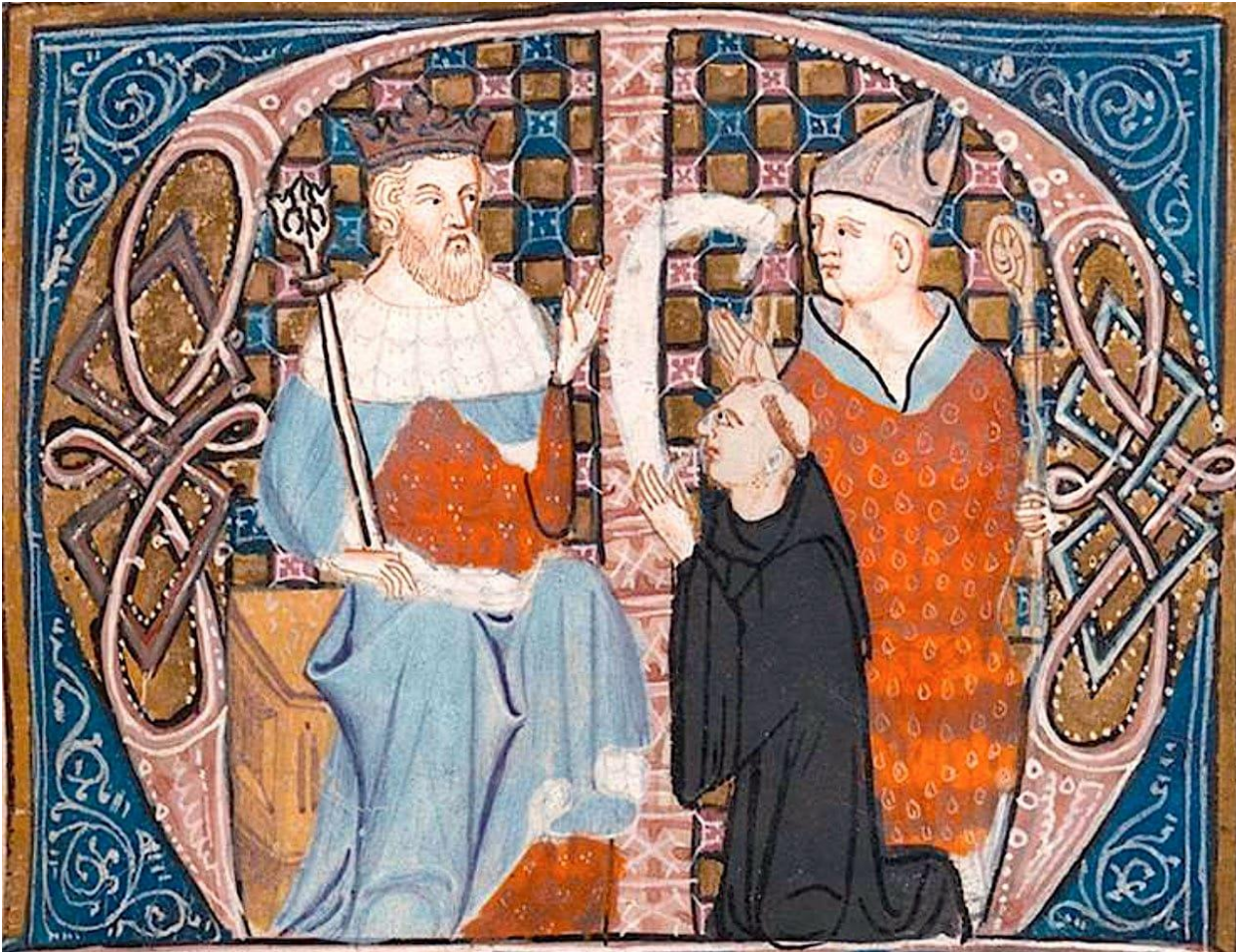


Wednesday 12 January 2022

St Aelred of Rievaulx



Aelred was the son of a priest. He was born at Hexham in 1109 and entered the Cistercian Order at Rievaulx in about 1133, after spending some years in the court of King David of Scotland. He became Abbot of Revesby in 1143 and returned to Rievaulx four years later to become abbot and to spend the remainder of his life.

He was profoundly influential through his spiritual writings, which he began at the request of Bernard of Clairvaux, the two having a similar approach to the spiritual life. Because of this, Aelred was often called the 'Bernard of the North.'

He died on this day at Rievaulx in 1167.

Sermon © the Revd Denise Owen.

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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

HYMN 1 Brother, sister, let me serve you ([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.

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, 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 Aelred of Hexham

Almighty God,
who endowed Aelred the abbot
with the gift of Christian friendship
and the wisdom to lead others in the way of holiness:
grant to your people that same spirit of mutual affection,
so that, in loving one another,
we may know the love of Christ
and rejoice in the eternal possession
of your supreme goodness;
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 Ecclesiasticus

Whoever fears the Lord will do this, and whoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom. She will come to meet him like a mother, and like a young bride she will welcome him. She will feed him with the bread of learning, and give him the water of wisdom to drink. He will lean on her and not fall, and he will rely on her and not be put to shame. She will exalt him above his neighbours, and will open his mouth in the midst of the assembly. He will find gladness and a crown of rejoicing, and will inherit an everlasting name. *Ecclesiasticus 15:1-6*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 3:7-14*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Such love, pure as the whitest snow ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

'Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them.' *Luke 12:32-37*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Aelred of Hexham is remembered for a number of reasons, and for a number of achievements. He became Abbot of the monastery at Rievaulx, one of the most important, and richest, of the monasteries at the time, and Aelred added to its fame and greatness. Rievaulx is now a ruin, but can be visited and enjoyed nestled in a North Yorkshire valley, cared for by *English Heritage*. Some of the walls are still standing, the layout of the buildings can be seen, and there is a museum with artefacts found during archaeological investigations.

I wonder what Aelred would make of it? It's a testimony to the power and reach of the religious life during the Middle Ages, but also to the willingness of men, as at Rievaulx, and women at others, to devote themselves to a disciplined and structured life of prayer and community. I rather think the fact that this aspect of the Church's life is far less known and visible these days, although it does exist and in some places flourish, would be a sadness for Aelred, as it's a way of life that he obviously valued and found to be a rich source of contemplation, and intellectual and spiritual satisfaction.

Aelred is also known for his writings, and one in particular, *On Spiritual Friendship*. Still read and used today, this work is an extended meditation on the importance and deep consolation of friendship. In a world that values image above reality, and social media 'likes' above real relationships, this work reminds us of what is significant and true about friendship. I would have to say, of course, that humankind has always looked for popularity through image, and networks of influence, rather than goodness and right living.

In *On Spiritual Friendship*, Aelred describes a friendship so close that it is almost as though two have become one, there is complete openness and equality. He could be describing what marriage should be, but as a monk this would not have been available to him, instead he saw friendship as a way of achieving an intimacy which was an image of God's friendship with humankind.

It is, perhaps, a rare kind of friendship, in which two people neither judge each other, nor try to correct each other. Instead, there is mutual support and understanding, a true sharing in each other's joys and sorrows, a care of the other even above care for self. This writes Aelred is *spiritual* friendship, a friendship, approved and commended by God, a friendship which fulfils the promise of Christ that his people would be friends not servants. So, as I've said, Aelred saw this kind of

friendship as an image of God's relationship with God's people; a relationship of complete love and complete forgiveness.

I wonder how many of us can claim to have a friend like this? A friend to whom we can bring any of our troubles and joys, knowing that they will take the time to listen and be open to sharing what is on our minds, a friend with whom we feel a deep connection. We've all learnt over the past few years how much we need companionship, a chance to talk, and a friend who is truly 'there for us'.

It is possible that we are such a friend to someone else; that we ourselves offer that friendship, which Aelred would say is spiritual, because it reflects the loving and compassionate attention of God. No judgement, perhaps not even offering advice, but attentive listening, a shared understanding, and time given to the other. It's a demanding, perhaps, even time consuming, friendship, a friendship that needs to be worked on, cultivated, tended, and most of all valued for itself. It is a true reflection of how God sees God's people, precious beyond price.

Rievaulx Abbey may now lie in ruins, but the legacy of the monastic life, and of Abbot Aelred live on. The religious life of monastic communities continues, in religious houses across the country, offering an example of lives consecrated and devoted to God. Aelred's writings also live on, and are profound resources for us and how we choose to live in the modern world, and as with all the greatest religious writing they are both full of wisdom and challenge.

Who will you offer friendship to this week?

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

What is love, O my God?

It is, if I am not mistaken, this ineffable delight of the soul,
the more sweet as it is more pure, the more gratifying as it is more ardent.

The one who loves You possesses You in proportion to their love
because You are Love.

Love is the torrent of joy with which you inebriate Your elect,
transforming them into Yourself by Love for You.

Charity may be a very short word, but with its tremendous meaning of pure love,
it sums up man's entire relation to God and to his neighbour.

The reward of friendship is itself. The man who hopes for anything else does not
understand what true friendship is.

Friendship is that virtue by which spirits are bound by ties of love and sweetness
and out of many are made one.

From the time when I began to recognise the sweetness of the holy scriptures
and the honey-sweet name of Christ claimed my affection for itself,
whatever lacked the salt of heavenly literature and the seasoning of that most
pleasant name could not be tasty or attractive to me, no matter how cleverly
argued what I read or heard seemed to me.

No medicine is more valuable, none more efficacious, none better suited to the
cure of all our temporal ills than a friend to whom we may turn for consolation in
time of trouble, and with whom we may share our happiness in time of joy.

These quotes and prayers are from Aelred himself

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 What a friend we have in Jesus [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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 of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
All Amen.

HYMN 4 When I needed a neighbour [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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, 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 Aelred 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

Merciful God,
who gave such grace to your servant Aelred
that he served you with singleness of heart
and loved you above all things:
help us, whose communion with you
has been renewed in this sacrament,
to forsake all that holds us back from following Christ
and to grow into his likeness from glory to glory;
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.