

**Thursday 16 June 2022**

# Corpus Christi



The feast of Corpus Christi is always celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. The Latin words mean 'body of Christ'. The festival is also called The Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion.

In medieval times in many parts of Europe, Corpus Christi was a time when the annual mystery plays were performed. The most famous were in York and occurred for at least 200 years until the Protestant Reformers suppressed them in the sixteenth century.

**Sermon** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**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.

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 Behold the Lamb**

(please 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.**

You then, who truly and earnestly repent of your sins,  
and are in love and charity with your neighbours,  
and intend to lead a new life,  
following the commandments of God,  
and walking from this day forward in his holy ways:  
draw near with faith,  
and take this holy sacrament to your comfort;  
and make your humble confession to almighty God.

**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 version of the Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda.'

**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 Corpus Christi**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we thank you that in this wonderful sacrament  
you have given us the memorial of your passion:  
grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries  
of your body and blood  
that we may know within ourselves  
and show forth in our lives  
the fruits of your redemption;  
for you are alive and reign with the Father  
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

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. *Genesis 14:18-20*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

### **Second reading**

A reading from St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my

blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Broken for me, broken for you** ([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, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.' Jesus then said, 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'

'Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.' *John 6:35-40; 51-58*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

'Corpus Christi' is Latin for 'body of Christ' and refers to the Eucharist. In some theologies, the bread and wine on the altar actually become the body and blood of Jesus. This idea has a large number of names, the best known of which is 'transubstantiation.' Those who follow this model point to the Bible when Jesus said at a



Passover ceremony (the Last Supper that occurred on the first Maundy Thursday), 'This is my body ... this is my blood.' The language in the Bible is precise and demands to be taken literally. If we reject the idea of transubstantiation, our only other valid option is to take his words at some metaphorical level.

The force of any metaphorical meaning derives from the context, in our case from the rest of Jesus' discourse at the Last Supper. When he took the bread and wine, he said, 'This is my body, this is my blood ...' and finished by saying, 'Do this *in remembrance of me.*' The word 'remember' here does not refer to any sense of bringing to mind such as recalling the title of a book or the plot of a film. It refers to the deeply Jewish practice of re-living an event. We bring it to mind such that we become a part of it.

The ancient Jews were master storytellers. They told and re-told the stories that defined their past in order to keep their cultural history alive. Their identity was wrapped up in their history: they knew their present grew out of their past and if they lost their collective memory of that past they would soon lose their grip on that present.

The Jewish audience Jesus was addressing would hear a story from its own past and each member would imagine themselves as being a part of it. For example, anyone hearing the story of the Exodus and 'remembering' it in this sense might start by thinking of him- or herself as one of the slaves being liberated from Egypt. They would imagine the miracles, re-live the sights and sounds, re-live the chaos, immerse themselves in the sensations of following pillars of cloud or fire, walking a muddy corridor between walls of water, and so on. In their mind's eye, each of them really was following Moses from slavery in Egypt to freedom in Palestine. Reliving in this way made them appreciate their status, and value their freedom.

When Jesus said 'do this in memory of me' he was therefore inviting his first followers to re-live the Last Supper, not just by eating bread and drinking wine but by keeping his presence close to mind. He was therefore inviting them to use common staples of diet as a means catapulting into that reliving their life with him. By saying 'do this' he was instructing them how to become identify themselves as disciples.

In the earliest account of the Last Supper (1 Corinthians 11:24, as above), Jesus said 'This is my body *which is broken for you* ... do this in remembrance of me.' He was inviting the first disciples to 'remember' and relive his life in such a way that it explores the costs. Jesus' body was broken physically by crucifixion and his soul was surely broken during the atonement, although we can assume that God later mended both during the resurrection. Jesus seems to imply that we must identify with his brokenness. Following him requires that we 'remember' that brokenness.

That brokenness may not involve a physical breaking, such as crucifixion, but it

certainly does require a willingness to change and fracture in order to become the different person God wants us to be.

That process of change often feels like being broken and always results in our becoming a person with fewer encumbrances. Think this time of John the Baptist when he said, 'I must become less in order that he becomes greater (John 3:30). Like John, we change and break such that our busy human lives become can better the Holy Spirit. God tells us to empty self (think of Philippians 2), which is a different way of living the beatitude, 'Blessèd are the poor in spirit ...' (Matthew 5).

Within this mindset, Jesus is saying that we must, in effect, accept being broken if we are to understand the Eucharist in a spiritual way: brokenness is essential if we are remember him, follow him, enter into his life. We cannot identify with him if we refuse to be broken.

The poem *Bread* by the Welsh poet R S Thomas explores this counter-cultural nature of Jesus' command:

Hunger was loneliness, betrayed  
By the pitiless candour of the stars'  
Talk, in an old byre he prayed  
Not for food; to pray was to know  
Waking from a dark dream to find  
The white loaf on the white snow;  
Not for warmth, warmth brought the rain's  
Blurring of the essential point  
Of ice probing his raw pain.  
He prayed for love, love that would share  
His rags' secret; rising he broke  
Like sun crumbling the gold air  
The live bread for the starved folk.

It's beginning to look very much as though God does make Himself present to us during the Eucharist. But he doesn't so much live in the broken bread as in us, his broken disciples.

## Prayers of intercession

Lord, listen to the prayers of your people,  
gathered at your table.

In faith we pray:

**All we pray to you our God.**

Here, where we celebrate how Christ gave us his body  
to be our spiritual food,  
listen as we pray for his body the Church,  
spread throughout the world ...

In faith we pray:

**All we pray to you our God.**

Here, where we recognize the presence of Christ,  
who takes away the sin of the world,  
listen as we pray for that world  
and for its peoples for whom his blood was shed ...

In faith we pray:

**All we pray to you our God.**

Here, where we come together as Christ gathered with his friends  
to give us this meal of holy fellowship,  
listen as we pray for all whom you have given us,  
our friends and all whose lives are joined with ours ...

In faith we pray:

**All we pray to you our God.**

Here, where we remember the night of Christ's agony and trial,  
listen as we pray for all who share his sufferings  
through fear or pain or distress of many kinds ...

In faith we pray:

**All we pray to you our God.**

Here, where we join our praises with the whole company of heaven,  
listen as we pray for all who have trusted Christ's promise  
to raise up on the last day those who eat his flesh and  
drink his blood ...

In faith we pray:

**All we pray to you our God.**

Lord, satisfy our hunger with the food that lasts,  
the bread of God which comes down from heaven  
and gives life to the world,

Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

**All we pray to you our God.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus 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 salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through Jesus Christ our great high priest.  
He offered himself to you as the Lamb without blemish,  
the acceptable gift that gives you perfect praise.  
At the Last Supper, seated with his apostles,  
he left this memorial of his passion  
to bring us its saving power until the end of time.  
In this great sacrament you feed your people  
and strengthen them in holiness,  
so that throughout the world the human family  
may be enlightened by one faith  
and drawn together in one communion of love.  
We come to this foretaste of your heavenly banquet  
to be transformed by your grace  
and restored in the image and likeness of the risen Christ.  
Therefore earth unites with heaven  
to sing a new song of praise;  
we too join with angels and archangels  
as they proclaim your glory without end:

**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

All praise to you, our God and Father,  
for you have fed us with the bread of heaven  
and quenched our thirst from the true vine:  
hear our prayer that, being grafted into Christ,  
and feast with him in his kingdom;  
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.**