

Wednesday 14 December 2022

St John of the Cross



Juan de Yepes was born near Avila in Spain in 1542. It was a noble family but so poor that his older brother died of starvation. He entered the Carmelite order when he was twenty-one.

He was ordained in 1567 and met Teresa of Ávila soon afterwards. John made a great impression on Teresa: she persuaded him to help with her reform of the Carmelite order. His labours caused conflict with the religious authorities who imprisoned him. The experiences inspired his finest poetry and mystical writing. He wrote *Dark Night of The Soul* as God purified its approach towards God.

He was banished to southern Spain, where he died after a severe illness on this day in 1591.

Sermon © the Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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Prayers of intercession by John of the Cross.

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 Love one another

(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.

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 the St John of the Cross

O God, the Judge of all,
who gave your servant John of the Cross
a warmth of nature, a strength of purpose
and a mystical faith
that sustained him even in the darkness:
shed your light on all who love you
and grant them union of body and soul
in your Son Jesus Christ 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 Song of Songs

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice.

My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. Catch us the foxes, the little foxes, that ruin the vineyards—for our vineyards are in blossom.

‘My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on the cleft mountains.’ *Song of Songs 2:8-17*

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

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. *1 Corinthians 2:1-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Friends, love one another (please 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, ‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’

Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.' *John 14:18-23*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

The Song of Songs in the Bible is a strange book. It doesn't mention God at all, nor prayer, nor worship. It may have been part of an ancient Jewish wedding liturgy or, at the least, a poem used at weddings. But intense forms of discipleship have always thought it a favourite. For example, St John of the Cross wrote many books, all of them describing his own response to passages from the Song of Songs.

John of the Cross was a seventeenth-century Spanish monk who helped re-organise the ancient monastic order of Carmelites. In context, they had deteriorated to become stale and rather legalistic. John wanted to reinvent them to make them into a powerhouse of discipleship. That's why his teaching to the Carmelites sought to help them become more Christ-like.

The Bible is clear that God is not only loving but is love (see for example 1 John 4). Love is both a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 6) and a gift of the Spirit (Romans 12). Love is the best way of discerning if worship is truly God centred (1 Corinthians 12 and 13). Everything about God is therefore well described in terms of love.

And because God is love, and because prayer is a means of talking to God and learning about God, it's perhaps not surprising that John's ideas centred on both prayer and love. These twin themes coalesce in a form of prayer that is often called 'prayer of relationship' although 'prayer of love' is perhaps a better description. His ideas were not new; rather, he found new ways of describing this way of praying.

For John, prayer is a loving waiting on God. We actively try and direct our love toward God and, because God is love, that love involves God because the love we direct toward God is God Himself. In effect, the God in us loves the God in heaven, who is love. Think of someone standing on a canal bank, throwing a rope around a beam on a narrow boat. The person holds both ends of the rope. By pulling on the rope, the barge moves closer to shore. In the same way, God sends His love to us, which we then redirect back to Him. In this way, we are drawn closer to God.

Eventually, our love for God and the love of God for us become indistinguishable. That's why John, when describing prayer in his book *The Spiritual Canticle*, employs the striking metaphor, 'The iron is in the fire and the fire is in the iron.'

If we truly love God, then, using the love that is God, we can truly experience God. It means that through prayer we no longer know merely *about* God but can actually start to know Him directly. We can experience His touch, which is absolutely ravishing. We can grow to resemble Him and become ever more Christ-like.

John of the Cross is regarded as a holy man because of his teaching on how to approach and apprehend God. That's why he took sentences from the Song of Songs, such as 'My beloved is mine and I am his,' and applied it to himself and his loving relationship with God.

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

O Blessed Jesus,

give me stillness of soul in You.

Let Your mighty calmness reign in me.

Rule me, O King of Gentleness,

King of Peace.

Give me control, control over my words, thoughts and actions.

O dear Lord, deliver me from all irritability, want of meekness,
want of gentleness.

By your own deep patience give me patience, stillness of soul in you.
Make me in this, and in all, more and more like you.

All Amen.

Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth.
Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners.
The angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine;
and God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me.
What do you ask, then, and seek, my soul?
Yours is all of this, and all is for you.
Do not engage yourself in anything less
or pay heed to the crumbs that fall from your Father's table.
Go forth and exult in your Glory!
Hide yourself in it and rejoice,
and you will obtain the supplications of your heart.

All Amen.

We must dig deeply in Christ.
He is like a rich mine with many pockets containing treasures:
however deep we dig we will never find their end or their limit.
Indeed, in every pocket new seams of fresh riches are discovered on all sides.

All Amen.

St John of the Cross

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Love one another

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;
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 [How deep the Father's love for us](#) (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 John of the Cross 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 of truth,
whose Wisdom set her table
and invited us to eat the bread and drink the wine
of the kingdom:
help us to lay aside all foolishness
and to live and walk in the way of insight,
that we may come with your servant John of the Cross
to the eternal feast of heaven;
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.