

Thursday 17 August 2023

James the Deacon



Stained glass window from York Minster.

James was a Roman citizen. He was never ordained as a priest hence his epithet of 'deacon'. He was a member of the mission sent by Pope Gregory to Christianise the Anglo-Saxons from their native Anglo-Saxon paganism. He accompanied Paulinus of York on his mission to Northumbria.

It is unclear when he actually arrived in England but he certainly near Lincoln after Paulinus left Northumbria to continue his missionary efforts.

In his history of the English Church, Bede, says that James died 'at some time after 671' AD.

Sermon and prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

More information about James the Deacon @ [Catholic Online](#).

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included 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>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [Father God, I wonder](#) (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 James the Deacon

Everlasting God,
whose servant James helped carried the good news of your Son
to the people our own land:
grant that we who commemorate his service
may know the hope of the gospel in our hearts
and manifest its light in all our ways;
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 Joshua

The Lord said to Joshua, 'This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses. You are the one who shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, "When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan".' Joshua then said to the Israelites, 'Draw near and hear the words of the Lord your God.' Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that among you is the living God who without fail will drive out from before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Gergashites, Amorites, and Jebusites: the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is going to pass before you into the Jordan.

When the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan flowing from above shall be cut off; they shall stand in a single heap.'

When the people set out from their tents to cross over the Jordan, the priests bearing the ark of the covenant were in front of the people. Now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. So when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the edge of the water, the waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a single heap far off at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing towards the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho. While all Israel were crossing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

Joshua 3:7-11, 13-17

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Psalm

A reading from the Book of Psalms

- ¹ When Israel went out from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
² Judah became God's sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.
- ³ The sea looked and fled;
Jordan turned back.
- ⁴ The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs.
- ⁵ Why is it, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?
- ⁶ O mountains, that you skip like rams?
O hills, like lambs?
- ⁷ Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
⁸ who turns the rock into a pool of water,
the flint into a spring of water.

Psalm 114

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Do not be afraid ([please click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

Peter came and said to Jesus, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'

'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

Jesus left Galilee when he had finished saying these things and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. Large crowds followed him and he cured them there.

Matthew 18:21—19:1

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Today's readings are those dictated by the Lectionary for today, 17 August, rather specifically than for James the Deacon. But they seem very relevant.

The first reading describes Joshua's colonising the Promised Land. Today's part of the story includes a pivotal moment when a ritual procession crosses the River Jordan. At its head are the priests who carry the Ark of the Lord, a carved wooden

box covered in gold that contained the tablets on which Moses had inscribed the Ten Commandments. The implied imagery is impossible to ignore: it suggests that it is the Law of Moses and not Joshua's army that sweeps away the former things and replaces everything with itself; it is the Law that conquers the Promised Land.

Today's Psalm is a later description of this central event. In beautiful Jewish poetry, it says, 'When Israel went out from Egypt ... Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion. ... The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back'.

Today's Gospel describes Jesus offering another of his parables. The story is framed in terms of debt, but it obviously describes Jesus' way of looking at forgiveness. Its 'punchline' occurs near its beginning when Jesus says, '[do not forgive only] seven times, but seventy-seven times'. It then explores the idea that nothing is too big to forgive, nothing is too small. Following Jesus always involves forgiveness.

Which all brings us to James the Deacon: he was a minor member of the team sent by Pope Gregory to Christianise Anglo-Saxon Britain from its paganism. James accompanied Paulinus of York on the part of the mission that went to Northumbria. That mission was clearly successful for Britain was converted within a comparatively short time and remained Christian for more than a millennium.

As we combine these themes, we see many similarities. Just as Joshua's priests entered Canaan and changed the country's religion, so Paulinus and his priests changed the religion of Britain. But there are differences. The first mission followed the Ark of the Lord while the second had a Bible. More, the conquest of Canaan may have followed the Ark of the Lord but the bulk of the invading force were soldiers who used deadly military force. They did not convert the initial residents but slaughtered them—today, we could with justification call it 'ethnic cleansing'. By contrast, the Mission to Britain did not use military force.

Christianity is important which is why we are called to share it. We can share it in ways that resemble Joshua or in ways that resemble James the Deacon ... but not both. We therefore need to understand the core differences between the two stories of mission. We can use force to guarantee that others share our faith—it could be military force such as crusades and Jihad, or with fiery words which we might call 'rhetoric' but are in fact threatening and akin to blackmail ('Convert to my faith or go to hell!'). Alternatively, we can try to be like the Christ we preach, which means the costly sharing of love, serving our neighbour, and forgiving without limit.

The world is clearly in a mess and needs to change. Christians will say that it needs to become Christian ... *but what form of Christianity?* Is it an appropriation of the old story of Joshua or is it a faith that loves and forgives and takes its lead from Jesus himself? Jesus says that his *true* disciples will be characterised by love.

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

'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness' ([Galatians 5:22](#)). Fill us with your Spirit that we may love more and build your Kingdom here on earth as it is in Heaven.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

'Love is the doorway through which the human soul passes from selfishness to service.' Dear Lord, fill us with your love and help us to reveal you to all those who need you. To that end, empower our love.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

'For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but one of power, love, and self-discipline' ([2 Timothy 1:7](#)). Dear Lord, your Scripture tells us there is no fear in love. Take away any fear or impediment to serving you: help us to love you and our neighbour to the uttermost.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

'The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty warrior. He will exult over you with joy. He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy' ([Zephaniah 3:17](#)). Dear Lord, help our love to grow, develop, and transmute, so we can more fully experience you in your servanthood and glory.

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

We are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, through Christ our Lord, who came and preached peace to those who were far off and those who were near.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Dear Lord and Father of mankind

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

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 Father, we adore you

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

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 James 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

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.