

Sunday 15 October 2023

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity



Sermon © Lucie Reilly.

Prayers of intercession © Revd Dr 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.

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 [Only by grace can we enter](#) (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 Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

O God, forasmuch as without you
we are not able to please you;
mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit
may in all things direct and rule our hearts;
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 the Prophet Isaiah

O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Isaiah 25:1-9

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians

My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:1-9

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Abide in me

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves

to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet." But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, "The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet." Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

'But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen".

Matthew 22:1-14

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Wow, if the Kingdom of Heaven is really like what we hear in today's Gospel, I'm not sure I'm very attracted to it. It doesn't sound very inviting, at least as Jesus describes it today—when we already have more than enough leaders throughout the world who are abusing their power, when violence is executed on a daily basis, when people's lives are being destroyed, when cities are burning, when some are excluded and told they don't belong? We don't need God's help to bring that about, we're pretty good at it by ourselves.

Does today's Gospel reading fit your image of the Kingdom of Heaven? Is that what you are seeking every time you come to church? Is the way Jesus describes the Kingdom what you have in mind when you pray, 'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven?' And if it is, who are you praying that it be done to? Yourself or someone else?

I find this to be a tough parable, it's like something has been left unwritten that we aren't reading, like there's something left unspoken that we aren't hearing.

There are just too many contradictions and inconsistencies to take it at face value. I think if today's Gospel teaches us anything, it's that we can't simply hear or read our sacred scriptures and casually respond, 'Thanks be to God'.

The text is inviting us to struggle not just with the text itself but with the text in the context of our lives, and to work out our faith in light of that struggle. And that's what I want us to do with today's Gospel. I want us to wrestle and argue with this gospel until it begins to take shape in a way that reshapes our lives.

With that in mind, how do you like the image of a wedding banquet as the Kingdom? Joy, love, feasting, family, the unity of two becoming one. Does that work for you? I'm good with that. It's the kind of thing I want for us.

But then look what happens next ... the king sends messengers to tell those who had been invited, 'Dinner is ready, come on. Let's get this party started.' But those who had been invited refused to come. They mistreated and killed the messengers. And then the king sent his army to destroy those who had been invited and burn their city to the ground. How about that for an image of the kingdom? Is that your experience of God? Are we going back to 'an eye for an eye?' Is that what we should teach your children and grandchildren about God?

When we pray the Lord's Prayer is that what we are praying for? And if that is the Kingdom then what do we do with 'Thou shalt not murder,' 'Turn the other cheek,' 'Love your enemies,' or Isaiah telling us that the Lord will 'swallow up death forever ... and wipe away the tears from all faces?' There's got to be more to this story than what it says.

Next the king sends out messengers to invite everyone, good and bad. It's as if they are saying, 'It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done, this feast is for you.' And that matches all those stories about Jesus eating and spending time with 'tax collectors and sinners,' healing lepers, forgiving the woman caught in adultery and giving sight to the blind.

Now this sounds more like the Kingdom to me. Thinking back to today's second reading, St Paul says, 'Rejoice, in the Lord always, again I will say, Rejoice,' 'Do not worry about anything,' 'The Lord is near.' And I remember Jesus saying, 'Do not be afraid,' 'I came that [you] may have life, and have it abundantly,' 'My peace I give you.'

The Kingdom is for everyone. No one gets left out. Great, that's better, but then a man shows up without a wedding robe. He survived the king's army, escaped the burning of his city, and accepted the invitation only to be thrown into the outer darkness because he wasn't properly dressed.

What is there a dress code for the Kingdom? Why didn't the king just give the poor guy a wedding robe? After all, didn't Jesus say something about welcoming

the stranger and clothing the naked? So, which is it: welcome and clothe the stranger or kick her or him out because they're not dressed properly?

Today's Gospel passage is an assortment contradictions and inconsistencies: a wedding banquet and a blood bath; messengers of good news and truth, and killers of those messengers; an enraged king that sends troops to destroy his own citizens; an open invitation to all and the exclusion of one who accepts the invitation. I really do hope that more to the Kingdom than that, don't you? Because today's Gospel sounds more like *headline* news than *good* news. And yet we can't just turn away from today's Gospel. It's asking something of us. If we ignore the contradictions and inconsistencies in today's Gospel then we also ignore or gloss over the contradictions and inconsistencies in each of our own lives, and in the world. I don't want us to do that. Let's face up to ourselves. Let's look at what is and imagine what could be.

The mess and adversities in our lives and our country today are telling us that something has been lost, that things are not right, that we're sabotaging the life we say we want and the values we claim to hold. We are betraying ourselves, each another, and the Kingdom. The Gospel today is holding up a mirror before us all; I wonder what today's gospel is showing you about yourself, about our country, about the ways in which we treat each other. What's missing? What's not right? What is it asking you to wrestle with? What is it asking us as a community to wrestle with?

Is Jesus is telling this parable and hoping to shake us up, hoping to wake us up? I wonder if he is hoping that we'll say, 'No, Jesus. We've followed your life. We've listened to your words. We've seen what you do. We know there is more to the Kingdom than that.'

Do you look at the world today, especially at the news this week and think, 'There's got to be more than this?' Do you hear the cries of people and say to yourself, 'There's got to be more than this?' Do you look at the brokenness, the injustice, the hurt and say to yourself, 'We can do better?'

If you do, I think you are absolutely correct. I think we all want that kind of Kingdom and that's why we showed up today and why we keep showing up. I think that's why we struggle with these hard-hitting scriptures. It's why we say our prayers and sometimes we weep. We've heard the calling of something more.

What is that 'more' for you? What does 'more' look like in the face of one has been excluded and told he or she doesn't belong? What is that 'more' amidst violence and killing? What would 'more' be when power is abused and people are hurt and oppressed? What would 'more' look like when we turn on one another?

How would 'more' respond when we say things like, 'That's not my problem,' 'He got what he deserves,' 'Why should I care or get involved?'

What would the 'more' of that Kingdom look like our lives, in our relationships, in the conflicts and struggles we have with others? What does the 'more' of that Kingdom ask of us in the criticisms and doubts we have of ourselves and others? What would that 'more' offer when we feel overwhelmed and lost?

I think that 'more' would be the real Kingdom of heaven, the one that's been lost, the one that needs to be recovered. It's the Kingdom that speaks of love, compassion, forgiveness, mercy, kindness, beauty, hope.

If that's truly what we want, if that really is what we seek when we pray 'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,' then we must become those things. It's up to us to become the 'more' for each other and for the life of the world. 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 today's reading from Isaiah 25

Isaiah says, 'O Lord, you are my God'. Loving God, teach us how to regard you as Father, and lead us into a genuine relationship with you.

O Lord, you are my God.

All I will exalt you, I will praise your name.

Isaiah says, 'I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.' Help us to experience you in such ways that lead us into true worship.

O Lord, you are my God.

All I will exalt you, I will praise your name.

Isaiah says, 'Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' Thank you that you have saved us and forgive us everything that separates us from you.

O Lord, you are my God.

All I will exalt you, I will praise your name.

Isaiah says, 'Cities of ruthless nations will fear you.' We ask your help in creating your Kingdom of righteousness.

O Lord, you are my God.

All I will exalt you, I will praise your name.

Isaiah says, 'This is the Lord for whom we have waited.' Show us how to wait on You in ways that led to an authentic encounter, causes holiness of life, and results in spiritual fruit.

O Lord, you are my God.

All I will exalt you, I will praise your name.

Isaiah says, 'God is a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.' We ask your help on all who are in need of any kind—physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual.

O Lord, you are my God.

All I will exalt you, I will praise your name.

Isaiah says, 'The Lord of hosts will ... will swallow up death forever.' We ask your blessing on the souls of the faithful departed and your comfort on all the bereaved.

O Lord, you are my God.

All I will exalt you, I will praise your name.

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 [Seek ye first the Kingdom of God](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)
[Seek ye first the Kingdom of God](#) (different version)
[Seek ye first the Kingdom of God](#) (another version)

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 the Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 [All I once held dear](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)
[All I once held dear](#) (different version)

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

Holy and blessed God,
you have fed us with the body and blood of your Son
and filled us with your Holy Spirit:
may we honour you,
not only with our lips
but in lives dedicated to the service
of 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.