

Sunday 22 October 2023

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Pure-energy dance Inc.



Sermon and prayers of intercession © the Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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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.

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 All glory laud and honour
All glory laud and honour
All glory laud and honour

(click on this link to hear the hymn)
(rock version)
(different version)

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 Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

God, the giver of life,
whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church:
by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ
and make us eager to do your will,
that we may share with the whole creation
the joys of eternal life;
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

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him—and the gates shall not be closed: I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me, so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things.

Isaiah 45:1-7

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

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

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake.

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming. *1 Thessalonians 1:1-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 All heaven declares

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

The Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice,

said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Matthew 22:15-22

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Today's Gospel passage describes Jesus being quizzed by the Pharisees. They want to entrap him and come up with a killer question about the boundary between serving God and serving Caesar. It was clever because, they thought to themselves, Jesus was skewered whichever way he answered.

To explain: if Jesus had said 'give power to Caesar' then the Jewish nationalists—and there were a very great number of them—would never listen to Jesus again because he was seen to be preferring the hated Romans. Many of the people wanted a *political* messiah in the mould of King David and would say, 'What's the point of a messiah if this Jesus doesn't want to free the people?' But if Jesus said to give power to God, then the Roman overlords would kill him for being yet another freedom fighter, and would execute him in the usual painful, grisly way. The Pharisees could not lose: Jesus' would sign his own death sentence whatever he answered.

And to makes things worse, their choice of 'visual aid' was a coin made from gold: it was mined from the ground therefore made by God, but the Romans mined it and minted it, turning it from ore into spending power.

To be clear, Jesus' answer was very clever because he avoided the opposing traps set by the Pharisees. He saved his skin and lived to enact the atonement that he came to earth to achieve. But in a different sense it was a disaster because we are still arguing about it: does it still apply to us today and, if so, how?

Every life has parts that belong to Caesar and other parts that belong to God, so we need a understand the passage properly. But Jesus did not mean living a physical life now and a spiritual life later. There is a story (maybe apocryphal) of a priest in the Soviet bloc who was tried by a hardline atheist judge. The judge said, 'Stop being a Christian. Save your prayers for later in heaven,' to which the priest replied, 'But sir, if I stop living as a Christian now, I won't *have* an afterlife in Heaven'. There is much truth in this reply. Nevertheless, many politicians today from all

countries and every persuasion point to Jesus' pronouncement and use it to justify stifling the church. Many of our politicians and churchgoers honestly believe that 'politics and religion should never mix' and use today's Gospel passage to justify their view.

Jesus himself clarified his approach when he prayed for his disciples on the night before his execution. His so-called 'High-Priestly prayer' recorded in John 17 is the longest of Jesus' prayers recorded in any of the gospels. In it he prayed that his disciples might be *in* the world—living physically in it—but not *of* it, not living its values (John 17:14–15). The distinction explains everything. The disciples needed to know, but so do we.

All of us live in this world and cannot escape. None of us can avoid the trappings of living in a physical world. Our physical existence, our being *in* the world, is book-ended by birth and death. For example, during that interval as physical people, we must sleep and eat and therefore need food which itself requires money and the need to make choices. That's why modern-day Caesars can affect the quality of our lives and their decisions cause wars, affect what we can do or say, create the conditions in which we live such as defining free speech or creating economic policies ... which all mean that as disciples we have no other choice as we live in the world.

But we must not be *of* the world by which Jesus means adopting all its views and values over those of God. The context of the High-Priestly prayer implies that Jesus wants us to spend our money furthering the Kingdom of God, model our values and relationship on him, so use our time in good work, prayer, and worship. In other words, we must ensure that our every action looks beyond itself to God.

And there our problems begin because we are usually presented with choices and most lies somewhere on the spectrum between 'worldly' and 'spiritual' and between '*in* the world' and '*not of* the world'. Choosing where to place ourselves on this spectrum is generally difficult.

Any close reading of St Paul's writings shows he also wrestled with these same problems. Maybe that's why he tells the church in Thessaloniki to, 'become imitators of the Lord ... inspired by the Holy Spirit'. If genuine, that imitation requires utter commitment and complete surrender to God. He is saying that everything belongs to God—as he said elsewhere, 'Love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, *all* your soul, *all* your mind, and *all* your strength.'

When Christians live the life that God truly require of them, the powers of this world feel threatened. Not only has Christianity interrogated their values and found them lacking, but they often fear the loss of their power. Many revolutions have been led by people seeking to obey God: think of the Great Civil War in England of the fall of Apartheid in South Africa under Desmond or—both of which

failed when the Christians adopted the worldly powers they started by opposing.

It's common to misread Jesus in this parable taking a few parts of our lives and giving them to God but allowing the remainder to stay with Caesar. That's an inversion. In fact, he was permitting Caesar to inhabit some parts ... but not much.

We conclude by returning to the parable. In closing, we note that when Jesus was presented with a Roman coin, he referred to the image on its surface, which was likely to be that of Tiberius. The inscription would have said 'son of the divine (God) Augustus'. When we render to God that which is God's, we give everything to Him because He made the gold. Even Caesar's image was fashioned from that gold.

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 1 Thessalonians 1

Loving Heavenly Father, we thank You for our Christian sisters and brothers. Remind us to prayer for them constantly and to rejoice at their work of faith, labour of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Receive the prayers of Your Church

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Heavenly Father, we thank You for choosing our Christian brothers and sisters. We pray for your Church: show us how to serve and support our fellow pilgrims as they serve you.

Receive the prayers of Your Church

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Heavenly Father, we thank You that Your word has sounded forth not only in the places mentioned in today's epistle but in every place our faith in you has become known. Help us as we share the faith.

Receive the prayers of Your Church

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Heavenly Father, remind us to imitate You despite any persecution because we have received Your word with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Give all Christian people strength when they are persecuted. We pray for all those in need ...

Receive the prayers of Your Church

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Heavenly Father, we turn from all idols in order to serve You, the living and true God. Show us the ways in which our faith is lukewarm as we serve the false gods of luxury, compromise, nationalism, ...

Receive the prayers of Your Church

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Heavenly Father, we wait for your Son from heaven, whom You raised from the dead—Jesus. We pray for those who have died in faith.

Receive the prayers of Your Church

All Hear our prayer.

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 Jesus shall take the highest honour ([click here 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 the Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 All my hope on God is founded ([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.

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

God our Father,
whose Son, the light unfailing,
has come from heaven to deliver the world
from the darkness of ignorance:
let these holy mysteries open the eyes of our understanding
that we may know the way of life,
and walk in it without stumbling;
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.