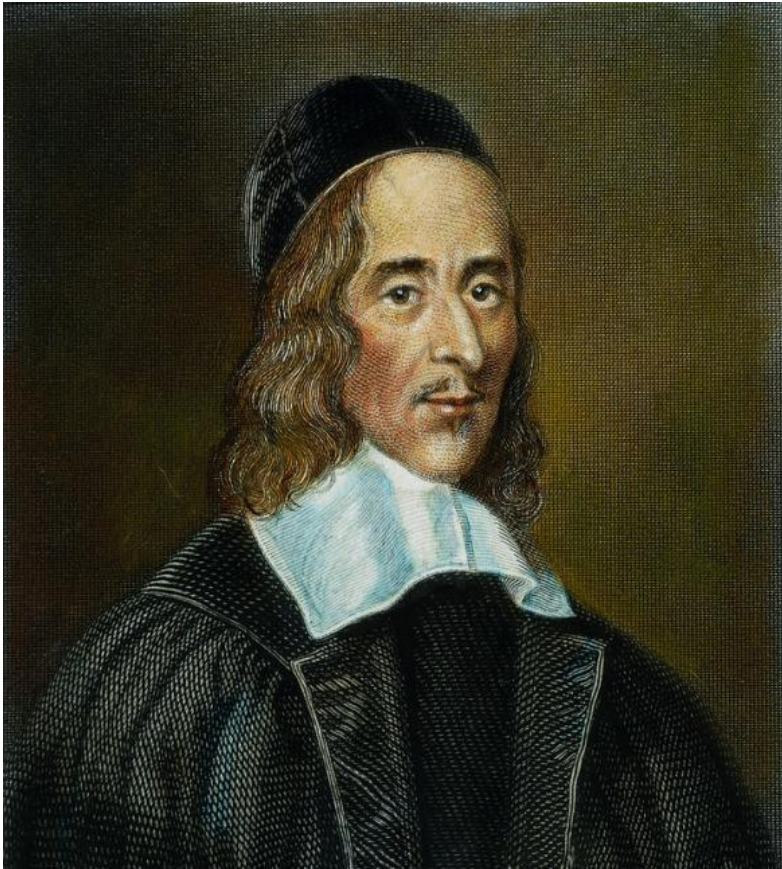


Tuesday 27 February 2024

George Herbert



George Herbert was born in 1593 into an aristocratic Pembroke family. He went up to Cambridge in 1614, eventually becoming a fellow of Trinity College. At the age of twenty-five, he became Public Orator in the University and then a Member of Parliament, apparently destined for a life at court.

Herbert then surprised everyone by being ordained. In context, he had visited his friend Nicholas Ferrar at a small Christian community ('Little Gidding') and was deeply inspired. He was made a deacon in 1626, married in 1629, and was priested in 1630 to become the parson of Bemerton parish near Salisbury, where he spent the rest of his short life.

He never neglected the care of the souls of Bemerton. He wrote prolifically: his hymns remain popular throughout the English-speaking world. His books *The Country Parson* (a treatise on the priestly life) and his collection poetry *The Temple* earned Herbert a leading place in English literature. He died on this day in 1633.

Sermon © 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.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns 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 Teach me my God and king [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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.**

It is usual to omit the Gloria during Lent.

The Collect for George Herbert

King of glory, King of peace,
who called your servant George Herbert
from the pursuit of worldly honours
to be a priest in the temple of his God and King:
grant us also the grace to offer ourselves
with singleness of heart in humble obedience to your service;
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 Malachi

The Lord said, 'My covenant with Levi was a covenant of life and well-being, which I gave him; this called for reverence, and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in integrity and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.' *Malachi 2:5-7*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Revelation of St John the Divine

From the throne came a voice saying, 'Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great.' Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out, 'Alleluia! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure'—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are true words of God.'

Revelation 19:5-9

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [Let all the world, in every corner sing](#) (click here to hear the hymn)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Matthew 11: 25-30

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

We don't know much about Jesus' life between his getting lost in Jerusalem at the time of his bar-Mitzvah, when he was twelve years of age and (Luke 2), and his baptism, when he began the public phase of his ministry; tradition suggests he was thirty years of age at the time but in truth we simply don't know. Because we know virtually nothing about these years, it has become common to call this period 'the lost years'.

But we do know a few tantalising details. In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus saying, 'Take my yoke ...' Many believe he was not just coining a metaphor but was hinting that he had himself been a good carpenter, for only a skilled wood worker could fashion a yoke that was both comfortable to the user and could channel a mechanical force. Obvious examples include yokes to help workers carry heavy buckets or for use when ploughing laying the bar across an ox's broad shoulders. His profession during the long years had been a worker of wood.

The idea of Jesus being a carpenter comes from Mark 6:3, which refers to a controversy in Nazareth after his active ministry had begun:

When the Sabbath came, [Jesus] began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed, saying, 'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter?

Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.' He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

He was amazed at their lack of faith. *Mark 6:2-6*

These verses help explain why we assume that Jesus was known locally as a carpenter. The passage also mentions local people talking about Mary but not Joseph, which sponsors the idea that she was now a widow, which is not unlikely. It also demonstrates that Jesus' family was large and close.

Mark 6:2-6 suggests the local people did not like Jesus' new way of life with its teaching, preaching, and healing. Their criticism comes across as a form of snobbery: they know Jesus and probably had done for a great many years. They knew him as a carpenter and knew his family. They seem to be reacting to the sheer *ordinariness* that Jesus demonstrated, perhaps asking if the same hands could both work wood and do great deeds.

How like us: we often want Jesus to be entirely special in absolutely everything.

Like the people in Nazareth, one common view of Jesus today suggests he only *appeared* to be human and focused solely on matters of the spirit. The Gospels themselves demolish this 'docetic' caricature by showing Jesus' birth and death; they portray him with human needs such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and weeping; he fostered relationships and loved his friends. In the same way, many of Jesus' parables show a man fully aware of work and commerce, so he fully understands the realities of being human. The Gospels insist that Jesus *was* fully human.

The people of Nazareth were complaining that Jesus was ordinary; the root of their misconceptions was that they misunderstood holiness. He was not a priest but a carpenter. And we, too, will misunderstand Jesus if we also misunderstand the nature of holiness.

There are generally two related strands to that misunderstanding. The first says that ordinary people cannot be holy: we want holy people to look different, speak different words, and in every way differ from us. False distinctions make it easier to deny that we, too, are called to holiness of life. A person from the same background and looking like us who is holy is therefore a threat to that invalid form of self-defence ... or an imposter. Hence the reaction against Jesus in Nazareth.

The second, related, response says that holiness itself must somehow 'look holy' so anything not overtly spiritual is not acceptable: for Jesus 'carpentry was not holy' and not appropriate.

This discussion, above, helps explain the context behind today's Gospel reading. Jesus is saying that he is ordinary in many respects but that God is speaking to him. God can work through him despite having been a carpenter. Just as a well-made yoke of wood transfers the power of an ox to a plough, so the yoke of Jesus transfers the power of God into the world. We should do things his way if the power of God is to act in our own lives.

Jesus is therefore saying that everyone can do God's work through ordinary actions lived in ordinary lives. The way to wrap together all these considerations is to accept that almost anything can be made holy if done for God, with God's help, with a good intention. Like Jesus, we can be a good carpenter or a good shepherd, but a good accountant or taxi-driver, nurse or doctor, housewife or pensioner. All that's needed is follow him and his example. That's why he says, 'Come to me!'

Today in the Church calendar, we remember George Herbert. He shocked his contemporaries by turning from a glittering career and becoming a humble parish priest in an obscure outback. He didn't do anything flashy but wrote poetry dedicated to God. He taught the Gospels to the common people. But because he did it for God, every aspect of his life was tinged with the holiness that comes from coming to Jesus and channelling his humility and godliness.

We are called to the same simplicity. All we need to do is come to him and follow.

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

All these prayers are in fact devotional hymns by George Herbert.

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth
Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices; something understood. *Prayer (I)*

Of what an easie quick accesse,
My blessed Lord, art thou! how suddenly
May our requests thine eare invade!
To shew that state dislikes not easinesse,
If I but lift mine eyes, my suit is made:
Thou canst no more not heare, then thou canst die.

Of what supreme almightie power
Is thy great arm, which spans the east and west,
And tacks the centre to the sphere!
By it do all things live their measur'd houre:
We cannot ask the thing, which is not there,
Blaming the shallownesse of our request.

Of what unmeasurable love
Art thou possesst, who, when thou couldst not die,
Wert fain to take our flesh and curse,
And for our sakes in person sinne reprove,
That by destroying that which ty'd thy purse,
Thou mightst make way for liberalitie!

Since then these three wait on thy throne,
Ease, Power, and Love; I value prayer so,
That were I to leave all but one,
Wealth, fame, endowments, vertues, all should go;
I and deare prayer would together dwell,
And quickly gain, for each inch lost, an ell.

Prayer (II)

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

Love bade me welcome

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

The peace

May the God of peace sanctify you:
may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness
that you may be blameless before him
at the coming of our Lord Jesus with his saints.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,
All And also with you.

These four represent different versions interpretations of 'come holy spirit'

HYMN 3 Come my way, my truth, my life [\(click here to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and mind 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 King of glory, King of peace [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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 George Herbert 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, shepherd of your people,
whose servant George Herbert
revealed the loving service of Christ
in his ministry as a pastor of your people:
by this eucharist in which we share
awaken within us the love of Christ
and keep us faithful to our Christian calling;
through him who laid down his life for us,
but is alive and reigns with you,
now and for ever.

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.