

Thursday 21 March 2024

Thomas Cranmer



Cranmer was born in 1489, in Aslockton in Nottinghamshire. He was recruited for diplomatic service in 1527 after an unspectacular academic career in Cambridge. He soon joined the team working to annul Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

He was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 and duly pronounced the Aragon marriage annulled. He was by now a convinced Church reformer, so he married in 1532 while clerical marriage was still illegal in England. He worked closely with Thomas Cromwell to further reformation, but survived Henry's final, unpredictable years to become a chief architect of Edwardian religious change, constructing two editions of *The Book of Common Prayer*, in 1549 and 1552, the Ordinal in 1550, and the original version of the later Thirty-Nine Articles.

Cranmer consented to the unsuccessful attempt to make Lady Jane Grey Queen of England, so was convicted of treason in 1553 and heresy in 1554. Prison broke his spirit, and he signed six recantations but was still condemned. He struggled with his conscience and made a final, bold statement of Protestant faith. He was burnt at the stake on this day in the year 1556.

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Prayers (confession, intercession, etc.) from the Book of Common Prayer © HM The King.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear 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 [There is a hope](#)

(please click on this link)

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.

Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins,
and are in love and charity with your neighbours,
and intend to lead a new life,

following the commandments of God,

and walking from henceforth in his holy ways:

draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort;

and make your humble confession to almighty God,

meekly kneeling upon your knees. *Invitation to confession in the BCP*

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 Thomas Cranmer

Father of all mercies,
who through the work of your servant Thomas Cranmer
renewed the worship of your Church
and through his death revealed your strength in human weakness:
by your grace strengthen us to worship you in spirit and in truth
and so to come to the joys of your everlasting kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate,
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, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

Isaiah 43:1-3a

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Second Letter to Timothy

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

Remind them of this, and warn them before God that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:8-15

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.'

John 10:11-15

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Today, the name 'Cranmer' immediately invokes thoughts concerning the *Book of Common Prayer*. A great many people regard the BCP, as it's often known, as one of the brightest gems of English prose. It's impossible to overestimate its impact on the further development of our language. Because the BCP shaped Anglicanism, Cranmer also helped shape the Church both in England but also around the world.

At the time of Cranmer, the English church was separating from the Church in Rome and the king. The king's minions were ransacking the monasteries and taking their wealth. The king permitted a translation of the Bible in English. These momentous policies were controversial, and the revolution frequently looked like stalling. At the time the boy-king Edward VI took the crown from his father Henry VIII, the English Reformation needed a focus or, as some thought, a useful distraction, so Cranmer was commissioned to compile the BCP.

Cranmer was not working in a vacuum. At this time, many differences existed between the Church of Rome and the new English Church such as their leadership (a pope and a king); the nature and power of their priests; the very nature of a sacrament—do the bread and wine actually *become* the body and blood of Christ or are they mere symbols. But possibly the key difference was the language in which their liturgies were celebrated, which changed from Latin (which only the educated could follow) to ordinary English (often called the 'vernacular').

Clear language is the key to good communication; stated otherwise, clarity in language must always precede clarity in thinking. This idea helps explain why using Latin during worship often led to incomprehensible services; many of those attending did not understand what was happening. Some of the misconceptions caused by using Latin were ridiculous: for example, at the highpoint of the Latin Mass, the priest elevates a wafer of consecrated bread and says, '*Hoc est enim corpus meum*' ('This is my body') but, apparently, many misheard the phrase as saying 'Hocus pocus': they misheard, then misinterpreted, explaining why they misunderstood the theology. It was the use of Latin that gave rise to the idea that a priest was performing a conjuring trick, pronouncing a spell that turned bread into the body of Christ, with the end result that worshippers who spoke no Latin—the majority—thought of worship as magic. This is one example from many.

Cranmer was tasked with writing a new liturgy in English. He proved to be a brilliant poet and a talented theologian. He borrowed heavily, most obviously from the service books used by monks in the English monasteries and principally that in Salisbury, the so called *Sarum Missal*. But he also borrowed much of their theology.

All theology is expressed in human language. It is usually expressed in written words that are then spoken. Consider the following two phrases which are separated by about 450 years of time but light-years in theological distance:

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
maker of all things, judge of all men:
we acknowledge and bewail
our manifold sins and wickedness,
which we, from time to time,
most grievously have committed
by thought, word and deed, against thy divine majesty,
provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us.

Prayer of confession from the BCP

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.

Prayer of confession from Common Worship

Both prayers seek to say sorry, but they otherwise speak from a wholly different mindset; they are phrased in an altogether different language. For example, in the second, contemporary, prayer God is Father to us all, but in the top prayer He seems to be Father to Jesus alone. In the bottom prayer, we confess that we ‘have sinned’ but in the top, this confession has expanded such that we confess to having ‘most grievously committed’ a series of ‘manifold sins and wickedness’. Their respective choice of language is no accident of time or era because, in context, both are appropriate to their host societies. But they express entirely different theologies

The words we use in worship always shape our thinking. Once shaped, they dictate the way in which we express our subsequent worship. Our language during worship can be used to express separation from God or closeness, alienation or intimacy, estrangement or acceptance. Indeed, Jesus regularly shocked his hearers with the language he used to express his understanding about God. For example, he started his template prayer with the words, ‘Our *Father* ...’ which was then revolutionary: for context, [John 10](#) says that Jesus was very nearly stoned to death for using similar this description of God (see especially John 10:25–31).

It is therefore essential that we consider the words we use. As every lawyer, scientist, bureaucrat, and even advertiser knows, a careful choice of language can dictate the result we desire. Consider for example these two sentences from recent advertisements, ‘The comfort you deserve’ and ‘A luxurious experience’—both refer to the same product, a sofa, but they imply a very different customer, hence audience, and therefore price and consequence for both customer and retailer.

These considerations demonstrate why we can and must consider the language we employ in worship. Our words reveal our inner thoughts: for example, the language we use in our worship can elevate or degrade God, can promote or humiliate ourselves, encourage or demoralise our fellow worshippers.

This transcript contains the wording from an Anglican service from the *Common Worship* series of worship resources—the standard Anglican liturgy in today’s Anglican Church. But many of the prayers come from Cranmer. Ponder these words. It could be useful to write our own prayers but, whatever we do, it’s important that our worship is real. It’s directed from us to 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

All these prayers are by Thomas Cranmer. Most appear in his Prayer book of 1542.

Lord God,
you have taught us
that anything we do without love is worth nothing,
for whoever lives without love
is counted dead before you;
send your Holy Spirit,
and pour into our hearts
that most excellent gift of love,
the true bond of peace and of all virtues;
grant this for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ
who is alive with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and for ever.

All Amen.

Based loosely on 1 Corinthians 13

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the sun of the world,
evermore arising, and never going down,
which by your most welcome appearing and sight,
brings forth, preserves, nourishes,
and refreshes all things,
as well that are in heaven as also that are on earth.

We beg you mercifully and faithfully to shine in our hearts,
so that the night and darkness of sins,
and the mist of errors on every side
may be driven away;
with you brightly shining in our hearts
we may all our life go without stumbling or offense,
and may decently and seemly walk as in the day time,
being pure and clean from the works of darkness,
and abounding in all good works
which God has prepared us to walk in;
you who with the Father and with the Holy Ghost.
live and reign for ever and ever.

All Amen.

Blessed Lord,
who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
Grant that we may in such wise hear them,
read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,
that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word,
we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

O God, from whom all holy desires,
all good counsels, and all just works do proceed;
Give unto thy servants that peace
which the world cannot give;
that our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments,
and also that by thee, we,
being defended from the fear of our enemies,
may pass our time in rest and quietness;
through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Cranmer's Collect for peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Cranmer's 1544 confession

(set to music by Thomas Tallis)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below:

The Dismissal

To the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us,
with the Father who made and created us,
and the Son who redeemed us,
be given all honour and glory,
now and forever.

Thomas Cranmer

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God from whom all blessings flow

(traditional version)
(different, traditional)
(gentle song)
(rock 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.

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 Thomas Cranmer 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 our Redeemer,
whose Church was strengthened
by the blood of your martyr Thomas Cranmer:
so bind us, in life and death, to Christ's sacrifice
that our lives, broken and offered with his,
may carry his death and proclaim his resurrection in the world;
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.