

Monday 15 July 2024

St Swithun



St Swithun (or 'Swithin') was a much-loved bishop of Winchester and subsequently patron saint of Winchester Cathedral. He died in 863 AD.

Tradition says that if it rains on Saint Swithun's bridge in Winchester on his feast day (15 July), the rain will continue for forty days. The legend grew in this way: St Swithun requested that he be buried outside his new cathedral rather than inside, 'where it might be subject to the feet of passers-by and to the raindrops pouring from on high'.

Later, in 971 AD, the cathedral authorities built a shrine to Swithun and moved his body inside the cathedral. The saint showed his displeasure by causing torrential rain and flooding. Only after forty days did the new bishop repent and moved Swithun's body back into the open. It stopped raining immediately.

Sermon © The Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

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 Lord of all hopefulness

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

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

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for St Swithun

Almighty God,
by whose grace we celebrate again
the feast of your servant Swithun:
grant that, as he governed with gentleness
the people committed to his care,
so we, rejoicing in our Christian inheritance,
may always seek to build up your Church in unity and love;
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 Prophecy of Isaiah

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Proverbs 3:1-8

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

James 5:7-11, 13-18

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Alleluia, Alleluia

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said, 'You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Matthew 5:43-end

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

When I think of St Swithun I immediately think of Winchester flooding after forty days of incessant rain. That's why, as I approach the date of 15 July, I always feel edgy and hope the weather will hold. I become neurotic as the day dawns and start trying to bargain with the weather: 'Stay dry and I'll ...' which is ridiculous because the story was invented by the monks of Winchester in the fourteenth century. It was a way of advertising their famous saint, and of increasing the numbers of pilgrims paying to see his tomb. The story is completely bogus: it's bad meteorology, bad history, and it's also bad Christianity because a genuine saint would not be vindictive in such a way.

The problem with the story of St Swithun (and so many others like it) is the way we respond to it. Perhaps we want it to be true or perhaps we dismiss it without reading it. It illustrates the way some of us prefer superstition to genuine faith. We read it then try to forecast the weather or we work out why anyone who suggests such a silly story should be ignored. We need a better response.

So often, we read things *into* a story rather than take something *out* of it. The distinction is important: the person who decides the content of a story before seeing an explanation will be tempted to accept or reject other evidence in order to make it fit our preconceived ideas. By contrast, the person who reads a story in order to find what's real will change their minds when new data come their way and let the story become bigger and more accurate. The first person needs the story to be corroborate their preconceived ideas while the second wants the truth.

And a related problem is the way we so often follow the first type of person when we deceive ourselves into thinking we're following the second.

Jesus tells us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength. Here, 'Loving God with our mind' means thinking through our faith because we want to serve God better. This part of Jesus' command is therefore customised because we all think differently.

God is loving so we will never ask us to do anything that cannot be achieved. When God tells us to love God with all our mind, He wants us to push ourselves a little, move out of our comfort zones but only as far as we are able. Requiring us to achieve the impossible would be unfair and cruel.

God is delighted each time we truly push ourselves to become better disciples. He accepts all genuine efforts. That's what Jesus is talking about: pushing ourselves to live a better faith is trying to be 'perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.' And that's what the reading in Proverbs is talking about, although it's framed in terms of faithfulness to Scripture. But the task *is* achievable because God Himself gives us the Holy Spirit to help attain such a holy goal.

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

Almighty God, thank you that you have made us in Your image. We are sorry for every time we harm that image. Help us to become better disciples, people for whom Your name is holy.

Lord in your Mercy

All Hear our prayer

We thank You for the Church of Christ. We ask that you guide and guard the Church, protecting it as it tries to serve You: seeking You rather than serving itself with You as its excuse.

Lord in your Mercy

All Hear our prayer

Loving Creator, we pray for the world. We pray for those who with influence in the world, asking that you inspire them to use their power for good. Change the world through them: that Your Kingdom may come here on earth as it is in heaven.

Lord in your Mercy

All Hear our prayer

Father God, ask your help on our friends, families and neighbours *(in particular ...)* at that you will meet with them intimately and heal them.

Lord in your Mercy

All Hear our prayer

Loving God, we pray for those who have died: those who died today, those who died alone, and those whose anniversary of death is near. *(in particular ...)*

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

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.

HYMN 3 Spirit of God rain down

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

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 [Reign in me, sovereign Lord](#) [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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 truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father,
almighty and eternal God,
whose mercy is no less than His power,
to preach the Gospel to everyone, through Christ, our Lord.
In the garden He appeared to Swithun,
who loved him in life, who witnessed his death on the cross,
who sought him as he lay in the tomb,
who was the first to adore him when he rose from the dead,
and whose apostolic duty was honoured by the apostles,
so that the good news of life might reach the ends of the earth.
And so Lord, with all the Angels and Saints,
we, too, give you thanks,
as in exultation we acclaim:

**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 Swithun 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

Merciful God,
who gave such grace to your servant Swithun
that she served you with singleness of heart
and loved you above all things:
help us, whose communion with you
has been renewed in this sacrament,
to forsake all that holds us back from following Christ
and to grow into his likeness from glory to glory;
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.