

Tuesday 3 September 2024

Gregory the Great



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Gregory was born in 540, the son of a Roman senator. As a young man, he pursued a career in the government. He was made Prefect of the city of Rome in 573 AD. When his father died, he resigned his office, sold his inheritance and became a monk. In 579, the Pope sent him to the Patriarch in Constantinople as his representative. He returned in 586 and became Pope in 590.

Gregory was an astute administrator and diplomat in era of great political instability. He planned the mission to England in 596 to re-establish the Church in this island and sent St Augustine and forty monks from his own monastery.

His spirituality centred around the love of God and desire for Him explaining why he is sometimes called the 'Doctor of desire'. His writings were pastorally oriented. Gregory is probably best known for the style of chanting named after him: 'Gregorian'. He died on this day in 604 AD.

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Given Gregory's desire to sing the scriptures to a different tune, all four of today's music pieces are different versions of Psalm 27. This psalm helps explain Gregory's vision of Christian service.

[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 [One thing I ask](#)

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

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 the St Gregory

Merciful Father,
who chose your bishop Gregory
to be a servant of the servants of God:
grant that, like him, we may ever long to serve you
by proclaiming your gospel to the nations,
and may ever rejoice to sing your praises;
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 Ecclesiastes

In all that he did, he gave thanks to the Holy One, the Most High, proclaiming his glory; he sang praise with all his heart, and he loved his Maker. He placed singers before the altar, to make sweet melody with their voices. He gave beauty to the festivals, and arranged their times throughout the year, while they praised God's holy name, and the sanctuary resounded from early morning. The Lord took away his sins, and exalted his power forever; he gave him a covenant of kingship and a glorious throne in Israel.

Ecclesiasticus 47:8-11

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the First Letter to the Thessalonians

Our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts.

As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-8

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [What gift can we bring](#)

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus called the disciples and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be servant of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Mark 10:42-45

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

St Gregory may have been a greatly spiritual man but he regarded himself principally as a do-er. He looked, analysed, then set in train whatever he thought necessary to get things done. That's why he was promoted so often and why we still remember him today.

But Gregory never implemented changes for the sake of change: if asked, his unspoken motto would probably have been something like, 'Make it better for God's sake!' because pleasing God was his main motivation and every change he enacted was intended as a sign of his love for God.

Central to his memory is a legend that when first a choir monk he got bored very quickly. To him, chanting the psalms was neither beautiful nor stimulating but a dull chore. Stopping could never be considered as an option, so he prayed while chanting, asking God how to cope with the tedium and, 'An angelic voice whispered in his ear'. He tried to reproduce the angelic sounds that he overheard—and ever since monasticism has sung its liturgy in the style of chanting given to Gregory: 'Gregorian' chant.

We do our best for God. This anecdote illustrates the way that, for Gregory, it was important that whatever we adopt (task, chore, or treat), we do it for God and therefore endeavour to show our love for Him thereby. That intention purifies and sanctifies. That's why he sang the same Scriptures to whatever new tune he heard and why he could purify and sanctify whatever he did by dedicating it to God.

We, too, may find the sameness of our daily acts of faith can kill for us any sense of active discipleship. We 'switch off' before nodding off, then trail off before dying off. Like Gregory, we need to find a different and maybe new way of being a fruitful Christian *that works for us*. In a metaphorical sense, we need to sing it to a new music. Perhaps taking a different hint from Gregory, we could import elements of faith from elsewhere just as he sent a new way of Christianity into England.

This idea is fraught with many dangers:

- We can start worshipping the process of change and the thrill of looking for something new rather than the God of wonder who should reign in the centre of that worship.
- We can dedicate a task to God and then feel anger when our newer forms of worship and praise, faith and service, start to feel dull. In which case, we adapt again and again and again, each time dedicating it to God.
- We can become impatient, expecting worship to become dull and lifeless, and thence give up trying to re-express our faith.

And so on. And so on. There are more excuses not to worship God than people being called by God to express praise and devotion.

Every disciple is called to worship. The word means 'worth ship', giving and expressing worth. Our worship, if genuine, should therefore be costly in both effort and commitment. That's why one paraphrase of the first commandment says, 'love God with everything'! As we engage in the sacred duty and spiritual joy of worship, we must start from a position of honesty and complete commitment, asking God to help us as we try to express His worth. In much the same way, we too need to ask God's help whenever our faith seems lacklustre. Let's see where it leads!

- 4 One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.
- 5 For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.
- 6 Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord. *Psalm 27*

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 by St Gregory

I beseech you, Lord Jesus Christ, that your Passion may be a strength for me, by which I may be fortified, protected, and defended. May your wounds be food and drink for me, by which I may be fed, inebriated, and delighted. May the sprinkling of your Blood be an ablution of all my sins. May your death be eternal glory for me. In these may refreshment, health, zeal, joy, delight, and desire of my body and soul be mine, now and forever.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, place your passion, cross, and death between your judgment and my soul, now and in the hour of my death.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Deign to grant grace and mercy to me, pardon to the living, rest to the dead, peace to your Church, and life and eternal glory to all sinners. You who live and reign forever and ever.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

O Lord, You received affronts
without number from Your blasphemers,
yet each day You free captive souls
from the grip of the ancient enemy.

You did not avert Your face
from the spittle of perfidy,
yet You wash souls in saving waters.

You accepted Your scourging without murmur,
yet through your meditation
You deliver us from endless chastisements.

You endured ill-treatment of all kinds,
yet You want to give us a share
in the choirs of angels in glory everlasting.

You did not refuse to be crowned with thorns,
yet You save us from the wounds of sin.

In your thirst You accepted the bitterness of gall,
yet You prepare Yourself to fill us with eternal delights.

You kept silence under the derisive homage
rendered You by Your executioners,
yet You petition the Father for us
although You are his equal in divinity.

You came to taste death,
yet You were the Life
and had come to bring it to the dead.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 [Take my life and let it be](#) [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)
[Take my life and let it be](#) [\(a different version\)](#)
[Take my life and let it be](#) [\(again, a different version\)](#)
[Take my life and let it be](#) [\(rock version\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,
fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will;
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 [Psalm 27](#) [\(click on this link to hear it\)](#)
[Psalm 27](#) Gregorian Chant [\(click on this link to hear it\)](#)

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 St Gregory 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 of truth,
whose Wisdom set her table
and invited us to eat the bread and drink the wine
of the kingdom:
help us to lay aside all foolishness
and to live and walk in the way of insight,
that we may come with your servant Gregory
to the eternal feast of heaven;
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.