

Sunday 15 September 2024

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity



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

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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 All my hope on God is founded ([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.

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

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 Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers
of your people who call upon you;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
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

The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he awakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backwards.
I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?

Let them confront me.

It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Isaiah 50:4-9a

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Letter of St James

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt-water yield fresh.

James 3:1-12

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [The Lord is my light](#)
[Jesus, name above all names](#)

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

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Mark 8:27-38

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Imagine a God who is high and mighty, aloof, lifted up in heaven, and utterly remote. Then imagine this God as being so holy that we cannot communicate with Him and He does not stoop to speak with us. If that were indeed the case, we could never know anything about Him—how could we? Communication would be so impossible that we would never know what he wants and commands, desires and loves.

To my mind, there is little point in such an image of such a God. He or She could give us nothing and would be unreachable except after death when we, too, were merely a spirit. By that time, we'd have lost all chances of doing whatever this God wanted. It becomes almost a nightmare of "What if?" questions.

But it's not true. The mere fact we have a Bible tells us that our God *can* communicate with humankind. Everything about the Bible implies that he has done so, and remarkably often. It also implies that God *wants* to communicate because, if an infinite God did not want to, He simply wouldn't. But He does.

That's why today's readings are important for they tell us not only that He does communicate but indicates much of the content. So, exactly what is He saying?

God's message is three-fold. First, the obvious bit: God assures us of His existence. He resides in uncreated light in an entirely spiritual domain we often call 'Heaven'. But He also resides here on earth. He exists in majesty, and He exists for intimacy, in your soul and in mine. The location of that interaction, the overlap of earth and Heaven, is the soul. You can enter His presence whenever you like: all you need is the time although, to be honest, training in the ways of spirituality will help. We call that interaction 'prayer', which is a small word for a vast activity.

The second part of God's communication concerns the nature of God, and it's here that we can get really excited. Much of the Bible's message is intended to correct misconceptions. God is a Spirit, so scripture tends to describe Him using metaphor and allegory; Jesus preferred stories in the form of parables. But here goes: God is a spirit; He is a consuming fire; He is light; He is the way, the truth, and He is life. More to the point, He is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so there is also relationship at the very heart of God.

If we distil all these ideas to create a central, concentrated image, we will see that God is love. That love is the 'glue' that binds the Trinity together, so it binds the Father to the Son, the Son to the Spirit, and the Spirit to the Father. And the love that is God creates the link between God with us, His children: God Himself is the bond. All the people whose souls have been touched by God, who have genuinely experienced Him to the point of a relationship coming into being, speak of God as a person characterised by ravishing love. They say this love is stunning and can feel overwhelming. This love is so intense that it is life changing. As it says in 1 John 4, 'God is love. Those who live in God live in love and God lives in them'.

Once we have encountered this being of infinite love, nothing else will do. Nothing else feels remotely the same. We are captured and captivated *and His love changes us*. At this point there is a transition in our discipleship from mere follower to devoted son or daughter.

Which leads to the third message that God wants us to share Him, which is not so much a message as a consequence. It becomes our duty (and desire) to tell everyone what we have heard and seen and experienced. God is no longer a secret.

The idea that we are to tell people about God is the message of today's three Bible readings, but they warn us that if we launch into the third part of today's message without the first and second, we will likely get it wrong. In Today's Gospel, for example, Jesus needs to correct misconceptions: Peter and the other disciples know something of God but not much; in today's Epistle, St James needs to warn teachers they might be getting it wrong, so they must take care before speaking. And it explains the reading from Isaiah when he says, 'the Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher ...'—note how it says *the Lord* has given me ... and not something like, 'I assumed, I supposed, someone said ...'. It needs to be first-hand.

As a Church, our task is learning the art of being Christian. At the heart of the Christian vocation is a growth into relationship with God. He makes Himself known. We are to grow into an ever-growing love with God. If we genuinely grow into that genuine relationship, we will change and grow with the holy love of God. It's visible and utterly unmistakable. It's the greatest evangelistic tool there is.

The message of today becomes very simple: get to know God and share Him; enter into a relationship with God and share it; enter the love who is God and share that love. When God came to earth as Jesus, he called this sharing of godly love, 'the Kingdom'. And he told us to seek it with everything we have. Why? Because God loves you and wants to make himself known through that love, so others are loved.

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 intercessions are inspired by today's passage from the Letter of St James.

Lord God, Lord of all: we pray for ourselves. We thank you for the Cross and our salvation which is achieved. Thank you that we can use our tongue to worship and praise you. Forgive us when we use our tongue to work against you. Tame our tongue. Inspire us to use our tongue to speak of you and your goodness. Inspire us to work for good and mercy and acts inspired by love. We pray for ourselves. Lord, in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

Lord God, Lord of all: we pray for your Church. We pray for its mission. Please help us to move beyond talking about faith and action, Kingdom and Passion, into doing. Help the Church become more completely yours. Help us to stop speaking except of You. Help us to stop acting against you. In particular, we pray for guidance as we consider moving out of Covid restrictions. We pray for your Church.

Lord, in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

Lord God, Lord of all: we pray for the world. We pray for the people of Afghanistan and all places of unrest and warfare. We continue to pray for medics, scientists, and politicians during the Covid pandemic. We pray for everyone affected by the hurricanes and floods a week ago and everyone affected by the climate emergency. Help us to move beyond words into action. We pray for the world.

Lord, in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

Lord God, Lord of all: we pray for the people we know about, care about, and worry about. Provide us with words of comfort and peace for every occasion. We pray for ... But forgive us if our help involves words alone. We pray for our friends.

Lord, in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

Lord God, Lord of all: we pray for those who have died this week, those who've died recently, and those whose years mind occur at this time ... their families and friends, those going through the agony of grief, not knowing where to lavish their love. Give us words of comfort and faith. We pray for those who have died.

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

The peace to this house from God our heavenly Father.

The peace to this house from his Son who is our peace.

The peace to this house from the Holy Spirit, the life-giver.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All And also with you

HYMN 3 Seek ye first

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

[The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below](#)

The Dismissal

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you

and give you his peace;

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 [Amazing love \(what love is this?\)](#) (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

Keep, O Lord, your Church, with your perpetual mercy;
and, because without you our human frailty cannot but fall,
keep us ever by your help from all things hurtful,
and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation;
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.