

Service of the Word 20 September 2020

Pentecost 16

Welcome

Good Morning and welcome to our service. This week has brought some unexpected and welcome late summer sunshine. Enjoying this blessing of sun and warmth has been welcomed by many especially as we face more grim news about the rise in Covid infection rates across the United Kingdom. The numbers are now so staggering across the world that it is hard to comprehend the level of loss experienced by so many people. In order to protect our own mental health and well being sometimes we need simply to focus on the small blessings of our lives. So we join our voices present and virtual in praise and thanksgiving of God's goodness.

Gathering

We are gathered together as the family of God
to offer praise and thanksgivings
to ask forgiveness of our sins
to hear and receive God's holy Word
to pray for the needs of the world
and to seek God's grace
that through Jesus Christ our Lord
and in the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to God's service.

Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit.
Lord, have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart.
Christ, have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided.
Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, all we long for is before you;
and our deep sighing is not hidden from you.
But we acknowledge our wickedness;
we are filled with sorrow at our sin.
Be pleased O Lord, to deliver us;

O Lord, make haste to help us.
May the Lord forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are
and direct what we shall be,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Praise

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
with God the Son, Jesus Christ,
and God the Holy Spirit,
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.

Collect of the Day

Lord God, let your constant compassion please and strengthen your church:
and since, with out you, we cannot continue in safety, may we ever be
governed by your grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns
with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, on God, world without end. Amen

First Reading Psalm 145 verses 1-8

I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name for ever and ever.
Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name for ever and ever.
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.
One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.

On the glorious splendour of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.
They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Second Reading Matthew 20:1-16 MSG

“God’s kingdom is like an estate manager who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. They agreed on a wage of a dollar a day, and went to work.

“Later, about nine o’clock, the manager saw some other men hanging around the town square unemployed. He told them to go to work in his vineyard and he would pay them a fair wage. They went.

“He did the same thing at noon, and again at three o’clock. At five o’clock he went back and found still others standing around. He said, ‘Why are you standing around all day doing nothing?’

“They said, ‘Because no one hired us.’

“He told them to go to work in his vineyard.

“When the day’s work was over, the owner of the vineyard instructed his foreman, ‘Call the workers in and pay them their wages. Start with the last hired and go on to the first.’

“Those hired at five o’clock came up and were each given a dollar. When those who were hired first saw that, they assumed they would get far more. But they got the same, each of them one dollar. Taking the dollar, they groused angrily to the manager, ‘These last workers put in only one easy hour, and you just made them equal to us, who slaved all day under a scorching sun.’

“He replied to the one speaking for the rest, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair. We agreed on the wage of a dollar, didn’t we? So take it and go. I decided to give to the one who came last the same as you. Can’t I do what I want with my own money? Are you going to get stingy because I am generous?’

“Here it is again, the Great Reversal: many of the first ending up last, and the last first.”

Reflection

As I write this there is every chance that much, if not all, of the United Kingdom including Scotland will be living in lockdown restrictions in the near future. Covid infection rates are rising rapidly so the talk now is of *circuit breaking or reopening pauses*. How your vocabulary grows in these new and different times. So in the spirit of the day I too want to pause and savour the words of our Psalm and the joy of this week of late summer sunshine. The writer of our Psalm reminds us that:

*The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

God's love, or to use the Hebrew word *hesed*, God's love is with us always and sometimes we simply need to stop and savour that love. How we do that is a very individual thing but do it we must because it is this savouring, this basking in God's love that will see us through any tough times ahead. For you it may be about time with family, walks in our beautiful hills, a round of golf or even an extra special treat at teatime to linger over. For me this week it is all about plums. My little old plum tree, about the only thing Bambi hasn't nibbled on - my little old gnarled plum tree has produced a bumper crop this year. A blessing I guess I owe to a warm spring and no killer frosts that have ruined the crop so many times before. So I have had plums galore which I have eaten, given away to friends and finally with the last ripening this weekend I have made coffee cakes and compote to enjoy now and to freeze for later.

I have savoured the beauty of the fruit as it ripened to a soft red on the tree, it is a victoria plum so not the deep purple of some other varieties. I carefully explained to birds and bees alike that they were welcome to the higher branches which I cannot reach, so sharing my bounty with my garden visitors. Plums have been my joy this week and savouring them have helped me to stop and savour the blessing of God's love. Whatever your preferred way of stopping, savouring and counting your blessings please make use of it not just in the coming weeks but regularly and often God's love is steadfast and ever present we simply need to stop and rest in that love regularly.

Many years ago I bought a little book of prayers called Plum Jelly and Stained Glass. It is now long out of print but my copy is still with me having survived every move I have made. I return to it often to remind me to stop and savour

the love of God which surrounds me daily. So I would like to share with you one of these prayers today.

Lord, *this* is my stained glass window today - seventeen jars of plum jelly - lined up on the kitchen window sill, where sunlight can play through them and brighten my world. this is the essence of summer, caught in a jar. Summer, savoured.

I need to preserve some of the deliberately undertaken fun of these not-so-scheduled summer days. I shall bottle some, to serve again like wine some midwinter's evening when the colour of joy has been almost forgotten. I shall capture the flavour of a whole long lazy Summer day, to remember in December. I shall preserve in some chamber of my mind the colour of flowers, the lilting clarity of bird song and the warmth of summer sun on my back.

Winter shall have delights of its own, I know. But I shall enjoy them all the more because of the saved and savoured colour of summer on my shelf. Thank you, Lord. [*from Plum Jelly & Stained Glass by Jo Carr & Imogene Sorley 1981*]

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Let us pray, for the church and the world, thanking God for the blessings in our lives

Intercessions

Blessing

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen

Act of Dedication

Almighty God,
we thank you for the gift of your holy word:
may it be a lantern to our feet,
a light upon our paths,
and a strength to our lives.
Take us and use us to love and serve all people
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Praise

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; *
you renew the face of the earth.
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; *
you renew the face of the earth.
May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in all his works.
You renew the face of the earth.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; * you renew the face of the earth.

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Be with you and all those for whom you have a care this day and evermore. Amen