

Service of the Word 27 September 2020
St Michael & All Angels [Pentecost 16]

Welcome

Good Morning and welcome to our service. It has been quite a hectic week across our little bit of Scotland as it has across the world. The much anticipated and dreaded second wave of Covid 19 has begun much earlier than expected in many places. New restrictions are being imposed as we begin to move through Autumn into Winter. This particular changing of the seasons usually brings with it feelings of sadness, coming of darker nights and yet it is a time when nature gives us the most glorious of display of beauty in multicoloured leaves. It is a season to ponder what has gone before and what lies ahead so let us together join our voices, virtual and present, in praise and thanksgiving for God's everlasting 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

Everlasting God, who ordained and constituted the ministries of angels and mortals in a wonderful order: grant that as your holy angels always serve you in heaven, so, at your command, they may help and defend us on earth;

through Jesus Christ, our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen

First Reading Genesis 28:10-17 NIV

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it^[a] stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^[b] I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Second Reading Matthew 18:10-14 MSG

"Watch that you don't treat a single one of these childlike believers arrogantly. You realize, don't you, that their personal angels are constantly in touch with my Father in heaven?"

"Look at it this way. If someone has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders off, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine and go after the one? And if he finds it, doesn't he make far more over it than over the ninety-nine who stay put? Your Father in heaven feels the same way. He doesn't want to lose even one of these simple believers."

Reflection

I knew this moment was going to arrive but it has come rather sooner than I expected. I don't mean the second wave of the Coronavirus Pandemic but that too has come earlier than many

predicted. For me personally, the moment has arrived when I have simply run out of words to say. This week I cannot find the words to address yet another crisis. I don't have any vocabulary left to share how I am feeling about a long winter in virtual lockdown. Like Jacob I simply want to lay my head down, on a pillow rather than a stone, to lay my head down and sleep hoping against hope that the world will look different when I awake. Like the lost sheep I need my angel shepherd to find me and lead me home. I had hoped that images of St Michael, sword in hand, battling the rebellious heavenly hoards - I had hoped that this image would inspire and uplift me. No such luck even the story of the mighty Archangel Michael fighting against the odds did not lift my spirits.

So I really don't know what to say to you or to myself today. Sometimes it is just too hard. I could try the prayer, if you can call it that, the prayer from the beginning of this pandemic of simply standing in the garden and shouting. But even that prayer requires energy and my mojo has deserted me.

If you feel like I do please know that you are not alone. Most of us just now are lost sheep, trying to sleep with stones for pillows. If you are more energised then please pray for the rest of us as we struggle to find our mojo once again. Find it we will I am sure of that because Jacob, even on his stone pillow, saw a vision which re-energised him. The lost sheep was found and returned to the safety of the fold. God is with us - our angels are with us sword in hand to protect and defend us. Amen

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