

Morning Prayer: Fifth Sunday after Trinity

The 5 Marks of Mission – Transform

Preparation

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you

All and also with you.

cf 1 Timothy 1,2

Praise the name of the Lord;

All ascribe greatness to our God.

Lord, open our lips

All and we shall praise your name.

cf Deuteronomy 32:3; Psalm 51:15

Hymn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkrepBvrLI4>

1 Hail to the Lord's Anointed!
Great David's greater Son;
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free;
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.

2 He comes with succour speedy
To those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and
dying,
Were precious in his sight.

3 He shall come down like
showers
Upon the fruitful earth,
Love, joy, hope, like flowers,
Spring in his path to birth:
Before him on the mountains
Shall peace the herald go;
And righteousness in fountains
From hill to valley flow.

4 Kings shall fall down before
him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore him,
His praise all people sing;
For he shall have dominion
O'er river, sea and shore
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar.

5 O'er every foe victorious,
He on his throne shall rest,
From age to age more glorious,
All-blessing and all-blest:
The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove;
His name shall stand for ever;
That name to us is Love.

Confession

All O King enthroned on high,
filling the earth with your glory:
holy is your name,
Lord God almighty.
In our sinfulness we cry to you
to take our guilt away,
and to cleanse our lips to speak your word,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw *us* to himself,
and cleanse *us* from all *our* sins

that we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Blessed are you, Sovereign God,
ruler and judge of all,
to you be praise and glory for ever.
In the darkness of this age that is passing away
may the light of your presence which the saints enjoy
surround our steps as we journey on.
May we reflect your glory this day
and so be made ready to see your face
in the heavenly city where night shall be no more.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All Blessed be God for ever.

The Word of God

Isaiah's 'Song of Deliverance'

- ¹ 'Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust and will not be afraid;
- ² 'For the Lord God is my strength and my song,
and has become my salvation.'
- ³ With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.
- ⁴ On that day you will say,
'Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name;
- ⁵ 'Make known his deeds among the nations,
proclaim that his name is exalted.
- ⁶ 'Sing God's praises, who has triumphed gloriously;
let this be known in all the world.

⁷ 'Shout and sing for joy, you that dwell in Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.'

Isaiah 12.2-6

**All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

When thinking about verses 1-3; how often do you forget to ask God to help you through a difficulty? Recall those times when you remembered to trust in God to help you; how did transformation of your circumstances come about? Pray that you can be the agent of helping someone towards their transformation.

The Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17 (read by Michaela McNeil)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.
¹¹Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The Gospel: Luke 4:16-21

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He

stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

Sermon by Sue Nelms

Mark of Mission 4 – To Transform Unjust Structures of Society

Now, O Lord, take my lips and speak through them; take our minds and think through them; take our hearts and set them on fire with love for you. Amen.

Our theme this morning is the Anglican Communion’s Fourth Mark of Mission – transforming unjust structures of society and we have had two wonderful readings to help us consider this.

I had what is called a sheltered childhood. It was wonderful – we lived in the middle of nowhere and I had so much freedom to go out on my bike and explore, a bit like my very own Famous Five adventure, but without the other 4. Life was easy and I wouldn’t have recognized an unjust structure of society if it had jumped up and bitten me on the leg! And if it did exist, it certainly didn’t happen in the lovely countryside that I lived in but rather in far flung parts of the world that I knew nothing about.

Life is very different today. In 1985, events such as Live Aid and groups like Band Aid drew our attention to the changes in climate leading to

famines that can strike parts of the world, causing mass starvation and migration in places like Eritrea, as shown by reporter Michael Burke. After the initial horror, we may have ended up sharing the sentiment of the line in Band Aid's "Do they know it's Christmas" song that says "Tonight, thank God it's them instead of you." Harsh, but probably true for many.

More recently, we have seen refugee crises, people sailing across dangerous waters in totally unsuitable dinghies in search of safety and not always successfully, children starving in war zones and again, after the initial shock, I wonder how much of an impact such events really made on us.

But then, suddenly we encountered the pandemic and everything shut down, giving some of us time, lots of time even, to think about things. We heard the story of George Floyd, whose death became the catalyst for the 'Black Lives Matter' movement, bringing to the attention of white people across the world the constant fear and injustice that so many people of colour live with.

We heard of the murder of Sarah Everard and this time people were made aware of the dangers that so many women face when they go out of their homes, even women who take all of the right steps to try and protect themselves as Sarah did. We started to think about the status and treatment of women in general, puzzling that we still find it something to comment on when a woman becomes 'the first' to achieve something in what was previously considered a male domain.

We discovered that many families in our own country were struggling to survive, with thousands of children going hungry as parents suddenly had no work and therefore no income. More recently we have heard of the terrible treatment of children living with haemophilia, Down's syndrome or other medical conditions and that of unmarried teenage mothers.

We see discrimination against so many people on grounds of race, age, religion or belief, sex and disability to name a few and I suspect that many of us wonder what on earth we can do about such huge issues,

perhaps reaching the conclusion that we are so little and the problem is so big so we do nothing.

So how do today's readings speak to this situation?

In Luke's gospel we have that mind blowing scene of Jesus standing up to read from one of the sacred scrolls in the synagogue and reading out these words:-

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

And then he sits down, telling them that this prophecy had just been fulfilled in their presence.

Imagine being there that day and feeling the impact of that. And for Jesus it was not an empty statement, because for the rest of his life on earth that is exactly what he did do, and it was uncomfortable viewing for those in authority, who neglected to help and support the very people that God wanted them to because it was so much easier to keep them out of sight, out of mind.

But Jesus did exactly what he had been commissioned to do. He encouraged his followers to look after widows and those most in need. He fed those who were hungry. He reached out to the people on the margins of society who were forced to live outside Jewish social norms, people like the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years and was therefore ritually unclean, the beggars who sat outside the temple, people living with leprosy, gentiles. He encouraged us to take notice of children, to become open-minded and as eager to learn as they are. He told us to look outside of our normal society and reach out to the people we find there.

That work didn't stop when Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead either. In John chapter 20 verse 21, in the locked room where they were hiding away after the resurrection, Jesus came to and said to the disciples "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you"

thereby handing over the charge to the people who had accepted his words and God's love, and as that commission passed down through the generations, finally it has arrived at us.

It can be scary standing up against the unjust structures of society, but the good news in our second reading this morning is that we are not on our own, totally unprepared and unsupported in this work.

In his letter to the Ephesians, part of which we heard this morning, the apostle Paul, who was never backward at sharing the gospel, encouraged everyone by telling them how God is with us when we stand up for right. You see we are not just dealing with issues of right and wrong or good and bad people. Rather, as Paul points out, we are called to stand up against the spiritual forces of evil and it is these forces which thrive on the misery caused by unjust societies.

To stand up against these actions, we are given God's total support and the tools on our side - truth, righteousness, desire to proclaim the gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the word of God - all described in our reading today as the armour of God.

A suit of armour is useless if you leave it on the floor though; it can provide no protection if we don't put it on and use it. In chapter 8 of John's gospel, Jesus said 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' What people living under the oppression of unjust structures of society need is to hear the truth. If they never hear the truth they can never be free. If we do not show them any form of righteousness, they will never be free. If we never proclaim the gospel of peace, the word of God, they will never be free.

This morning's mark of mission, that of transforming unjust structures of society brings together some of the other marks that we have looked at during this series. Safeguarding creation increasingly involves transforming unjust structures as we realise that our actions impact on the lives of people completely unrelated to us in a far-off country. Responding to human need often involves challenging unjust structures. Nurturing new believers may free them from restrictive practices and proclaiming the gospel will set them free.

We may be scared off by the phrase 'Marks of Mission' thinking 'I don't do mission' or similar. Well Jesus himself told us how to do things. When asked which of the commandments in the law was greatest, He replied "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Matt 22.36-39).

Such love includes telling, teaching, tending, treasuring and transforming and my prayer this morning is that we will all be equipped to reach out and love our neighbour as ourselves.

The Responory

Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
and be not wise in your own sight.

**All Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
and be not wise in your own sight.**

In all your ways acknowledge him
and he will make straight your paths.

All Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

**All Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
and be not wise in your own sight.**

from Proverbs 3

Affirmation of faith

**All We believe in God the Father,
God almighty, by whose plan
earth and heaven sprang to being,
all created things began.**

**We believe in Christ the Saviour,
Son of God in human frame,
virgin-born, the child of Mary
upon whom the Spirit came.**

**Christ, who on the cross forsaken,
like a lamb to slaughter led,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
he descended to the dead.
We believe in Jesus risen,
heaven's king to rule and reign,
to the Father's side ascended
till as judge he comes again.**

**We believe in God the Spirit;
in one Church, below, above:
saints of God in one communion,
one in holiness and love.
So by faith, our sins forgiven,
Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,
we shall rise with him in glory
to the life that knows no end.**

Prayers

Intercessions are offered.

Collect

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change,
The courage to change the things we can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

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.**

Hymn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08utbDFP9AE>

1. Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord in Your suff'ring world
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice joy peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase

2. Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for the craftsmen
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

*God of the poor
Friend of the weak*

*Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come change our love
From a spark to a flame*

3. Refuge from cruel wars
Havens from fear
Cities for sanctu'ry
Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

4. Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future our dreams
Lord end our madness

Carelessness greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

5. Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame

Until Your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of Your ways
Seek Your salvation
And bring You their praise

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The Conclusion

Jesus, lord of time,
All hold us in your eternity.

Jesus, image of God,
All travel with us the life of faith.

Jesus, friend of sinners,
All heal the brokenness of our world.

Jesus, lord of tomorrow,
All draw us into your future. Amen.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among us and remain with us always.
All Amen.

Let us bless the Lord:
All thanks be to God.