



Sunday 26th Sept 2021 – Trinity

Led by the Rev'd David Newton

Hymn

- 1 New every morning is the love
our wakening and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life and power and thought.
- 2 New mercies, each returning day,
hover around us while we pray;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.
- 3 If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.
- 4 The trivial round, the common task,
will furnish all we need to ask,
room to deny ourselves, a road
to bring us daily nearer God.
- 5 Only, O Lord, in thy dear love
fit us for perfect rest above;
and help us, this and every day,
to live more nearly as we pray.

Opening Words

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleans 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.**

Meditation

*We pause to take up that monastic practice of meditation again.
Contemplation is something learnt / habituated, so we need to keep doing it...*

Take up a comfortable posture. Close your eyes.
And first, we begin to centre ourselves by focusing on our breathing.

As you breathe in and breathe out pray the simple words 'be present'...
A prayer that we might be fully present here, and so come to abide in
God's presence.

Notice any thoughts and emotions, observe them, and let them pass, as
you come back to focus on your breath and on that simple prayer, 'be
present'.

We stick with this for a few minutes.

Prayer of Confession

**Most merciful God,
we confess to you,
before the whole company of heaven and one another,
that we have sinned in thought, word and deed
and in what we have failed to do.
Forgive us our sins,
heal us by your Spirit
and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Readings

Bible Reading: James 5. 13-end

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Gospel Reading: Mark 9.38-end

John said to him, 'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.'

'If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.'

'For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.'

Reflection

Written by the Rev'd David Newton

Today's readings present us with a cacophony of short pithy sayings and stories and ideas.

I imagine Mark working with scraps of scroll lying around his office. He jots down things he remembers from his time with Jesus. He speaks to others and notes down their memories. And here, in this passage, he seems to just bundle them together.

Mark recalls Jesus saying something about others casting our demons. There is a separate memory about Jesus saying something about a cup of water. Another record recalls Jesus' stern words to those who tried to stop the little ones coming to him. There is yet another memory – the context lost – of Jesus saying something about tearing your eye out if it causes you to sin. And then there is a memory of Jesus saying

something about salt – this memory it seems is so hazy that it is difficult to make much sense of on its own. It is as if Mark remembered that Jesus said something about salt and being salty and thought, I can't remember much of that, but I remember the image, so I'll jot it down. Matthew and Luke – who both use Mark's Gospel to write their own accounts – try to order some of this more disparate stuff. But Mark just jams it all in, in an untidy holy mess.

I sat at my desk, and I thought how on earth does one bring all this together?

Perhaps first off, it is no bad thing to step back from the text and imagine it being written, to imagine Mark at work drawing sources together. It helps us remember that we are reading ancient manuscripts here, not the dictated Words of God. And with that comes all the attendant complications of context and interpretation and so on. We have no direct access to the human person of Jesus of Nazareth, but instead four wonderful recreations that re-tell the good news of his life through different lenses and perspectives. They are already interpretations!

Thinking about the process of remembering and writing and interpreting staves off any unhelpful ideas of immediacy with the text that tries to bypass the hard work of making sense. It staves off the evils of fundamentalism and the bigoted dogmatism that can accompany it; it opens us up to questioning and critique, both which are central to the life of anyone who seeks to follow after Christ.

All that comes before we attend to the content of the texts given to us this morning... So, to those we must now turn as we attempt to bring some coherence out of these fragments. Mark, after all, chose to put these fragments together.

It seems to me as if they hang – naturally perhaps – on that final phrase we heard in the Gospel, 'be at peace with one another'.

Be at peace...

We can, if we want, try to 'own' Jesus, to restrict access to him, and to decide exactly what it means to follow him, excluding everyone else who might see things differently from us.

We can stand opposed to those who bring healing and wholeness in Jesus' name but are not part of our group. We can stretch out our

hands to stop people coming to Jesus before they pass certain doctrinal or ethical tests. We can use our feet to patrol the borders of our pure and righteous group.

We can stockpile the salt.

But Jesus is adamant, such behaviour is far from the kingdom of God. Instead, he says 'whoever is not against us is for us.' He opens the draw bridges, asks for open hands and for feet that go well outside the walls of our safe and comfortable club. He asks for eyes that do not look to judge, but instead look for places where the Spirit is moving – ahead of us, in unexpected place, amidst unexpected people.

Only then then can the salt be spread abroad over the earth, instead of being stockpiled until it is good for nothing.

Whoever is not against us is for us.

Within the worldwide Church then these disparate sayings all seem to push us to think ecumenically. They help us to consider those who use Jesus' name, but don't quite understand following Jesus in the same way we do. We are called to open our hands, to walk into the unknown, to open our eyes and see what God is doing through other groups of Christians, even if we profoundly disagree with them about one thing or another.

Beyond that, these disparate sayings push us to think about how we might partner with 'people of peace' from all faiths and none.

Again: whoever is not against us is for us.

The pandemic has taught us much about the value of partnership.

I know for myself, and have heard stories from up and down the country, of local churches connecting with the local councils in ways that were simply never thought about before. Churches ran local Covid Community Response groups in collaboration with the councils, organising volunteers to deliver food, or pick or prescriptions, and so on.

In Comberton, a partnership has begun between the church and the GP surgery with the launch of 'Time for Talk'. This is a confidential Listening Service that the GPs can refer patients to. (If you think you might like to be involved to get in touch to find out more). In Hardwick, the recent Eco-Event modelled something of this partnership as churches came together with local groups to help us all think about how we

much meet the challenges of the climate and biodiversity crisis. We could go on... we are called to partner with anyone and everyone for the common good of the place we find ourselves. What else could it mean to be people of peace, people of salt? We can (if we want) close our fists, walk the ramparts, and become a holy huddle. If we do though, we put stumbling blocks in the way of others glimpsing the Kingdom. Or we can engage in the mess of the world and all the uncertainty and risk that comes with that. We can join hands with others, march with those who also seek the common good, and open our eyes to the work of the Spirit in surprising places. This is surely the call of God who is Peace. Amen.

The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
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.**

Prayers of Intercession

Written by Michaela McNeil

Lord, we give you thanks today for so many things, a thousand miracles we take for granted every day. Thank you for the vitality and diversity of the natural world. Thank you for the regularity and stability of the created world. Thank you for the way the body goes on functioning with remarkable ingenuity. Train our hearts to be thankful so that we live daily out of a deep sense of gratitude and humility.

Jesus, Lord of life **in your mercy, hear us.**

We know that our world is both wonderful and flawed at every point. We see the symptoms of a disordered world in every news broadcast. Bless we pray those parts of the world which are especially damaged and in need of healing at the moment (remembering Afghanistan). Give them leaders of genuine calibre, and the support of the international community. And keep us from the sin of thinking that their problems are nothing to do with us, for we are all children of one heavenly Father.

Jesus, Lord of life **in your mercy, hear us.**

In the Church we hope to find a different way of living and sharing together, and so often we are disappointed. The flaw in creation is also in us and in the Church. Forgive us for distorting your gospel into our own possession and the likeness of our own prejudices. Give us joyful and generous hearts which allow you to work through us to bring meaning and beauty into your Church and world. Persuade us out of our arguments, inspire us out of our pettiness, and set us free to agents of your Kingdom.

Jesus, Lord of life **in your mercy, hear us.**

We pray for people in any kind of need for whom this talk of 'life in all its fullness' would ring very hollow. Be close today to the lonely, the

bereaved, the despairing and the desperate. Bless with hope those who are unemployed, homeless, deserted or friendless. Give your deep healing to the sick, the disturbed, the damaged and the lost. In our hearts we name in silence some of those who we know to be in dark places today ...

Jesus, Lord of life **in your mercy, hear us.**

You, Lord, came to give us life, and to do so you had to lay down your own life to bring us back to God. Help us this day to live as those who have been given the glorious liberty of the children of God, and who want to live our lives in gratitude and joy. So make us ready for that day when all that is good is caught up in the life of heaven and Christ is all in all.

Jesus, Lord of life **in your mercy, hear us.**

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

**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.**

The Collect

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face;
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.

Amen.

Hymn

- 1 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not,
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be.

Great is thy faithfulness!

Great is thy faithfulness!

*Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided -
great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!*

- 2 Summer and winter, and spring-time and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
- 3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Final Prayer

**O God who brought us
from the rest of last night
to the new light of this day,
bring us in the new light of this day
to the guiding light of the eternal.
Lead us, O God, on the journey of justice.
Guide us, O God, on the pathways of peace.
Renew us, O God, by the wellsprings of grace
today and for ever.
Amen.**

Blessing

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts
and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus
Christ our Lord. And the blessing of God...

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.