



## Morning Prayer 5 September 2021

### 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity. Creationtide.

#### Preparation

O Lord, open our lips

*All* **and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Rejoice in the Lord always,

*All* **and again I say, 'Rejoice'.**

*cf Philippians 4:4*

Blessed are you, Sovereign God, creator of all,  
to you be glory and praise for ever.

You founded the earth in the beginning  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

In the fullness of time you made us in your image,  
and in these last days you have spoken to us  
in your Son Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

As we rejoice in the gift of your presence among us  
let the light of your love always shine in our hearts,  
your Spirit ever renew our lives  
and your praises ever be on our lips.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*All* **Blessed be God for ever.**

#### HYMN

I God is Love: let heav'n adore him;  
God is Love: let earth rejoice;  
let creation sing before him,

and exalt him with one voice.  
He who laid the earth's foundation,  
he who spread the heav'ns above,  
he who breathes through all creation,  
he is Love, eternal Love.

2 God is Love: and he enfoldeth  
all the world in one embrace;  
with unfailing grasp he holdeth  
every child of every race.  
And when human hearts are breaking  
under sorrow's iron rod,  
then they find that selfsame aching  
deep within the heart of God.

3 God is Love, and though with blindness  
sin afflicts the souls of all,  
God's eternal loving-kindness  
holds and guides them even then.  
Sin and death and hell shall never  
o'er us final triumph gain;  
God is Love, so Love for ever  
o'er the universe must reign.

### **Confession**

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'  
So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing  
our sins in penitence and faith.

**All Lord God,  
we have sinned against you;  
we have done evil in your sight.  
We are sorry and repent.  
Have mercy on us according to your love.  
Wash away our wrongdoing**

**and cleanse us from our sin.  
Renew a right spirit within us  
and restore us to the joy of your salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.** *cf Psalm 51*

May the Father of all mercies  
cleanse *us* from *our* sins,  
and restore *us* in his image  
to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

### **The Word of God**

*The Psalm for today is Psalm 146*

1 Alleluia.

Praise the Lord, O my soul:  
while I live will I praise the Lord;  
**as long as I have any being,  
I will sing praises to my God.**

2 Put not your trust in princes,  
nor in any human power,  
**for there is no help in them.**

3 When their breath goes forth, they return to the earth;  
**on that day all their thoughts perish.**

4 Happy are those who have the God of Jacob for their help,  
**whose hope is in the Lord their God;**

5 Who made heaven and earth,  
the sea and all that is in them;  
**who keeps his promise for ever;**

6 Who gives justice to those that suffer wrong  
**and bread to those who hunger.**

7 The Lord looses those that are bound;  
**the Lord opens the eyes of the blind;**

8 The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;  
**the Lord loves the righteous;**

9 The Lord watches over the stranger in the land;

he upholds the orphan and widow;  
**but the way of the wicked he turns upside down.**

10 The Lord shall reign for ever,  
**your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.**  
**Alleluia.**

*Let us meditate on the first and last verses of this psalm. In the first verse, how does praise to the Lord feature in your daily life? The last verse speaks of the Lord's reign, how do you let the Lord reign in your life?*

*The Epistle reading: James 2:1-7*

### **Warning against Partiality**

<sup>1</sup>My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? <sup>2</sup>For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, <sup>3</sup>and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here, please', while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there', or, 'Sit at my feet', <sup>4</sup>have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup>Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup>Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

*The Gospel reading is taken from Mark 7:24-end.*

### **The Syrophenician Woman's Faith**

<sup>24</sup> From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, <sup>25</sup>but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. <sup>26</sup>Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the

demon out of her daughter. <sup>27</sup>He said to her, ‘Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.’ <sup>28</sup>But she answered him, ‘Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’ <sup>29</sup>Then he said to her, ‘For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.’ <sup>30</sup>So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

### **Jesus Cures a Deaf Man**

<sup>31</sup> Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup>They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. <sup>33</sup>He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. <sup>34</sup>Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened.’ <sup>35</sup>And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. <sup>36</sup>Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. <sup>37</sup>They were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’

### **Sermon**

Today marks the first Sunday in what has become known as ‘Creationtide’. This season – perhaps surprisingly – has its roots in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and has since then spread across the worldwide Church of God.

It runs from 1<sup>st</sup> Sept – 4<sup>th</sup> October, at the back end of the period of the church calendar called ‘Ordinary Time’, where we think about God in the ordinary and everyday stuff of life. Well, we couldn’t get much more ordinary than thinking about our interaction with the world around us: our eating and drinking, our homes and clothes.

During Creationtide we come to celebrate the natural world - to find God’s presence through both the natural world and through human-

made objects, as they both reflect something of God's glory and creativity.

We come to repent of our pillaging of the natural world, acknowledging that future generations cannot use resources up like we have in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We come to repent of living at other people's expense, of enjoying the products that come from cheap labour and poor safety standards.

And finally, we come to commit ourselves to living more sustainably, so that *all* might share in the bounty of this earth.

To celebrate, to repent, and to commit to living sustainably. It all sounds so easy. Yet of course we all know it is not... and our readings today push us towards some of the complexity around all of this.

For in our Gospel reading we meet Jesus in a rather bizarre situation saying things which make most of us – 21<sup>st</sup> century western liberals – a little uncomfortable.

We meet Jesus as he enters Tyre – Gentile territory. He purposefully moves beyond the Jewish homelands, and he enters someone's home. This should immediately strike us. Jews were not to enter the homes of Gentiles, yet here Jesus is, breaking down boundaries.

A Gentile woman discovers where he is and comes and begs that he might heal her daughter. Jesus' response to her is – to put it mildly – not very nice. Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs. Yet, her dogged response to Jesus wins the verbal sparring match and Jesus declares her child healed.

What are we to make of this?

Some possibly helpful background. It is thought that the rural Jewish areas produced the grain for the (richer) Gentile city areas around Northern Galilee, including the Decapolis (the 10 cities). In times of food shortage, it is more than possible that the Jewish hinterlands resented having to give their grain to the Gentile town dwellers.

Hence then the bread imagery that Jesus uses. It's not fair to take the children's food and give it to others. Here, then is a classic rural / urban, poor / rich divide and the classic resentment that can arise between the two.

But then comes the brilliant response from this woman. Even the dogs eat the crumbs, she says. Even the dogs need feeding. The urbane elite still need grain; they too are human beings with some claim for resources and a share in the bounty of the earth.

With that background in play, what can we draw out of this strange and difficult story?

First, this is a story all about boundary crossing. Jesus goes into Gentile territory! The audience gasp. Jesus enters a Gentile house, speaks to a gentile. The audience gasp. He listens to a woman, heals her daughter. The audience gasp.

This story comes off the back of Jesus declaring emphatically that all foods are clean. Nothing on the outside can make you unclean he says. Eating food cannot. Talking to a Gentile cannot! And so, with this story the boundary crossing Jesus continues on his way. He breaks down cultural barriers, reminding us all of our shared humanity. For the bounty of the earth belongs to all.

Second, this story reminds us of some of the complexities of having a shared humanity and learning to share the resources of the earth with equity.

The Jewish farmers of rural Galilee had a genuine gripe against the urbane and rich Gentiles who took their food. Jesus manifests some of that anger in his sharp rhetoric. More than that Jesus shows a clear tribal belonging – he is Jewish and he wants to stand up for his people. There is nothing wrong with a local sense of belonging – indeed as humans we need it. We belong to a local village, or nation, or whatever it might be. Such communal belonging is essential to our identity and so our humanity.

But crucially, our “tribal” identity must never be formed at the expense of others. It’s not my group against that group. It should never be my Englishness, against those illegal immigrants; or my desire for the latest trendy gadget at the expense of people mining rare-earth metals in foreign lands. Having a shared humanity doesn’t preclude “tribal” or group identities, as long as we understand that the bounty of the earth belongs to *all*, and not just to my group.

Third, the story highlights the importance of listening to outsiders and those beyond the boundaries of our group. Jesus, who so often silences opponents with rhetorical questions, “loses” the argument to this Gentile woman. He is open to listening – especially to those outside his own Jewish group. He is open to be challenged and provoked by them. If we truly think of Jesus as human, then we are not being heretical if we say that we see him learn and even change his mind in this encounter.

In a world of echo chambers may we have the same openness to having our views changed by the perspectives of others whose experience of life may have been very different from our own. Only in doing that might we be able to live in such a way that the bounty of the earth is shared with all.

This Creationtide, may we celebrate the bounty of earth, repent of living at others’ expense, and commit ourselves to living out what we preach: our shared humanity, *all* made in the image of our Creator. Amen.

### **Apostle’s 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**

The response, **in your mercy hear us**, follows either Jesus Lord of the Church, Jesus Lord of the world or Jesus, Lord of the people.

Jesus, Lord of the Church, **in your mercy hear us**

Lord Jesus, through whom all things came into being and through whom all things are held together, we pray, as the early Church prayed in Your name, Jesus, our Lord and our God:

- to be filled with your Holy Spirit;
- to enable us to pray in the Spirit;
- to give us boldness in speaking your Word;
- that through us and our actions, Your hands stretch out to heal and perform signs and wonders to the Glory of God,

Jesus, Lord of the Church, **in your mercy hear us**

Lord Jesus we pray for Your Church worldwide, that all of us understand that first and foremost, we are Your people, that we are the saints, that the things which bind us together: grace; love; compassion; faith; belief that Jesus came not to condemn the world but to save it; belief that the life and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus brings salvation through the forgiveness of sins; the Holy Spirit and His gifts and fruits ... We pray for the global Church to understand that these things are are enormously more important than

the things with which we divide ourselves up into groups and cliques and denominations.

Jesus, Lord of the Church, **in your mercy hear us**

Lord Jesus we pray for our archbishops, Justin and Stephen, our bishops, Stephen and Dagmar, all of the people who contribute to leadership in the Lordsbridge team, clergy, lay ministers, churchwardens and members of PCCs as well as for all the Evangelical, Baptist, Methodist, Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox congregations who meet in buildings, outdoors and online in our area. We pray that we shall be richly blessed and that through courageous and faithful work in our communities, many people will come to Christ.

Jesus, Lord of the Church, **in your mercy hear us**

Lord Jesus we pray for a world dominated by sin. We pray for the leaders of the nations, that your light and your love will break through into their lives, transforming their decision-making so that they plan for the long-term good of all of their people, so that in every nation, Your kingdom come. We pray for the armed conflicts in the news, for example in Afghanistan and for the fifty across the world which are ignored by the media. We pray for the counties where crime is running at catastrophic levels, many of them in Central and Southern America and sub-Saharan Africa. And we pray for the many countries in which the majority of the population are trapped in poverty, many of them in Africa and Central America, but including Afghanistan and Yemen. We pray for generosity of spirit among the rich people of the world to help the frightened people, the hungry people, the thirsty people and especially, to help people to help themselves by providing skills, tools, seeds and medicines.

Jesus, Lord of the world, **in your mercy hear us**

Lord Jesus, we pray for the beauty of our little corner of creation. We pray against the tens of thousands of fires burning across all of the tropical rainforests, much of the savannah, many of the temperate forests, and even far to the North and South, in the cold conifer forests and deep peats of the tundra. We pray against the fact of

climate change, the extremes of weather that it is bringing, the record temperatures, the melting ice and the rising sea levels. Especially we pray for your protection for the many people vulnerable to rising ocean levels in places like the Maldives and Bangladesh as well as closer to home, along parts of the British coastline. We pray for protection for indigenous peoples, threatened by climate change and often by the political elites of their own countries. And finally Lord Jesus, we pray for the biodiversity of our gorgeous home that came into being through you, please protect the vulnerable species, both those beautiful charismatic species known and loved by all and also the ugly, unpleasant species about which few people care.

Jesus, Lord of the world, **in your mercy hear us**

Lord Jesus, we pray for people who are struggling. We pray for those whose struggles are spiritual, worshiping false gods, or no god at all. We pray that we, and other Christian people, will through our prayers, words and actions, come alongside those in spiritual distress, and guide them onto the true and narrow way, so that they can, like us, take up their cross, and like us, abide in you and you in us. We pray for people whose struggles are mental, people grappling with depression, anxiety, addiction and other mental distress. We pray that if, like the Bishop of Ely, we sometimes wake up around 3 am, that we will pray, like him, for those who are struggling through a black night. We pray for people whose struggles are physical, people who are acutely sick, who have long-term or life-limiting conditions, who are recovering from injury, infection or surgery. We bring them before you today, hoping that fingers will find the hem of your garment, that friends will lower us through the roof to you, that through your Holy Spirit, we will be your hands and feet, laying on healing hands and anointing with oil, literally or in our prayers. And we pray for all those who care for people in need, in every role in society, whether paid or voluntary or taken for granted.

*Silence*

Jesus, Lord of the world, **in your mercy hear us**

Lord Jesus, we pray today for those people who are dying, those who know it to be true and those yet to accept it, or those yet to find out. We pray for chaplains and others whose ministry is to present the Gospel to people who are dying. We pray for all those people who are grieving, for those whose grief is raw and those who everyone assumes to have been healed by time but for whom grief remains an everyday reality. We thank you for the spring of water gushing up to eternal life, and for the certainty that the gift of faith brings, both for those whose faith is known to all and those whose faith is known to You alone, Lord Jesus. We hold up before you the names of those on our hearts in the silence.

*Silence*

Jesus, Lord of the world, **in your mercy hear us**

Lord Jesus, for every blessing, every gift that you bring, every word, for love, for friendship, for all that you are, we are truly, completely and thoroughly grateful. Thank you. **Amen**

### **The Collect**

Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
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.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:  
**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  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**HYMN**

1. O for a thousand tongues to sing  
my dear Redeemer's praise,  
my dear Redeemer's praise,  
the glories of my God and King,  
the triumphs of his grace,  
the triumphs of his grace,  
the triumphs of his grace!
2. Jesus! the name that charms our fears,  
that bids our sorrows cease,  
that bids our sorrows cease;  
'tis music in the sinner's ears,  
'tis life and health and peace. *(3 times)*
3. He breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
he sets the prisoner free,  
he sets the prisoner free;  
his blood can make the foulest clean;  
his blood availed for me. *(3 times)*
4. He speaks; and, listening to his voice,  
new life the dead receive,  
new life the dead receive,  
the mournful broken hearts rejoice,  
the humble poor believe. *(3 times)*

5. Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,  
your loosened tongues employ,  
your loosened tongues employ;  
ye blind, behold your Saviour come;  
and leap, ye lame, for joy! (3 times)
  
6. My gracious Master and my God,  
assist me to proclaim,  
assist me to proclaim  
and spread through all the earth abroad  
the honours of thy name. (3 times)

**Closing words**

**Lord our God,  
on the first day of creation  
you made the light that scatters the darkness.  
Let Christ, the light of lights,  
hidden from all eternity,  
shine at last on your people  
and free us from the darkness of sin.  
Fill our lives with joy  
as we go out to welcome your Son at his coming.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.**

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life.

*All* **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**