

**Sunday 17th October –
Twentieth Sunday After Trinity**
Led by Sue Nelms, LLM



Gathering and Greeting

○ Lord, open our lips
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

○ God, make speed to save us.
○ Lord, make haste to help us.

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

Praise the Lord.
The Lord's name be praised.

Opening Prayer

Faithful one, whose word is life:
come with saving power
to free our praise,
inspire our prayer
and shape our lives
for the kingdom of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Hymn – Who Would True Valour See

I Who would true valour see,
let him come hither;
one here will constant be,
come wind, come weather;
there's no discouragement

shall make him once relent
his first avowed intent
to be a pilgrim.

2 Whoso beset him round
with dismal stories,
do but themselves confound,
his strength the more is.
No lion can him fright:
he'll with a giant fight,
but he will have the right
to be a pilgrim.

3 Hobgoblin nor foul fiend
can daunt his spirit;
he knows he at the end
shall life inherit.
Then, fancies, flee away;
he'll not fear what men say;
he'll labour night and day
to be a pilgrim.

Meditation

Psalm 91

⁹ Because you have made the Lord your refuge
and the Most High your stronghold,
¹⁰ **There shall no evil happen to you,
neither shall any plague come near your tent.**
¹¹ For he shall give his angels charge over you,
to keep you in all your ways.
¹² **They shall bear you in their hands,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.**
¹³ You shall tread upon the lion and adder;
the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.
¹⁴ **Because they have set their love upon me,
therefore will I deliver them;**

I will lift them up, because they know my name.

¹⁵ They will call upon me and I will answer them;
I am with them in trouble,
I will deliver them and bring them to honour.

¹⁶ **With long life will I satisfy them
and show them my salvation.**

Confession

St Paul says

'Be imitators of God;
love as Christ loved;
do not grieve the Holy Spirit;
put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice.'

So let us confess our sins to God,
who forgives us in Christ.

cf Ephesians 4.30 – 5.1

**Almighty God,
long-suffering and of great goodness:
I confess to you,
I confess with my whole heart
my neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments,
my wrongdoing, thinking, and speaking;
the hurts I have done to others,
and the good I have left undone.
O God, forgive me, for I have sinned against you;
and raise me to newness of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Readings by Rick Nelms

Hebrews 5.1-10

¹ Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; ³ and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴ And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

‘You are my Son,
today I have begotten you’;

⁶ as he says also in another place,

‘You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.’

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹ and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰ having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Mark 10.35-45

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, ‘Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.’

³⁶ And he said to them, ‘What is it you want me to do for you?’ ³⁷ And they said to him, ‘Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.’ ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ ³⁹ They replied, ‘We are able.’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.’

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’

Reflection by Rev David Newton

On Wednesday this week a team of folk at St Mary’s Comberton were working in the churchyard as part of the ongoing project there (which is primarily aimed at increasing biodiversity). A lady turned up who I had not met before. She arrived whilst everyone was on coffee break and asked, slightly indignantly, when the work was going to happen - she wanted to get going! So, she was given a job, and off she went. She reappeared several hours later having worked away diligently and patiently.

I, on the other hand...well, I did some work clearing out brambles and planting some seeds in the spring meadow. But I also gave jobs to people, “oversaw” the work, “made sure it was all going okay” and so on. Perhaps I am being a little hard on myself and the contrast not that clear cut. But you get the point. One of us was serving, the other was perhaps just a little bit more like those Gentile rulers Jesus was talking about.

I am sure you have all met people who you desperately want to be on a team with. Those folk who just get on and do things, who quietly and humbly serve. Such folk are the engine room of any institution – whether it be the church, or the village hall, or the local business. They think not of themselves and their own aggrandizing, but simply of how best to serve the project in front of them and those around them.

They find opportunities to offer their gifts and don’t simply wait to be asked. They don’t demand or command the attention, but if they weren’t there, the whole shop would fall apart.

Such people, it seems, model something of Jesus... who came not to be served but to serve.

In Christ, we see a radical new way of being – that is not about self-promotion and self-aggrandizing, that is not about seeking to be at the top of the pile, but instead to be at the bottom, as the servant.

Too often, the radical edge of this story is blunted. Over the millennia this story has seeped into our cultural imagination. So now, all sorts of leaders, whether in politics or business will speak about their work as service.

It is not as if they are wrong to do so. I am sure some are using the rhetoric to hide the reality that they are in fact tyrants and despots. But for many I expect there is a genuine desire to serve... And we indeed pray that those with power and authority, those who lead or govern, do see their work in terms of service. But we must realise that such a move takes us quite a long way from what Jesus is getting at here.

Jesus did not serve by being a political or business leader. He quite literally took on the role of a slave, washing his disciples' feet. And then he was hung outside of the city walls, on the rubbish dump; forgotten, betrayed, and irrelevant to the might and power of the Roman Empire. Here is a servant of a different order. Or in the language of Hebrews a high priest of a different order. The high priests of old were of course servants of the people. They offered sacrifices and mediated to God. Yet they were still the political and religious elite. They were the centre of attention, the ones with power, wealth, and status. Alongside the kings, they called the shots.

Jesus was not a servant in these terms. He was a high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Now, Melchizedek is an obscure character from that book of beginnings: Genesis. He appears in chapter 14 as King of Salem. He blesses Abram (who was to become Abraham), and Abram in turn offers him a tenth of all he has. That's all we know of Melchizedek, but later writers are clearly intrigued by this elusive character. He comes to stand for this distinct and different order of high priests.

And Jesus – so our writer from Hebrews says – belongs to this order. Here is one who is high priest in different way. This is not about 'service in power' (good as that can be). Rather in Jesus we see service

through giving power away, empowering others, becoming nothing himself, but liberating others.

If this is the kind of service that we see in Jesus, then we must also say that this is the kind of service that we see displayed in God.

For God does not command attention. God is invisible, never directly present and always in some sense hidden. God serves from 'behind the scenes', sustaining creation, loving all things into existence, but never directly visible. God speaks, but only ever through others. God's power is found in empowering us. God seeks nothing for Godself but gives and gives and gives out of love for creation.

Even within the very life of God, we speak of the Father, Son and Spirit, each attending to the other; of "deflecting" attention away from themselves and onto the other persons in a dynamic and never-ending circle of truth, goodness and beauty.

In God we see perfect service. We see it in God's own life, as each person does not seek attention for themselves but attends to the others. We see it in the creative act of God – in sustaining all things invisibly. We see it in Jesus who took the form of a slave, humbled himself, and became obedient, even unto death, death on a cross. (As Philippians 2 has it).

To serve as God serves then means getting down in the dirt. Not seeking attention or praise but getting on with things behind the scenes. Not seeking power but seeking to empower others. Not seeking our own good and promotion but the good of others.

In doing that we echo the servant King, the one who is forever hidden and invisible, whose life is forever turned outward. Amen.

Affirmation of faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.**

**Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.**

**He humbled himself
and was obedient to death,**

even the death of the cross.

**Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by John Crang

As God's beloved children let us pray:

Eternal God, the giver of life, whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church: by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ and make us eager to do your will, that we may share with the whole creation the joys of eternal life

For the church and Diocese

Enlighten Justin and Stephen, our Archbishops, Stephen and Dagmar, our Bishops, and all who minister with knowledge and understanding, that by their teaching and their lives they may proclaim your word. As the world looks for direction in these uncertain times may their words be timely and understood as we all continue to navigate these uncharted territories...

We pray too for the new lay members just elected to the General Synod, that they may bring their gifts and vision, and be heard and understood as the church continues to fulfil its timeless mission in a rapidly changing world...

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

For the pandemic

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love...

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

For hospital staff and medical researchers

Gracious God, give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a cure. Strengthen them with your Spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health...

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

For Refugees

Almighty and merciful God, whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own; look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger, homeless and hungry. Bless those who work to bring them relief; inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts; and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace...

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

For those held in captivity

Merciful Father, we bring to you our concern for those wrongly imprisoned or held captive: for those trying to secure their release, that the ways of peace and diplomacy may prevail over acts of violence and aggression, that their captors may know a change of heart; through Him who was sent to proclaim liberty for captives and to set free those who are oppressed...

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

For union with creation *

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.

They came forth from your all-powerful hand;

they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.

Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus, through you all things were made.

You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,

you became part of this earth,

and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.

Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.

Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!
Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.
God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!

For ourselves and those we miss

Hear us as we remember those who have died in the peace of Christ,
both those who have confessed the faith and those whose faith is
known to you alone and grant us with them a share in your eternal
kingdom. We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the
mercy and protection of God.

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

Collect

God, our light and our salvation:
illuminate our lives,
that we may see your goodness in the land of the living,
and looking on your beauty
may be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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 forever. Amen.**

Hymn – Lord of beauty, thine the splendour

Lord of beauty, thine the splendour
Shown in earth and sky and sea
Burning sun and moonlight tender
Hill and river, flower and tree
Lest we fail our praise to render
Touch our eyes that they may see.

Lord of wisdom, whom obeying
Mighty waters ebb and flow
While unhasting, undelaying
Planets on their courses go

In thy laws thyself displaying
Teach our minds thyself to know.

Lord of life, alone sustaining
All below and all above
Lord of love, by whose ordaining
Sun and stars sublimely move
In our earthly spirits reigning.
Lift our hearts that we may love

Lord of beauty, bid us own thee
Lord of truth, our footsteps guide
Till as Love our hearts enthrone thee
And, with vision purified
Lord of all, when all have known thee
Thou in all art glorified

Conclusion

Almighty God,
by your command time runs its course;
forgive our impatience,
perfect our faith,
and, while we wait for the fulfilment of your promises,
grant us to have a good hope because of your word;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
and the blessing of God the Father,
God the Son and God the Holy Spirit
Be with us all, now and evermore. **Amen**

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

* 'A Christian prayer for union with creation' was published in Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.