

**Sunday 3rd October –
Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity**
Led by Sue Nelms, LLM



Gathering and Greeting

O Lord, open our lips

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Give us the joy of your saving help

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Opening Prayer

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Amen

Hymn - How deep the Father's love for us (sung by St Martin's
Voices)

- 1 How deep the Father's love for us,
how vast beyond all measure,
that he should give his only Son
to make a wretch his treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss -
the Father turns his face away,
as wounds which mar the chosen One
bring many souls to glory.

- 2 Behold the man upon a cross,
my sin upon his shoulders;
ashamed, I hear my mocking voice

call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held him there
until it was accomplished;
his dying breath has brought me life -
I know that it is finished.

3 I will not boast in anything,
no gifts, no power, no wisdom;
but I will boast in Jesus Christ,
his death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from his reward?
I cannot give an answer;
but this I know with all my heart -
his wounds have paid my ransom.

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Meditation

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have ordained,
What is man, that you should be mindful of him;
the son of man, that you should seek him out?
You have made him little lower than the angels
and crown him with glory and honour.
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands
and put all things under his feet.

Psalm 8:4-7

Confession

God our Father,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins.
For turning away from you,
and ignoring your will for our lives;
Father, forgive us:
Save us and help us.

For behaving just as we wish,
without thinking of you;

Father, forgive us:
Save us and help us.

For failing you by what we do,
and think and say;
Father, forgive us:
Save us and help us.

For letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;
Father, forgive us:
Save us and help us.

For living as if we were ashamed
to belong to your Son;
Father, forgive us:
Save us and help us.

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 John Crang **Hebrews 1.1-4, 2.5-12**

I Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³ He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵ Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. ⁶ But someone has testified somewhere,

‘What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?’

⁷ You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honour,
⁸ subjecting all things under their feet.’

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,
⁹ but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
¹⁰ It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹² saying,
‘I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.’

Mark 10.2-16

² Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ ³ He answered them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ ⁴ They said, ‘Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.’ ⁵ But Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.” ⁷ “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.” So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’

¹⁰ Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.

¹¹ He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’

¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children

come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' ¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Reflection by Rev David Newton

There is in our age – both inside and outside of the church – a renewed interest in pilgrimage. I saw a picture of Archbishop Justin on a new (8 mile!) pilgrimage route in Devon just this week.

The Camino in Spain has become hugely popular, old routes in these isles are being re-established. And, in the church we love (indeed I love) to use the language of pilgrimage.

'We are pilgrims on a journey, fellow trav'lers on the road' (as that lovely hymn puts it). The Gospels are full of the language of journey too. The disciples are called to 'follow'. They have nowhere to lay their head as they take up the mantle of the itinerant herald alongside Jesus. Yet there are dangers associated with this relentless emphasis on pilgrimage and restless and ceaseless journey. It can enable us to evade the often boring and mundane responsibilities of love and faithfulness over time – over the long haul – to particular people and places and institutions.

The trope of pilgrimage fits all too easily with a world of zero-hours contracts and abandoned serial commitments. 'Put a line under it', 'time to move on', 'that was good for a time'. The emphasis on journey chimes with contemporary lives in which jobs, relationships, and the place we live, are all temporary expedients. Willingness to commit, to take on responsibilities within a local community, to belong for the long term are all waning.

Thankfully this is less true in village communities, and this may well be the reason many of us chose to live in such places. But still – it is clear to all of us I am sure - we live in a world impatient with rootedness, stability and commitment.

In the Gospel narratives Jesus does not only call people to follow. He also calls people to 'go home'. Go home and tell what God has done for you. Go home and re-make relationships, find healing and

wholeness in the place you have come from and amongst the people from whom you have run away.

In John's Gospel one of the most common verbs is 'to abide' – to stay, to remain... The Spirit's presence is associated with abiding, with staying put.

In our days of instability, where commitment, rootedness and long-term responsibility are in decline, the church must say something about the value of stability and fidelity. In our days when human desire has been monetized, and advertising is built to seduce us to want things we do not need, the church must say something about love that goes deeper than superficial and whimsical desire.

For being people of love does not mean gratifying our most immediate desires. Instead, it means being faithful to what is right in front of us, preferring to mend rather than discard, being aware of how our actions impact the vast web of relationships around us.

All of this is a circuitous way into our readings for today, which are about – in one way or another – long term commitment; of God to us (in Hebrews) and ours to one and another (in Mark's Gospel).

This passage in Mark has of course been used by oppressors, and those with too much power, to keep people in extremely damaging and painful relationships and situations. Those suffering abuse have been told that they should stay put, as "God hates divorce". Many have been sacrificed at the altar of patriarchy.

But the passage is clear about the fragility of our relationships and the inevitability of relational breakdown. Wrongs are done. Relationships end (and indeed sometimes must).

We all have and will again betray love, but the Gospel is one of hope, of new life the other side of pain. It is the good news of forgiveness. It is also the good news of a stability and faithfulness and commitment from God that will never fade. This is part of what our Hebrews reading points towards. Long ago... God spoke through the prophets, but in these days he speaks through Christ. We are given since of God's commitment to us, to creation, through the long-haul.

We are made brothers and sisters with Christ, adopted into the family... given a kinship which can never be severed. Christ who created the world now sustains us in it – he is the ultimate sign of

fidelity to a faithless world. His commitment took him to the cross and through it into new life.

The fidelity of God never waivers through our unfaithfulness. It is that fidelity which gives hope, new life, forgiveness when we betray love. It is that fidelity which gives us the resources to try again, and again, and again... that we might learn what it is to be a people of faithfulness, stability and commitment in a world that shuns such things for the ecstasy of the single moment.

Such faithfulness is difficult, but it is also essential to our humanity. For the heart of each of us is not some autonomous and independent centre; it is not some deep inner self that we find within. The heart of each of us is found in our relationships, in those bonds of love that make us and shape us. The core of our being is found in those connections to other people, in the responsibilities we have to love those right in front of us.

We need each other. We are made who we are through each other. The path to human flourishing is not found by searching for the ethereal and fleeting grand “experience”. It is not found in the constant search for newness. Instead, it is found in the ordinary and mundane attachments we have to one another, in the far less exciting, but far more wonderful bonds of fidelity.

Amen.

Affirmation of faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Rick Nelms

Today, when I say 'My Lord and my God' please reply 'pour out your love'

My Lord and my God, **pour out your love**

Heavenly father, God of love, thank you so much that you made everything, and that you made it possible for us to experience that everything. Thank you so much that you gave us freewill so that we could choose to worship you, and that when we abused that freewill, you sent Jesus, not to condemn the world but to save it; you sent Jesus not in anger or bitterness, but in love and for forgiveness and reconciliation. Thank you that when we are prodigal people, you are faithfully waiting, endlessly patient, infinitely loving. Thank you that where two or more of us are gathered together in your name, as we are today, you are among us, with us, in us, through us, before us. Thank you that You, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Thank you that therefore Jesus calls us brothers and sisters, proclaiming your name to His brothers and sisters, praising You from the midst of the congregation. Thank you that through Jesus we have the means to become as little children, to be gathered up in His arms, to have His hands laid upon us, to be blessed and to belong to the Kingdom of God.

My Lord and my God, **pour out your love**

Heaven Father, God of love, we pray for your Church today. We pray for the wisdom to know that what binds us together is so much more important than the trivia which we, as sinful humans, use to divide ourselves up into cliques and denominations; us and them. We pray for all two billion people who make up your Church here on Earth, in all their diversity, held together by your love, by Jesus, Him crucified for our sins, by forgiveness, by the gift of faith, by your Holy Spirit, by the certainty of eternal life. We pray for Alison and her family as she settles into her new role at Launde Abbey and thank you for all that she has given, so freely, over recent years. We pray for all who lead in

the Lordsbridge team, clergy, lay ministers, Churchwardens, PCCs and congregations, particularly at this time when we are seeking a new team rector and a vicar for Hardwick and Dry Drayton. We pray that we will be Churches for those who do not know you; yet; that we will be outward looking, serving, loving, praying, being your hands and feet, preaching the gospel to our families, friends and neighbours through our behaviour, actions and words.

My Lord and my God, **pour out your love**

Heavenly Father, God of love, we pray for your creation today. We thank you that when you had made everything, it was very good. We pray for the preparations for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Glasgow from 31st October 2021. We pray that your light will shine into the lives of all who are stewards of your creation, all 7 billion of us. We pray that every person on Earth will be inspired by the enthusiasm of little children for the future of creation in their individual decision-making and in their collective environmental activism and in the decision-making of the world's leaders. May your will be done, for through Jesus all things came into being, and He sustains all things by His powerful Word.

My Lord and my God, **pour out your love**

Heavenly Father, God of love, we pray for this community, for these villages which make up the Lordsbridge team and everywhere from which our little zoom congregation is drawn. We pray for those people in our communities who are struggling, for those trapped in poverty, for those who have been pushed over an economic precipice by the pandemic, for those people who are homeless, for those people who are lonely, for those people trapped in loveless marriages, for those people trapped in abusive relationships, for those people trapped by terrible events in the deep past of their lives, for people living with grief. We thank you God that it is the little people, the powerless people, those who come to you as little children, those who come to you as struggling people who will inherit the Kingdom of heaven. We pray for those in our communities who are such people and who do not know you; yet. We pray for those who represent us collectively,

for local and district councillors, MPs, as well as those who affect peoples lives less accountably, local government officials, civil servants and businesspeople and all others in positions of power. Many of these people are Christians and we pray for your Holy Spirit to guide and counsel them; for the rest, we pray for your light to shine into their lives, for your light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not, will not and cannot overcome it.

My Lord and my God, **pour out your love**

Heavenly Father, God of love, we pray for everyone who is ill today. We pray for those with sudden, acute illness. We pray for those whose illness will last for years, perhaps for a lifetime. We pray for those whose illness will end their lives, those who know this and those who do not yet know it. We pray for those whose illness is spiritual, the result of worshipping false gods or worshipping no God at all. We pray for those whose illness is mental, the result of old trauma, of deranged brain chemistry, of depression, anxiety and other conditions, named and unnamed. We pray for those whose illness is physical, the result of infection or inheritance, of systemic malfunctions, of recovery from injury or surgery, of conditions known and unknown, diagnosed and undiagnosed. We pray especially for those who are ill but not believed. We pray for all those who care directly and indirectly, paid and voluntary, We pray for needs to be met, for people to come alongside, support, befriend, love and most of all Lord, we pray for healing, knowing that you will hear and answer our prayers in Your own way so that we might not recognise the healing when it comes and that for some, part of the healing will come with a new body in heaven.

My Lord and my God, **pour out your love**

Heavenly Father, God of love, thank you for the love expressed in Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, fully God and fully man, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by Your grace He might taste death for everyone. When He had made purification for sins, Jesus sat down at Your right hand. We thank you for the lives of all those who have died

in the faith of Christ, both those whose faith is known to us and those whose faith is known only to you.

My Lord and my God, **pour out your love**

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

Collect

God, our judge and saviour,
teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love,
that we may live each day
with confidence in the salvation which is given
through 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 – At the Name of Jesus (sung by St Martin's Voices)

I At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of Glory now:
'tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,

who from the beginning
was the mighty Word:

- 2 Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed.

- 3 Name him, Christians, name him,
with love strong as death,
but with awe and wonder,
and with bated breath;
he is God the Saviour,
he is Christ the Lord,
ever to be worshipped,
trusted and adored.

- 4 Surely, this Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with his Father's glory,
with his angel train;
for all wreaths of empire
meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him
King of Glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877) (Public Domain)

Conclusion

The Lord bless us and watch over us,
the Lord make his face shine upon us
and be gracious to us,
the Lord look kindly on us
and give us peace;

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

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