



The Tenth Sunday after Trinity 4th August 2024

In the name of the + Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

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

Holy God,
faithful and unchanging:
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

HYMN

When morning gilds the skies,
My heart awaking cries:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Alike at work and prayer
To Jesus I repair:
May Jesus Christ be praised!

In heaven's eternal bliss
The loveliest strain is this,
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Let earth, and sea, and sky
From depth to height reply,
May Jesus Christ be praised!

The night becomes as day
When from the heart we say:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
The powers of darkness fear
When this sweet chant they hear:
May Jesus Christ be praised

Be this, while life is mine,
My song of love divine:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Sing this eternal song
Through all the ages long:
May Jesus Christ be praised

Confession

Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;

that we may do justly,
love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God,
who in Jesus Christ has given us
a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,
forgive us our sins, +
open our eyes to God's truth,
strengthen us to do God's will
and give us the joy of his kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Collect

Let your merciful ears, O Lord,
be open to the prayers of your humble servants;
and that they may obtain their petitions
make them to ask such things as shall please you;
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

A Reading from The Old Testament Exodus 16. 2-4, 9-15

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. ²In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

⁹Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'" ¹⁰While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

¹¹The LORD said to Moses, ¹²"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'" ¹³That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, "It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

²³ Yet he gave a command to the skies above
and opened the doors of the heavens;
²⁴ he rained down manna for the people to eat,
he gave them the grain of heaven.
²⁵ Human beings ate the bread of angels;
he sent them all the food they could eat.
²⁶ He let loose the east wind from the heavens
and by his power made the south wind blow.
²⁷ He rained meat down on them like dust,
birds like sand on the seashore.
²⁸ He made them come down inside their camp,
all around their tents.
²⁹ They ate till they were gorged—
he had given them what they craved.



**A reading from the New Testament
Ephesians 4. 1-16**

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

⁴ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it^(a) says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”^(b)

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions^(c)? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything
To do it as for Thee.

A man that looks on glass
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heaven espy

All may of Thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with this tincture, "For Thy sake,"
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.

Alleluia, alleluia.
We do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.
Alleluia.

The Gospel

The holy Gospel is written in the 6th Chapter of the Gospel according to John beginning at the 24th verse.

Glory be to thee, O Lord

²⁴ Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

Jesus the Bread of Life

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

²⁶ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

²⁸ Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

³⁰ So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

³² Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise be to thee, O Christ

Reflection

The link between the reading from Exodus about the provision of the manna and the words of Jesus are deeply associated but perhaps take a bit of teasing out.

As a reminder, the people of Israel were enslaved by the Egyptians for centuries, miraculously delivered by God and led by Moses into a wilderness journey towards a promised land. These people had a 'slave mentality'. No wonder whilst travelling in this harsh wilderness, Egypt suddenly seemed very appealing. They looked back selectively, forgetting the oppression and forced labour but remembering the steady supply of food.

They had freedom but no idea what that meant or how to cope. They were beginning a completely new life and had to learn. Freedom involved taking responsibility for themselves. Freedom is part of how we grow up and they were to grow up to be the people of God.

One month in and they had had enough. They murmured against Moses and his brother Aaron. "It would have been better for us to have died by the hand of God in Egypt. There at least we ate to the full. You have brought us all here to die in this wilderness from hunger." They had completely lost sight of the miraculous deliverance and now was their first test of their trust in this God who had brought them into freedom.

God understood their predicament and did not deal with them harshly but provided manna; an interesting substance which appeared on the ground, white and like coriander seed, which they could prepare for food. They had no idea what it was, hence the name 'manna' which has at its root the idea of 'what is it?'. Importantly it was a daily provision; it melted away after the sun was upon it and it did not keep. Only enough for one day for each person could be gathered; if you tried to 'stockpile' it just went bad. However, on the day before the Sabbath, when no work should be done, they could gather double the amount, and it did not go bad.

This should have been a sign to the people to be fed earlier by Jesus. If they had thought about the 12 baskets of food remaining meticulously recorded after all had eaten enough, they might have made the connection between that and the abundance of manna before the Sabbath. This was a vision of the great sabbath that will be the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God.

When reading the gospel, we can easily skate over the literal provision of food and move quickly to interpret a figurative meaning. But manna met a real need. When they received manna, it was first not a spiritual gift, but a practical one. It was a physical substance with a spiritual grace attached to it; what Christians would identify as a 'sacrament'

Although Moses had a part to play, he instructed the people about its use, he did not provide it, God did. Neither did Jesus provide the bread to feed the 5000. They both acted as channels for the gift of God which gives life to the world. However, with Jesus, it goes further he is both the channel and the gift itself.

In John's gospel there two recurrent characteristics unique to John. There are seven teachings in which Jesus takes upon his lips the verb 'I am'. This links the human Jesus to God himself and describes the full identity and truth of the Christ and each begin with the words "I AM", the holy name of God.

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

The crowd quickly identify what he is claiming and the mood changes. Beyond the text we read today their enthusiasm turns to outrage that he should make such a claim for himself.

The second characteristic is the use of the distinctive doubled 'Amen' that Jesus uses. This occurs 25 times in John's Gospel. In the other three gospels Jesus introduces teachings with a single 'Amen'. Amen for us is the concluding formula to end a prayer or affirm support for one. Amen indicates that a statement is 'confirmed', or supported and is therefore true. Most bible translations use 'very truly' or 'verily verily' or similar. But here we are as close as anything else to Jesus' actual speech.

"Amen, Amen I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Here again is the need for our response; we are to work for that which endures. Like the hearers at the time, we ask what this work might be. We have Jesus' response. It is to believe in him, to come to him. We might respond that this does not seem like work as we imagine it. But look back at Paul's letter to the church and we see this fleshed out, spoken plainly.

Our Christian calling is indeed a gift of God, but it also involves work on our part. Just as the manna had to be gathered and prepared, we are to 'work out our salvation'. Not to earn 'brownie points with God' but as a response to the unmerited love (grace) we have received. Paul writes:

'I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ...in works of service ... speaking the truth in love, ... grow to become in every respect the mature body ...(so) all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.'

Intercessions

Let us pray for the church and for the world and let us thank God for his goodness.

For the Church remembering particularly our brothers and sisters in the faith who suffer discrimination and persecution. Strengthen all your church in the service of Christ, that we may share boldly with others the gift of salvation and wholeness found in our Lord Jesus.

We pray for the King, the Government and for all leaders of nations whose decisions and actions affect us all. Enlighten them with your wisdom and truth that they may act with integrity seeking the common good.

Our world struggles to live justly and in peace. We pray for those who suffer through disease or for lack of food and clean water; those parts of our world ravaged by conflict where instability prevents any possibility of a settled life, and for all refugees fleeing conflict.

We hold in your love those whom we love, the special people you have given to us wherever they may be, for our friends, the close ones and those we sometimes forget. We thank you for each of them and what they give to us.

Bless with hope all those in any kind of need. The lonely, the despairing and the fearful. The unemployed, homeless, deserted or friendless. Give your deep healing to the sick, the disturbed, and the damaged. We pray for those who are in our thoughts today.

We thank you for those people who have given us the examples and models by which we try to live. Those who have lived and died in quiet holiness and whose prayers have helped to sustain the world. Help us to live in the light by which they lived and to worship the source of that light, Jesus Christ our risen Lord. We commit to your peace all who have died whom we remember in love, and in common sympathy, we pray for all who mourn.

These and all the silent prayers of our hearts we offer to you. Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ our lord.
Amen

Being made one by the power of the Spirit,
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 for ever.
Amen.

God of our pilgrimage,
you have willed that the gate of mercy
should stand open for those who trust in you:
look upon us with your favour
that we who follow the path of your will
may never wander from the way of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

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 almighty,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Be with us and remain with us always
Amen

HYMN

Jesus, good above all other,
gentle Child of gentle Mother,
in a stable born our Redeemer,
give us grace to persevere

Jesus, cradled in a manger,
for us facing every danger,
living as a homeless stranger,
make we thee our King most dear.

Jesus, for thy people dying,
risen Master, death defying,
Lord in heaven, thy grace supplying,
keep us to thy presence near.

Jesus, who our sorrows bearest,
all our thoughts and hopes thou sharest,
thou to man the truth declarest;
help us all thy truth to hear.

Lord, in all our doings guide us;
pride and hate shall never divide us;
we'll go on with thee beside us,
and with joy we'll persevere!

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