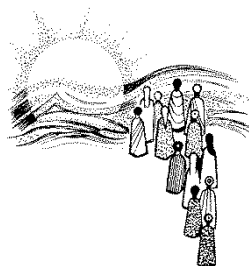


Second Sunday after Trinity 2020



Words of welcome

TODAY we are reminded of the costliness of discipleship, but reassured that if we choose to walk with Jesus the way of the cross we find ourselves drawn closer to the God who promises us his gift of peace, no matter what situation we find ourselves in. We pray today for grace and courage for the journey of faith.

Opening Acclamation

O God of life, of all life and of each life,
We lay our lives before you.

We give our lives to you, from whom nothing in us is hidden.

**You are before us, God, you are behind;
You are around us, God, you are within.**

O God of life, you know the secret thoughts of every heart.

**We bring the faith that is in us, and the doubt;
We bring the joy that is in us, and the sorrow.**

O God of life, you are in the light, and in the darkness

**We bring you the knowledge that is in us, and the ignorance;
We bring you the hope that is in us, and the despair.**

O God of life, O generous Spirit

Renew us with your life, today, tomorrow and always. Amen.

Today's Collect

Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.

Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

A reading from Matthew's gospel

Jesus summoned the twelve and sent them out with the following instruction: ²⁴A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and one's foes will be members of one's own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

For the word of God in scripture
For the word of God among us
For the word of God within us
Thanks be to God

Reflection

Today's gospel, not least the end of the passage, can, I think, be classed among 'the hard sayings of Jesus'. It doesn't make for easy reading, as Jesus makes it plain to the twelve disciples that the message they have the task of sharing would, at times, be unpopular.

Jesus came full of compassion for those around him. He healed them, he listened to them, he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom to them, and ultimately he died for them, and here he reminds the disciples that, in v. 25, they called him the devil 'Beelzebul'. He makes it clear to the disciples that when faced with the same challenges they will fare no better. Neither should we expect any preferential treatment as his followers today.

Three times Jesus tells the disciples not to be afraid, because he knew what lay ahead. It's important that we too should not allow fear of what could happen or what people might say to us, to constrict us.

The French philosopher Pascal once said that there are two kinds of servant – those who go ahead with torches to light the way, and those who come behind carrying the bags.

In his book 'Luminaries: 20 lives that illuminate the Christian way' Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, reflects on the life of St. Teresa of Avila, the 16th century Spanish mystic and Carmelite nun. She was certainly one of those servants who would be at the front with a torch to light the way. Her way was one of strict self-discipline which resulted in her famous work 'The Way of Perfection'. Unfortunately her way was not appreciated by her fellow sisters in the convent and when Teresa called for reform, they threw her out. On one occasion she was turned out at night in the middle of a rainstorm. Dressed from head to toe in her coarse wool habit she got into her donkey cart and was riding along when a wheel went into a ditch and the cart turned over, dumping her into the mud. She sat there, in mud-soaked wool, looked up to heaven, and said "Lord, if this is how you treat your friends, it's no wonder you don't have many"

In the book, Rowan Williams points out that Teresa reminds her readers many times that Mary and Martha (as seen in our painting in the Lady Chapel at Christ Church) join to welcome Jesus. She reminds us that we are called to grow into human beings where contemplation and action are inseparable. For Teresa being Christian was being present in the world with God at the centre of all your experience. From that centre the 'mission' of God goes forwards in word and deed. Contemplation and action were part of the whole. There is no longer a gap between Mary and Martha.

It's a good model for us. It's the model Jesus commended to his first disciples. Not promising them an easy life, but promising his presence with them. A presence they would recognise in contemplation and in action.

And so may all of us grow in contemplation..... a contemplation that moves us to action as we seek to be bearers of the good news of God's love. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

In faith let us pray to God our Father,
in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,
and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God of love, we pray for the life of your Church throughout the world, especially for those who guide us through uncertain times: our Bishops, David, Mark and Mark; our Archdeacon, Karen; our Area Dean, Rachel; and Anne, Tom and Barbra. May they labour in your strength and rest in your peace. May every open building be a welcoming, safe space, every congregation a community of love, and every Christian a witness to your grace.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer.

God of mercy, we pray for a world emerging from lockdown, and for those who exercise power at this time. We pray for decision-makers, that they might practise discernment, courage and compassion. We pray for protesters, as they call us to face our past with honesty and repentance. Show us how to live as members of the human family; to reject violence and exploitation; to bear each other's burdens, and to work together for justice and peace.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer.

God of compassion, we pray for those who are ill or anxious, at home, in care communities and in hospital. We pray for those whose lives are filled with fear and despair, for all who feel forgotten, and for those who are shielding or isolated. We pray for the health and care workers serving our community, and for those whose daily offerings of sacrificial care are known only to you. Draw near with your saving love and bring healing and hope.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer.

God of glory, we rejoice in the communion of saints; we remember all who have faithfully lived and all who have died in Christian hope. We hold in your love the recently departed, John Meager and Brenda Platt. We remember also those whose anniversaries fall at this time, Maureen Daly, Edna Gee and Gordon Peacock. Help us to follow their example and bring us with them into the fullness of your eternal joy.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer.

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding;
pour into our hearts such love towards you
that we, loving you above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We join all our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus gave us.

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.

Closing words and Blessing

O God, you have set before us a great hope that your kingdom will come on earth,
And have taught us to pray for its coming:
Make us ready to thank you for the signs of its dawning,
And to pray and work for the perfect day when your will shall be done
on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Some words from George MacLeod, founder of the Iona Community
Christ, you are before us.
This is what gives us courage to go on.
It is you who directs.
It is you who beckons.
So we dedicate ourselves.
And ask your blessing.

The blessing of the God of life be ours,
The blessing of the loving Christ be ours,
The blessing of the Holy Spirit be ours,
To cherish us, to help us, to make us holy.
Amen.

Let us go in the peace of Christ
Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the king of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation:
all ye who hear,
now to his temple draw near,
joining in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shieldeth thee gently from harm, or when fainting sustaineth:
hast thou not seen
how thy heart's wishes have been
granted in what he ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the Amen
sound from his people again:
gladly for aye we adore him!

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