

A morning service for Sunday 19 July
The sixth Sunday after Trinity

God bless your home and all who dwell in it

This is the day that the Lord has made
Let us rejoice and be glad in it

Hymn

There is a hope
Stuart Townend

https://youtu.be/o_yv5yGZnBc

Introduction

Today we will all be worshipping God together in heart and mind if not in place, for today our worship in church and the service you have here are the same. You will be reading the words we are saying and hearing the same hymns. We are together where it matters, in the presence of God, for his love reaches us in our homes, our workplaces, in hospital, in villages, towns and cities and in the fields and pathways of our countryside. Throughout the past 18 weeks we have been held in that love, a community of Christians who through prayer and through action have supported and comforted each other through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ. Now as we move into a world where we can return to church, we need to support each other still. Many will still be shielding, and others will be holding back from any social activities to protect their loved ones. There is great anxiety for many as they face the new normal and its strange rules of behaviour. We still need to hold each other in our prayers as well as looking outwards to those who are now beginning to open up the world to us all and serving the community in many different ways. As Christians we will all continue to follow the regulations, not merely out of obedience or fear but out

of a genuine wish to alleviate the worries and anxieties of others. Love casts out fear. But love cannot by remove the source of the anxiety, what love does is to support, care, protect and sustain; love promises to stand beside us all the way. The Celtic Christians knew this so well and many of their prayers are enfolding prayers.

Like these from St Patrick

Lord be with us this day,
Within us to purify us;
Above us to draw us up;
Beneath us to sustain us;
Before us to lead us;
Behind us to restrain us;
Around us to protect us

And

I bind unto myself today,
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, his might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need,
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, his shield to ward,
The Word of God to give me speech
His heavenly host to be my guard.
Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger

With Christ enfolding us with his love and with his promise of eternal care we can be strong to help others and to bear whatever this world sends.

Thanksgiving and confession

Blessed are you, creator of all
to you be praise and glory for ever.
As your dawn renews the face of the earth,
bringing light and life to all creation,
So may we rejoice in this day you have made
As we awake refreshed from the depths of sleep
open our eyes to behold your presence
and strengthen our hands to do your will,
that the world may rejoice and give you praise
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Blessed be God for ever.

Loving God we have come to worship you
help us to pray to you in faith,
and to hear your word with eagerness
Through Christ our Lord
Amen

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

Absolution

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.
Amen

Collect for Trinity 6

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 in all things, and above all things
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and for ever. Amen

Hymn

O God you search me, and you know me

https://youtu.be/mEGc3_D19Vo

First Reading

Isaiah 44; 6-8

Besides Me There Is No God

⁶ Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel
and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:

“I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.

⁷ Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.

Let him declare and set it before me,
since I appointed an ancient people.

Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.

⁸ Fear not, nor be afraid;

have I not told you from of old and declared it?

And you are my witnesses!

Is there a God besides me?

There is no Rock; I know not any.”

Psalm 86; 11 – 17,

- ¹¹ Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.
- ¹² I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.
- ¹³ For great is your steadfast love toward me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
- ¹⁴ O God, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.
- ¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
- ¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;
save the child of your serving girl.
- ¹⁷ Show me a sign of your favour,
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame,
because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

Second Reading

Romans 8; 12-25

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³ for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Hymn

Lord of all hopefulness

<https://youtu.be/LCBjxVP6GWE>

The Gospel Reading

Matthew 13; 24-30 & 36-43

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” ³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Reflection

This is a Gospel reading renowned for the story of the very evangelical, pulpit thumping preacher who, warning his congregation of the results of bad living, emphasised most strongly their end, describing the blazing furnace in such detail that one could feel the heat of the flames licking the feet and faces of the congregation and hear the “weeping and the gnashing of teeth.” But at that very point, where strong men were reviewing their lives in trepidation, an elderly lady, a pillar of the church and sitting in the front row of the pews, says “but I’ve lost me teeth” to which came the stern response “teeth will be provided!”

Clearly this Gospel passage is about judgement. The elderly lady, pillar of the church and probably as innocent as the day, sees the story for just that – a warning against sinful behaviour and takes it personally. And this preacher and many others, home in on this aspect of Jesus’ explanation of the story and put the fear of God into their listeners.

But if we stand back from this parable and think about the other stories Jesus has told, about the people he has healed, and about his conversations with the Pharisees, we begin to question such a simple analysis.

Jesus explains the parable as a story of the end times, the final harvest, when God will judge who is to be included in the Kingdom and who has excluded themselves. He uses an example from the harvests of his times – where all the crop is gathered in and then the weeds are separated from the good wheat and burned. Until this moment, the two cannot be separated, they are too alike. The farmer would risk losing much of his crop if he tried to sort it out too early. God, the best of farmers, sends his angels to carry out this sifting because they are the ones who know exactly who’s who. In other words, no one here knows who’s wheat and who’s a weed.

During his three years of earthly ministry, Jesus is constantly facing people, particularly the Pharisees, who judge him by the company he keeps, by the behaviour of his disciples and for healing on the Sabbath. They have already put their neighbours, as well as Jesus, his disciples, the sick, the woman taken in adultery and many others, into the dock, tried and convicted them and consigned

them to hell. They have taken upon themselves God's right to judge – they have declared that a person who is suffering in any way does so as a form of punishment, and that those who are healthy, financially sound and pillars of society are obviously favoured by God and therefore righteous and good. It enables them to disregard anyone who might call upon them for assistance and to only befriend those who are 'righteous' like themselves.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus attacks their attitude with perfect, pithy rejoinders like "before you fuss about the tiny piece of dust in your brother's eye, how about removing that plank in your own." And then surpasses all of his remarks with the wonderful response to the accusers of the woman taken in adultery. Her punishment should have been stoning – they bring her to Jesus to force his hand in condemning her and he replies quite simply "let him who is without sin, cast the first stone." Not even the Pharisees would dare to think of themselves totally without sin – it would be blasphemy - for only God is without sin.

Jesus is constantly reminding his contemporaries that judgement belongs to God and that they have no idea how God judges. Often as we read the Gospels, we can get the message that Jesus is saying 'you are all sinners and therefore judgment will find you out.' But on the other hand, as soon as someone turns to him for help, recognising who he is, his kindness and compassion pours forth.

Actions and words combine in the works of Jesus to reveal how God sees us. When we turn to him, he is immediately responsive. When we ask his forgiveness it is instant, and even if we later have to return to ask again, we are still forgiven. God's intention is for us to have a good life, a life where we acknowledge the things we get wrong and try and put them right, asking Him for help. In fact, we become self-judging, not in the neurotic sense, but simply and straightforwardly pointing out to ourselves where we have failed to love God and our neighbour as ourselves. Then we can ask him to help us sort ourselves out.

But why is it that God is asking us not to judge people? As well as its being his job we might also answer that question by saying that we haven't got all the facts. Just like the men in the story who wanted to tear out the weeds, we don't know

which is which or who's who. We only know what we see, which in most cases is very little indeed. But there is an even more important reason for not judging people.

The moment we judge someone else we are making ourselves superior and them lesser beings. We are taking on ourselves the right to put someone in a category, pigeon-hole them. And according to the pigeon-hole – so the way we treat them. It enables us to demean a whole group according to their race, colour, creed, gender or age. We can assign values to them, assume motives, and even dispose of them. Throughout recent history this very human mechanism has been used time and again to oppress, and to kill.

Jesus points out the need for God's judgment – a knowing, merciful, kindly judgement which delivers us from ourselves – and he points out the dangers of judging others.

It was a danger that he knew only too well. Because not long after he told these parables there was a whole judgemental army ranged against him – an army of scribes, pharisees and the Temple authorities. They had decided that he was dangerous, that he was a worthless troublemaker who upset their carefully manufactured opinions of themselves, and that he was expendable.

We can look through history and see time and time again where peoples have been judged and considered outside society – and enslaved, oppressed and destroyed.

And the cross of Christ reminds us of just that.

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 on 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

Hymn

Make me a channel of your peace

<https://youtu.be/daGWdbrSGBM>

Intercessions

Lord Jesus, you are the way, the truth and the life,
You have shown us the way to live by loving our neighbours
You have taught us to seek the truth about ourselves,
about the complex relationship of our world
and about the nature of your love
help us to face ourselves honestly
and help us become the loving people you created us to be

Lord Jesus, you warned us that judgment is God's alone
Yet in our world we are surrounded by voices who judge,
in social media, in the press and television, in parliament,
in councils, schools and in the pub.
Help us to resist the temptation to get swept up
into the tide of judgment that sees others as lesser
and us as greater beings
help us to look for the bigger picture
and give to others the compassion we would hope for ourselves.

Lord Jesus, give to all those entrusted with positions of authority,
those who make the decisions that govern our lives,
the ability to make fair and impartial decisions
the wisdom to discern the right way forward
and the strength to bear responsibility faithfully.

Lord Jesus, give a voice to all those
who are made to feel small, for others to feel big,
give confidence to those who need to belittle others to feel better,
give peace to the anxious and strength to the weak
so that they may grow in dignity and peace
secure in their being, confidently growing to the fulness of life.

Lord Jesus, we bring before you the sick and suffering of our world
all those known to us and all those known only to you
we remember especially

Alex, Anne & Geoff, Catherine, Derek & Val, Don & Ro, Eileen, Frances, Harriet, Jacky, Matthew and Lucy, Michelle, Peter,
Val Adams, Jake Agnew, Elizabeth Bailey & family; Ken Baker, Robert Bloomfield, Nonnie Bridge, Doreen Clarke, David Kloose [Close], Guy Coxeter, Jimmy Cromar, Beryl Dabson, Peter Dickinson, Barry Dowsett, Jean Foster, Tom & Kylie Freeman & Family, Doreen Gilbert, Gillian Grafham, Eddie Gordon, Richard Green,
Colin Hart, Kaye Head, Kath House, Stephen Johnson, Hayden Keeling, Colin Lister,
Rene M, Claire and Andrew MacLeod, Rhys Maples, David McNeill, Carole Noble, Harriet Pearson, Cecilia Phelps, Dave Phillips, Robert Price, Doug Watson, Ruth Wells, and the family and friends of the late Jack Samson and the late Karon Dallard

Lord Jesus, we pray for your church
In the healing ministry you have called it to exercise
an inner healing of body, mind and soul
an inner healing of self-worth
which only you can offer.
Grant that your people everywhere
may be so filled with the Holy Spirit
and so touched by your grace
that they may share effectively
in the wider work of healing
through their life and witness
bringing wholeness to broken people
and a broken world

We bring our prayers to an end with the words that Jesus taught 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 Prayer

Loving God, lead us out into the world
renewed in vigour, in hope,
in faith and in purpose.
Send us out to live and work for you
and to live your life
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn

Praise to the holiest in the heights

<https://youtu.be/fPBE5r3a0UA>

Blessing

The peace of God
Which passes all understanding
Keep your 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 you and all those you love and pray for
This day and always
Amen

Closing music

Here is love, vast as the ocean

<https://youtu.be/v8YOPj5TnUM>