

Ashburton and Moorland Team

Evening Worship

TRINITY 12

22nd August 2021



Preparation

¶ The Gathering

A light is brought in, or a candle may be lit.

The officiant greets the people with these or other suitable words

In the evening, Jesus came and stood among the disciples and said to them: 'Peace be with you.' *John 20:19*

The light and the peace of Jesus Christ be with you all
and also with you.

Blessed are you, sovereign God of all,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
In the darkness of this passing age,
your saints proclaim the glory of your kingdom,
revealed among us in Christ our light.
Open our eyes to behold your presence
and join our song to those of the saints
in praise of all your marvellous deeds.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

Hymn – Stand up, stand up for Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xfcu9ahY04Q>

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
stand up before his cross,
an instrument of torture
inflicting pain and loss;
transformed by his obedience
to God's redeeming plan
the cross was overpowered
by Christ, both God and man.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
be counted as his own;
his gospel of forgiveness
he cannot spread alone.
The love which draws us to him,
he calls us out to share;
he calls us to the margins
to be his presence there.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
in faith and hope be strong,
stand firm for right and justice,
opposed to sin and wrong.
Give comfort to the wounded,
and care for those in pain,
for Christ, in those who suffer,
is crucified again.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
give courage to the weak,
be unashamed to praise him,
be bold his name to speak.
Confront the cross unflinching,
Christ's love has set us free;
He conquered death for ever
and lives eternally.

.

Prayers of Penitence

(Sit or kneel)

Jesus says, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'
So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ,
Confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

**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 neighbours 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.**

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.

The Liturgy of the Word

Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods.

'Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.'

Then the people answered, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.'

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Ephesians 6:10-20

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn – We pray thee, heavenly father

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdt832_Mh-E

We pray thee, heavenly Father,
to hear us in thy love,
and pour upon thy children
the unction from above;
that so in love abiding,
from all defilement free,
we may in pureness offer
our souls, ourselves to thee.

Be thou our guide and helper,
O Jesus Christ, we pray;
so may we well approach thee,
if thou wilt be the Way:
thou, very Truth, hast promised
to help us in our strife,
food of the weary pilgrim,
eternal source of Life.

And thou, creator Spirit,
look on us, we are thine;
renew in us thy graces,
upon our darkness shine;
that, with thy benediction
upon our souls outpoured,
we may receive in gladness
the blessing of the Lord.

O Trinity of Persons,
O Unity most high,
on thee alone relying
thy servants would draw nigh:
unworthy in our weakness,
on thee our hope is stayed,
and blessed by thy forgiveness
we will not be afraid.

Gospel Reading

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord.

John 6:56-69

Jesus said to the crowd: 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon

Jesus had this amazing vision of what the world might be, what the world ought to be. Of what would make people really happy.

He came across so many unhappy people – sick, hungry, homeless, argumentative, poor, down-trodden – and he knew he could help them. He knew how to lift their spirits and their eyes up, looking towards God, and how they could be filled by God's Spirit rather than their own misery.

They could be liberated and inspired. What they needed was bread from heaven – a spiritual food from God which could bring peace, comfort, joy, and everlasting life.

But he had great trouble in convincing people of what they needed to do. In today's gospel we hear how Jesus had taken the crowd along with him so far, but only so far. Because of what he was saying, "many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him."

I find this shocking. In my head I think of Jesus as completely successful in convincing people of his way of thinking, of his understanding of God. But he wasn't. Clearly a lot of people felt it was too risky to continue following him.

Maybe their friends were tugging at their sleeves saying "You don't want to get caught up in this movement – you've no idea where you might end up – it's far too risky." Which it was – Jesus was to lose his life.

Maybe they felt that they were ok, really. Good enough. They paid their taxes, they didn't see they were doing anything wrong. Why take a risk?

Maybe they thought that material success and comfort was all that mattered?

They found Jesus' teaching difficult. "This man says he can give people eternal life. No one could believe that."

So, many simply left the crowd and went home. "That's not for me!"

I am reminded of my time at school where there was an outdoor swimming pool – unheated and cold looking. There were some of my friends in the pool clearly enjoying themselves, splashing and diving, messing around a bit and being very noisy into the bargain.

I guess they had learnt to swim somewhere else, and so weren't scared of the water. I was! I knew I couldn't swim, and was as thin as a rake and pictured myself shivering and spluttering in the freezing water.

I simply couldn't imagine enjoying myself like they were – I would just sink to the bottom.

So I walked away....

Later, with some careful teaching in the pool, with other beginners at the shallow end, I began to get some sense of the fun of swimming – but I was still frozen stiff and throughout my school days I did my best to avoid all swimming!

When we are given a choice, there is always the option to say “No, that's not for me.” Like the disciples who might have been persuaded, but decided, on balance, it wasn't for them.

In this remarkable passage from John's gospel, we see Jesus sounding unsure and rather vulnerable.

“Do you also wish to go away?” he asked the remaining twelve, sounding disheartened.

And Simon, it had to be Simon because he always spoke from his heart without thinking, Simon said “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

Simon's words must have warmed Jesus' heart....

In a sense, the clarity of Jesus' message was the problem he was up against. “The spirit gives life; the flesh is useless.” he said. He couldn't be clearer than that. And yet it's a subtle message as well.

Of course flesh isn't useless in one sense – we are made of it. We can't live without food, water, sleep, rest. Our flesh needs sustenance – and heavenly bread can't be put in the toaster and

eaten with butter and marmalade! Jesus fed the five thousand with solid food!

But that's the backdrop to real living. The life that matters is about companionship and friends, parents and carers, teachers and peer groups, art and music, drama and dancing, shared activities and interests, attachment (inevitably followed sooner or later by loss).

These hint at the existence in everyone of a spiritual life. And this was always Jesus' focus. A life where others matter, where we can give rather than receive. Where we discover deep satisfaction in service to others.

Jesus was wanting people to make a decision. To take the step of turning to him, being inspired by his vision of loving God and loving others on a lifelong spiritual journey leading to eternal life. The alternative was to just drift down the slippery slope of self-indulgence.

And the disciples said "Yes" to Jesus. "This is what we want."

It was a great choice – one that we in our own lives have also made. And keep making – it seems that almost every day we have to decide afresh what to do for the best. St Paul describes it as a battle against the wiles of the devil, in which our faith, salvation, truth, and righteousness will be tested over and over again.

But the strength of God's power will be our protection, as we proclaim the gospel of peace.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Hymn – You are the King of glory,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C0-dkK8cnQ>

You are the King of glory,
You are the Prince of peace,
You are the Lord of heaven and earth,
You're the Son of righteousness.
Angels bow down before You,
worship and adore,
for you have the words of eternal life,
You are Jesus Christ the Lord.
Hosanna to the Son of David!
Hosanna to the King of kings!
Glory in the highest heaven,
for Jesus the Messiah reigns!
(Repeat)

The Creed

**We believe in God the Father,
God almighty, by whose plan
earth and heaven sprang to being,
all created things began.
We believe in Christ the Saviour,
Son of God in human frame,
virgin-born, the child of Mary
upon whom the Spirit came.**

**Christ, who on the cross forsaken,
like a lamb to slaughter led,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
he descended to the dead.
We believe in Jesus risen,
heaven's king to rule and reign,
to the Father's side ascended
till as judge he comes again.**

**We believe in God the Spirit;
in one Church, below, above:
saints of God in one communion,
one in holiness and love.
So by faith, our sins forgiven,
Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,
we shall rise with him in glory
to the life that knows no end.**

Prayers

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ,
let us pray to the Father.

In joy and hope we pray.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his
glorious and life-giving resurrection,
and that he may fill us with the spirit of generosity.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That people in all countries and places of oppression
may find fresh strength and support in their struggles
for justice and fairness.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That God may grant us humility
to be subject to one another in Christian love,
and learning ways of generosity and peace.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That he may enable a sharing of the world's resources
to provide for those who lack food,
work, or shelter.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That by his power war and famine
may cease through all the world.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That he may comfort all those suffering from loneliness, isolation or
fear at this uncertain time.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick,
the weak, the dying and those who mourn,
to comfort and strengthen them.

In a moment of silence, let us bring before God
those whom we know to be in particular need at this time

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful:
We pray to you, O Lord

That your holy angels may lead us in oaths of peace and goodwill:
We pray to you, O Lord

That we may be pardoned and forgiven for our sins and offences:
We pray to you, O Lord

That there may be peace in your church and for the whole world
We pray to you, O Lord

That we may be bound together by your Holy Spirit,
In communion with all your saints,
Entrusting one another and all our life to Christ:
We pray to you, O Lord

The Lord's Prayer

**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.**

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid
and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask
but through the merits and mediation
of 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.

Hymn – God of grace and God of glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9rWrw3XB08>

God of grace and God of glory,
on thy people pour thy power.
Crown thine ancient church's story,
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us,
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days.

Cure thy children's warring madness;
bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore.
Let the gift of thy salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving thee whom we adore.

The Blessing

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen

Let us bless the Lord

Thanks be to God.