

Evening Prayer – Trinity 18

3rd October 2021,

from The Book of Common Prayer

Hymn – Lord Jesus Christ

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA_g98O42Q4

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have come to us,
you are one with us,
Mary's Son;
cleansing our souls from all their sin
pouring your love and goodness in,
Jesus our love for you we sing,
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
now and every day
teach us how to pray,
Son of God.
You have commanded us to do
this is remembrance, Lord, of You:
into our lives your power breaks through
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have come to us,
born as one of us,
Mary's Son.
Led out to die on Calvary,
risen from death to set us free,
living Lord Jesus, help us see
You are Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
I would come to you,
live my life for you.
Son of God.
All your commands I know are true,
your many gifts will make me new,
into my life your power breaks through,
Living Lord.

Opening prayers

God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God and God in him.

1 John 4.16

Beloved, we are come together in the presence of almighty God and of the whole company of heaven to offer unto him through our Lord Jesus Christ our worship and praise and thanksgiving; to make confession of our sins; to pray, as well for others as for ourselves, that we may know more truly the greatness of God's love and shew forth in our lives the fruits of his grace; and to ask on behalf of all men such things as their well-being doth require. Wherefore let us kneel in silence, and remember God's presence with us now.

**Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.
We have followed too much the devices and desires
of our own hearts.
We have offended against thy holy laws.
We have left undone those things
which we ought to have done;
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done;
and there is no health in us.
But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders.
Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults.
Restore thou them that are penitent;
according to thy promises declared unto mankind
in Christ Jesu our Lord.
And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,
to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.**

Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord,
to thy faithful people pardon and peace,
that they may be cleansed from all their sins,
and serve thee with a quiet mind;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that 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.

O Lord, open thou our lips
and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Praise ye the Lord.
The Lord's name be praised.

Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord :
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded :
the lowliness of his handmaiden.

For behold, from henceforth :
all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath magnified me :
and holy is his Name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him :
throughout all generations.

He hath shewed strength with his arm :
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat :
and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things :
and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel :
as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :
world without end. Amen.

Old Testament Lesson

Genesis 2:18-24

Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.' So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,
'This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.'
Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife,
and they become one flesh.

Psalm 8

O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name in all the world!

Your majesty above the heavens is praised
out of the mouths of babes at the breast.

You have founded a stronghold against your foes,
that you might still the enemy and the avenger.

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,

All sheep and oxen,
even the wild beasts of the field,

The birds of the air, the fish of the sea
and whatsoever moves in the paths of the sea.

O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name in all the world!

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.

Epistle

Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, 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. 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, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

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

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

You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned them with glory and honour,
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, 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.

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. 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, saying,

‘I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.’

Nunc Dimittis

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace :
according to thy word.

For mine eyes have seen :
thy salvation;

Which thou hast prepared :
before the face of all people;

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles :
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.

Gospel Reading

Mark 10:2-16

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

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. 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. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth:
and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic Church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

**Our Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.

And grant us thy salvation.

O Lord, save the Queen.

And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness.

And make thy chosen people joyful.

O Lord, save thy people.

And bless thine inheritance.

Give peace in our time, O Lord.

**Because there is none other that fighteth for us,
but only thou, O God.**

O God, make clean our hearts within us.

And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

The Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God,
increase in us thy gift of faith
that, forsaking that which is behind
and reaching out to that which is before,
we may run the way of thy commandments
and win the crown of everlasting joy;
through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Collect for Peace

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord,
in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life,
whose service is perfect freedom;
defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies;
that we, surely trusting in thy defence,
may not fear the power of any adversaries;
through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect for Aid against all Perils

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord;
and by thy great mercy
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night;
for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Hymn – Jesus, good above all other

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cgNRVPifDs>

Jesus, good above all other,
gentle child of gentle mother,
in a stable born our brother,
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 heav'n, 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 ne'er divide us;
we'll go on with thee beside us,
and with joy we'll persevere!

Sermon

The reading from Genesis and the Gospel reading are both setting out the importance of marriage, of loving and stable relationships. When two people fall in love and then get married, in almost all cases we can assume that they are determined to be faithful and loving to the end of their days.

The vows, the rings, the smiles, the love, all combine to give the couple a great start together, fulfilling God's desire that they may not be lonely. And it is God's desire that all such marriages should be life-long and faithful.

But oddly, there's no mention of what is, for many, the natural consequence of being married – the birth of children. For these lucky couples, loneliness is dramatically reduced when a demanding, noisy, sleep-depriving infant arrives on the scene.

And when that happens, the parents typically start doting on their child. Their focus changes from their own romantic joys, to a whole new raft of responsibilities and a whole new outlook. Suddenly bringing up their child becomes a major priority. Giving them the best possible start.

Books are read, advice is googled, friends are consulted, even grandparents are sometimes asked what they did!

A child is immensely precious, and also, says Jesus, has a trusting nature that illustrates perfectly the relationship God would love to have with us. "For it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

Jesus was being completely outrageous when he said this – no-one in those days considered children that important – they thought rather that it was the holy people and the religious leaders who were far more likely to get to heaven than a squalling baby!

But Jesus was absolutely clear, and suited his words with actions that sound very like an infant baptism. "And he took the children up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."

We had a baptism in Widecombe Church last week, where I picked up the child in my arms, poured water over them and blessed them.

And we also had this verse that immediately preceded today's gospel: "If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea."

Jesus was well aware that children could be led astray in all sorts of ways, that they can have “stumbling blocks” put in front of them. This clearly was an issue in his day just as it is a major issue today.

And Jesus’ condemnation of someone who takes advantage of a child is deliberately graphic to illustrate just how appalling it is that any child should have to suffer at the hands of someone else.

He is saying that child safety and child wellbeing should have the highest possible priority. And none of us can possibly disagree!

So a major theme in any child’s upbringing is gaining the commitment of everyone close to the family to support the child by prayer, example and teaching. As it were, supporting them with concentric walls of protection – parents, then godparents, then friends, then the wider community.

That way, children have the best chance of being kept free from harm.

But the other theme in today’s gospel is that none of us are perfect. Sadly, arguments break out from time to time in almost all marriages; many children suffer abuse; all sorts of hurt can be caused in all sorts of ways.

Things go wrong. Everyone gets things wrong from time to time. I know I do.

So what’s the right thing to do when we get something wrong, and hurt someone else (either physically or emotionally)?

- Forget all about it, toughen up?
- Do nothing and keep your head down?
- Find someone else to blame?
- Request a millstone and be thrown into the sea?
- Apologise to God?
- Apologise to the person we’ve upset?

Both the last two are the positive answers.

If we can empathise with the person we have upset, then we’re most of the way there. Seeking their forgiveness, making amends, and asking them and God for forgiveness and a fresh start – these are the ways to a brighter future, and deeper relationships.

Many marriages have been saved by talking through issues, coming to a more generous understanding of difficulties, maybe working with Relate.

And many people find a deeper sense of joy and happiness when a problem has been tackled and solved. Glimpsing what Jesus meant when we become like a little child – living a life free from guilt and shame, and surrounded by love, thanking God for all his goodness.

Amen.

Hymn – Blest are the pure in heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xw7u0oDHqcU>

Blest are the pure in heart,
for they shall see our God;
the secret of the Lord is theirs,
their soul is Christ's abode.

The Lord who left the heavens
our life and peace to bring,
to dwell in lowliness with men,
their pattern and their king.

Still to the lowly soul
he doth himself impart
and for his dwelling and his throne
chooseth the pure in heart.

Lord, we thy presence seek;
may ours this blessing be:
give us a pure and lowly heart,
a temple meet for thee.

Prayers

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

Almighty and ever-living God, who by thy holy apostle hast taught us to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks, for all men: we humbly beseech thee most mercifully to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy divine majesty; beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity and concord; and grant that all they that do confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy word, and live in unity and godly love.

We beseech thee also to lead all nations in the way of righteousness and peace; and so to direct all kings and rulers, that under them thy people may be godly and quietly governed. And grant unto thy servant Elizabeth our Queen, and to all that are put in authority under her that they may truly and indifferently administer justice, to the maintenance of thy true religion, and virtue.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops, priests and deacons, especially to thy servant Robert our bishop, that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and lively word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments.

Guide and prosper, we pray thee, those who are labouring for the spread of thy gospel among the nations, and enlighten with thy Spirit all places of education and learning; that the whole world may be filled with the knowledge of thy truth.

And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace; and specially to this congregation here present, that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

And we most humbly beseech thee of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all them who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we commend to thy gracious keeping, O Lord, all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear, beseeching thee, according to thy promises, to grant them refreshment, light and peace.

And here we give thee most high praise and hearty thanks for all thy saints, who have been the chosen vessels of thy grace, and lights of the world in their several generations; and we pray that, rejoicing in their fellowship and following their good examples, we may be partakers with them of thy heavenly kingdom.

Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator and advocate. **Amen.**

A prayer for all those affected by Coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of thy mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from thy love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Silence

(You may like to add your own prayer(s) at this point, perhaps focusing on those you are most concerned about.)

Hymn – Christ triumphant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0r3EogSdfPU>

Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King.
Lord of heav'n our lives sustaining
hear us as we sing:
Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!

Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
Pow'r and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:
Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name.

Suffering Servant scorned, ill-treated,
victim, crucified!
Death is though the cross defeated,
sinners justified:
Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name.

Priestly King, enthroned forever
high in heaven above!
Sin and death and hell shall never
Stifle hymns of love:
Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name.

So, our heart and voices raising
Through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon You gazing,
this shall be our song:
Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name.

Ending

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,
be with us all evermore. Amen.