

Ashburton and Moorland Team

TRINITY 18

16th October 2022



¶ The Gathering

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

HYMN – Thou, whose almighty word

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJuqdlVH8VY>

Thou, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight;
Hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

Thou, who didst come to bring
on thy redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
O now to all mankind
let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love,
lifegiving, holy Dove,
speed forth thy flight;
move o'er the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light!

Holy and blessed Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world, far and wide,
let there be light!

Words: John Marriott
(1780-1825)

Prayer of Preparation

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

The Summary of the Law

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:
The first commandment is this:
'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'
There is no other commandment greater than these.
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Confession

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ
to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven,
and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Gloria in Excelsis

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
increase in us your gift of faith
that, forsaking what lies behind
and reaching out to that which is before,
we may run the way of your commandments
and win the crown of everlasting joy;
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.

¶ The Liturgy of the Word

Readings

A reading from the book of Genesis (32.22-31)

Jacob got up, took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.' The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the second letter of Timothy (3.14 – 4.5)

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn – Be thou my guardian and my guide

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuirBAKHc5g>

Be thou my guardian and my guide,
and hear me when I call;
let not my slippery footsteps slide,
and hold me lest I fall.

The world, the flesh, and Satan dwell
around the path I tread;
O save me from the snares of hell,
thou quickener of the dead.

And if I tempted am to sin,
and outward things are strong,
do thou, O Lord, keep watch within,
and save my soul from wrong.

Still let me ever watch and pray,
and feel that I am frail;
that if the tempter cross my way,
yet he may not prevail.

Isaac Williams
(1802-1865)

Gospel Reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke
Glory to you, O Lord.

Luke 18.1-8

Jesus told his disciples a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming." ' And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon

In our readings, firstly we heard Jacob demanding a favour from God – and having it granted.

Then we had Timothy telling us that we must endure suffering.

And thirdly we have a widow demanding, and being given, justice by a reluctant judge.

What's going on? These are all people who are in touch with God, living their lives as best they can, but two of them are seeking favours for themselves, and the third (Timothy) is saying that we may well suffer if we are true to our mission to bring other people to faith.

It all feels a bit contradictory. I wonder where your sympathies lie?

Picture the widow, who is having a hard time. I feel a lot of sympathy for her. It was very tough being a widow in Jesus' time – when your husband died you lost your household income and there was no social security or tax credits. There was a tradition that widows should marry the brother of their deceased husband, but that's unlikely to work for many widows.

But it seems as though this widow was suffering unfairly. Maybe her husband had left her a property, and his family were preventing her from inheriting it. Or maybe her savings had been taken from her illegally.

Jesus doesn't spell out the details, and anyway he's making up the story, calling it a parable. I sympathise with the widow in her lonely battle, and am glad when the lazy judge is forced to do something for her.

There's a timeless truth here – people administering justice should always act on behalf of those who have been treated unfairly. Sadly there are many places where justice can only be achieved if you know the right people, or can offer a bribe, or where you are wearing the right headgear. Think for a moment of the injustices happening today in Iran against women who break the head-covering code?

Jesus then promises justice to all people who, like the widow, suffer injustice. It's his vision of the Kingdom of God here on earth that God will grant justice to all his chosen ones – to all the people who are doing their best to lead good and holy lives but come up against difficulties that are not of their making.

I take it that “chosen ones” are those who God would choose (or select) from a crowd made up of all kinds of people – some of whom would have no interest in God's kingdom, but would rather just take or demand what they selfishly want for themselves – they would not be “chosen”!

Jacob was another “chosen” one, inheriting his father's blessing by a trick carried out by his mother. For many years he had been afraid his brother Esau would take revenge on him, and in today's reading Jacob is having a sleepless night facing up to the prospect of meeting Esau – will he be killed?

He's done all he can to make peace – sending flocks and herds to his brother as a peace-offering – but will that be enough?

He wants God on his side, and by wrestling with God's angel, and winning, he receives a blessing for his journey. Jacob is trusting God for his safety, and is grateful for God's blessing – with that he can face the dreaded meeting.

Both the widow and Jacob are receiving support from God when tackling a difficult situation – in a real sense, they have earned it. It's not that people of faith get special treatment, that God gives them an easy life on their way to heaven, rather it's that God supports those who work at bringing in his Kingdom, who do their best to make the world a better place.

Timothy is writing to such people – encouraging them, even though there will probably be suffering and hardship for the sake of the gospel. It's because they are struggling that Timothy is writing to encourage them.

His vision is that “everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.... be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage.” The

people he is writing to are finding it tough, being ridiculed, and he is affirming them.

I can remember when I was a teenager and trying to be a good Christian, I was challenged by some of my non-Christian friends who said that Christianity was a soft option, it just meant enjoying spending time with like-minded friends, and coming across as “holier-than-thou.”

“You’re just in it for yourself – and you think you are such a goody-goody.”

Sadly, this view of Christianity hasn’t really changed much – many Christians are seen as escaping from the difficulties of the tough world by ignoring it, by forming communities where they can boast about being saved, and where they can safely condemn those who are going to hell.

Timothy wouldn’t recognise this lifestyle. For him his faith was a leading-edge challenge to a corrupt society. Like the prophets, Elijah or Isaiah, he saw that the revelations and inspiration of God revealed in Scripture (what we know as the Old Testament) were a call to a new lifestyle, where widows and orphans were supported, where promiscuity and drunkenness were forgone, and gentleness and peace were to become the norm.

His faith in Jesus, as the Messiah who fulfilled the scriptures, drove him to urge everyone to live their lives differently, unselfishly. For him “all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient.”

Proficient in what? So that they are “equipped for every good work.”

So we are to “proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.” Not for our own ends, but to challenge the ills of society.

There’s nothing cosy about this, as anyone who has fought for justice knows – like the widow in Jesus’s story.

Although this sounds a tough call – “Why would anyone put themselves out like that?” people might ask, wanting an easier lifestyle for themselves – the, perhaps unexpected, result is the best possible life!

With good fellowship, joyful praise and from time to time communion with God himself in the receiving of bread and wine.

Nothing is better! Thanks be to God.

Amen.

The Nicene Creed

***I / We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.***

***I / We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.***

***For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.***

***I / We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.***

**// We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
// We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
// We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

The Peace

We are the body of Christ.
In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace
and builds up our common life.

The peace of the Lord be always with us.

Hymn – Father of heaven whose love profound

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7MDDDHJ7kc>

Father of heaven, whose love profound
a ransom for our souls hath found,
before thy throne we sinners bend;
to us thy pardoning love extend.

Almighty Son, Incarnate Word,
our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, Lord,
before thy throne we sinners bend;
to us thy saving grace extend.

Eternal Spirit, by whose breath
the soul is raised from sin and death,
Before thy throne we sinners bend;
to us thy quickening power extend.

Thrice holy! Father, Spirit, Son -
mysterious Godhead, Three in One,
before thy throne we sinners bend;
grace, pardon, life to us extend.

Edward Cooper
(1702-1751)

Prayers of Intercession

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 his love.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

That we may play our part
in bringing in the Kingdom of Heaven
here on earth.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

That God may help us
to work against injustice,
to be generous to people across the world,
to focus on those in need
rather than our own possessions and our own security.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

That all those who live in poverty
may find justice and fairness in society
and receive financial support when in need.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

That the rich may use their wealth for the whole of society
and not just for themselves.

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 a place of safety, and for justice and fairness.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

That God 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.

**Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

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.

Silence is kept.

Hymn – Immortal, invisible

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLEajS1omRU>

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the ancient of days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above
thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish-but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all laud we would render; O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Walter Chalmer Smith
(1824-1892)

¶ Ending

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us,
and make us continually to be given to all good works;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Blessing

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 among us and remain with us always.
Amen.