

A PLOUGH SUNDAY SERVICE
for
January 2023

Being a Service

*Prepared by the Church of England Council for the
Church and Countryside.*

L O N D O N

1956

A PLOUGH SUNDAY SERVICE

¶ *All standing, the Priest shall say :*

BELOVED, we are come together on this day to offer our accustomed worship to Almighty God; to thank him for all his blessings, to confess our many shortcomings, and especially to-day to ask him to bless this coming year of work on the land, that all may be conscious of God's glory and power, and of our entire dependence on him. Wherefore let us, remembering God's presence with us now, worship him with gladness in our hearts.

¶ *Then shall be sung the hymn "O God of Bethel"*

O GOD of Bethel, by whose hand Thy people still are fed, Who through this weary pilgrimage Hast all our fathers led:	Through each perplexing path of life Our wandering footsteps guide; Give us each day our daily bread, And raiment fit provide.
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Our vows, our prayers, we now present Before Thy throne of grace; God of our fathers, be the God Of their succeeding race.	O spread Thy covering wings around, Till all our wanderings cease, And at our Father's loved abode Our souls arrive in peace.
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¶ *Then shall the Priest say :*

LET us ask God to help us to worship him in spirit and in truth.

Let us pray.

LORD of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness and of thy great mercy keep us the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

¶ *Then shall be sung or said this Psalm :*

CONFITEBOR TIBI (Psalm 111)

I WILL give thanks unto the Lord with my whole heart : secretly among the faithful, and in the congregation.

The works of the Lord are great : sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

His work is worthy to be praised, and had in honour : and his righteousness endureth for ever.

The merciful and gracious Lord hath so done his marvellous works : that they ought to be had in remembrance.

He hath given meat unto them that fear him : he shall ever be mindful of his covenant.

He hath shewed his people the power of his works : that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

The works of his hands are verity and judgement : all his commandments are true.

They stand fast for ever and ever : and are done in truth and equity.

He sent redemption unto his people : he hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend is his Name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom : a good understanding have all they that do thereafter; the praise of it endureth 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.

¶ *And this Psalm :*

LAUDATE DOMINUM (Psalm 150)

O PRAISE God in his holiness : praise him in the firmament of his power.
Praise him in his noble acts : praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him in the sound of the trumpet : praise him upon the lute and harp.

Praise him in the cymbals and dances : praise him upon the strings and pipe.

Praise him upon the well-tuned cymbals : praise him upon the loud cymbals.

Let every thing that hath breath : praise the Lord

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.

¶ *Then shall be read the First Lesson (Isaiah 28. 23-29).*

GIVE ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

¶ *Then shall be sung or said this Canticle :*

BENEDICITE, OMNIA OPERA

O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Angels of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Heavens, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Waters that be above the Firmament, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O all ye Powers of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Sun and Moon, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Stars of Heaven, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Showers and Dew, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Winds of God, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Fire and Heat, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Winter and Summer, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Dews and Frosts, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Frost and Cold, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Ice and Snow, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Nights and Days, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Light and Darkness, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Lightnings and Clouds, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O let the Earth bless the Lord : yea, let it praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Mountains and Hills, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O all ye Green Things upon the Earth, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Wells, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Seas and Floods, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Whales, and all that move in the Waters, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O all ye Fowls of the Air, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O all ye Beasts and Cattle, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Children of Men, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O let Israel bless the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Priests of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Servants of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Spirits and Souls of the Righteous, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye holy and humble Men of heart, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O Ananias, Azarias and Misael, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him 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.

¶ *Then shall be read the Second Lesson (Luke 8. 4-15).*

AND when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

¶ *Then shall be sung or said this Psalm :*

OBE joyful in the Lord, all ye lands : serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.

Be ye sure that the Lord he is God : it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise : be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.

For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting : and his truth endureth from generation to generation.

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.

¶ *Then shall be sung or said the Apostles Creed by the Priest and People, standing :*

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 Catholick Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen.

¶ *Then shall follow these Prayers, all kneeling, the Priest first saying with a loud voice :*

The Lord be with you;

Answer. And with thy spirit.

Priest. Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

¶ *Then the Priest and People shall say the Lord's Prayer :*

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.

AN ACT OF PENITENCE

Priest. And now, in the presence of the Most High God whom we worship and adore, let us now make humble acknowledgement of all our shortcomings. Let us ask his pardon for that we have disobeyed his laws, and have sinned against our Creator and our fellow creatures in thought, word, and deed.

¶ *Then shall all say together :*

O GOD our Father, we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed; we have not loved thee with all our heart; we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves. Have mercy upon us we beseech thee: Cleanse us from our sins, and help us to overcome our faults, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Priest. May the Almighty and merciful Lord grant unto you pardon and remission of all your sins, time for amendment of life and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

PETITIONS

Priest: We bring before thee, O God, our petitions, for thou hast taught us to cast all our care upon thee;

People: Our Father, which art in heaven.

Priest: Through the dedication of our work on the land to thy glory, and the common good;

People: Hallowed by thy name.

Priest: Through our zeal to do thy will;

People: Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done.

Priest: By the fruits of the earth in their due season;

People: Give us this day our daily bread.

Priest: Because we have not put our whole trust and confidence in thy mercy;

People: Forgive us our trespasses.

Priest: That we may never put self-interest first;

People: Lead us not into temptation.

Priest: When we desire more than is our due;

People: Deliver us from evil.

Priest: For thou art Lord of all. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease;

People: For thine is the kingdom, The power and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

¶ Then shall all join in saying this Thanksgiving:

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, We thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks For all thy goodness and loving-kindness To us, and to all men; We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love In the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, For the means of grace, And for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, That our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; And that we shew forth thy praise, Not only with our lips, but in our lives; By giving up ourselves to thy service, And by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

¶ Then shall be sung the hymn "God of Mercy, God of Grace"

GOD of mercy, God of grace,
show the brightness of thy face.
Shine upon us, Saviour, shine,
Fill thy Church with light divine,
And thy saving health extend
Unto earth's remotest end.

Let the people praise thee, Lord;
Be by all that live adored.
Let the nations shout and sing
Glory to their Saviour King;
At thy feet their tribute pay,
And thy holy will obey.

Let the people praise thee, Lord;
Earth shall then her fruits afford;
God to man his blessing give,
Man to God devoted live;
All below, and all above,
One in joy, and light, and love.

THE BLESSING OF THE PLOUGH

¶ After the hymn, all shall remain standing, and the Plough Team being at the west end of the church, the leader shall say in a loud voice:

The plough is the symbol of our work on the land.

¶ Then shall a member of the Young Farmers Club say:

May the Lord preserve our going out and our coming in.

People: From this time forth for evermore.

¶ *Then shall the Plough Team advance to the chancel while the Priest reads the following sentences:*

God created the earth. *Genesis 1. 1.*

The earth hath he given to the children of men. *Psalms 115 16.*

For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope. *1 Corinthians 9. 10*

¶ *The Plough Team, with their plough, now face the Priest.*

Leader: Reverend Sir, at the beginning of the new year's work we desire you to ask God's blessing on the labours of the landworkers of this parish, of which this plough is a sign and token.

Priest: My brothers, this I will gladly do, with hearty prayer to Almighty God for his favour and goodness towards us.

¶ *Then shall the Priest continue:*

The Lord be with you;

People: And with thy spirit.

Priest: Our help is in the name of the Lord;

People: Who hath made heaven and earth.

Priest: The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord;

People: And thou givest them their meat in due season.

Priest: Thou openest thine hand;

People: And fillest all things living with plenteousness.

Priest: ALMIGHTY God, creator and preserver of all mankind, who orderest all things upon earth: Give us grace to trust thy wisdom and mercy; that we, obeying thy laws, may prosper in all that thou givest us to do; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as the ploughman ploughing the field, and making long furrows, steadily pursueth his appointed task, for he looketh for the harvest that cometh after, even so may we also, in hope of eternal life, patiently continue in well-doing; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ Then shall the Priest lay his hand on the plough and say:

God speed the plough,
The plough and the ploughman,
The farm and the farmer,
Machine and beast and man.

God speed the plough,
In fair weather and foul,
In success and disappointment,
In rain and wind, in frost and sunshine,

God speed the plough.

¶ And the people shall answer:

God speed the plough.

¶ The Priest shall continue:

And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, be upon you, and all who plough the fields. *Amen.*

¶ Then shall be sung the hymn "Rejoice, O Land"

REJOICE, O land, in God thy might;
His will obey, him serve aright;
For thee the saints uplift their voice;
Fear not, O land, in God rejoice.

Glad shalt thou be, with blessing crowned;
With joy and peace thou shalt abound;
Yea, love with thee shall make its home,
Until thou see God's kingdom come.

He shall forgive thy sins untold;
Remember thou his love of old;
Walk in his way, his word adore,
And keep his truth forevermore.

¶ Then shall follow an Address.

I love this service, with its traditional language and formality.

It seems to come from a past where life was more certain, more ordered and safer. The words are timeless and assured, the product of generations of faithful Christians writing prayers and hymns of praise for celebrating farming, setting down in words and poetry a wonderful liturgy.

However there's a danger that when we are using the old language of thee's and thou's, we feel a sentimental longing for those easier, serener times. The past seems very peaceful compared to the turmoil of today – with ongoing wars, strikes and inflation, and politicians at loggerheads. But actually any assumption that life was better in the past is totally false.

Life on the land has always been tough (but also rewarding), and today's service brings out the connections between the hardships and joys of life on the land, and the hardships and joys of the life of the spirit – both can bring us tough times or fruitful times. No-one escapes the tough times, least of all farmers here on the edge of Dartmoor.

They've always had a tough time, very often having to cope with events completely outside their control. Fluctuating incomes have been an ever-present issue – from the agricultural depression in the 1920s and 30s onwards there've been wide swings in prices for sheep and cattle. Then there was the catastrophic foot and mouth culling in 2001; and there is still great uncertainty about subsidy regimes and ELMS, the availability of labour, the price of fertiliser and fuel – the list is endless.....

The life of a farmer is tough; but then farming has always been tough. How much success did the Sower in today's reading from Luke have? As he scattered his precious grain, it seems that only a quarter of his seed found good soil – the rest fell on rock and shrivelled up, or among thorns and was choked, or on paths and tracks where it was trampled. It was pretty unrewarding work.

Very different from the Garden of Eden which sounds like an idyllic, flourishing and productive haven. But Adam and Eve were thrown out for their disobedience to God, so God “sent them forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground.” Ever since, food production has required effort and struggle.

Producing our food needs farmers committed to their way of life, choosing to farm, rather than following an easier and more remunerative career. So today's farmers have developed the essential skills of patience, resilience and survival. Skills that the rest of us can learn from....

So today we are here to support and encourage farmers, and to affirm God's blessing on them, to thank them for all the food they produce and that we enjoy.

Keep up the good work....

Thank you farmers!

¶ *Then shall be sung the hymn "We plough the fields, and scatter"*

WE plough the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's almighty hand:
He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us
Are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
For all his love.*

He only is the maker
Of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey him,
By him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, his children,
He gives our daily bread.

We thank thee then, O Father,
For all things bright and good,
The seed time and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
For all thy love imparts,
And what thou most desirest,
Our humble, thankful hearts.

¶ Then shall all remain standing for the Blessing.

The peace of God, which passeth 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 Ghost,
be amongst you and remain with you always.
Amen.