

Morning Worship for Trinity 8

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;

the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:

the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,

and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,

that we may truly worship you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,

all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

Our love for you is like a morning cloud,

like the dew that goes away early.

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring you his pardon and peace,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Psalms 17:1–7, 16

Show me, O Lord, your loving-kindness. Hear my plea of

innocence, O Lord; give heed to my cry; listen to my prayer,

which does not come from lying lips.

Let my vindication come forth from your presence; let your eyes

be fixed on justice.

Weigh my heart, summon me by night, melt me down; you will

find no impurity in me.

I give no offence with my mouth as others do; I have heeded the

words of your lips.

My footsteps hold fast to the ways of your law; in your paths my

feet shall not stumble.

I call upon you, O God, for you will answer me; incline your ear to
me and hear my words.

Show me your marvellous loving-kindness, O Saviour of those

who take refuge at your right hand from those who rise up

against them. But at my vindication I shall see your face; when I

awake, I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

I am speaking the truth in Christ. I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit. I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. (Romans 9:1–5)

This is the word of the Lord; *thanks be to God*

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

When Jesus heard that Herod had beheaded John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

(Matthew 14:13–21)

This is the Gospel of the Lord; *Praise to you O Christ*

The Gospel canticle, the Benedictus (Luke 1:68–79)

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets God promised of old to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us.

To show mercy to our ancestors, and to remember his holy covenant.

**This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.**

**And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of all their sins.**

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

A reflection by Gordon Gray

This is a remarkable passage, it's the only miracle performed by Jesus that is found in all four of the Gospels, and twice in Matthew and Mark. No other story is like it in that regard.

As with so many gospel passages this one benefits from knowledge of the context of the story within the gospel. Jesus goes off on a boat trying to get to a "lonely place by himself." This was possibly to pray or as Matthew tells the story more likely for fear of Herod who had just assassinated his cousin for doing things not unlike what Jesus was doing. However, the hills soon filled up with people who had heard stories about him, and they all came out looking for him. Was their arrival a testament to his charisma? His reputation? Who knows?

The numbers are interesting. They could be as high as fifteen to twenty thousand if you note the fact that the number crunchers in those days would not have counted the women or children, which could possibly have doubled or tripled the attendance. Matthew in fact hinted at that when at the end of the story he added, "And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children."

Of course, by the end of the day, everyone is hungry. The disciples had only packed a basic peasant's lunch of a few loaves and fishes, so what should they do about the others? When Jesus asks about it, they felt it wasn't their problem and suggested he send the people into the towns, to let them buy their own food. That, of course, was impossible. For one thing, most were poor and sick (and homeless) or else they wouldn't have been out there following Jesus in the first place.

So, what did Jesus do? He responded to the disciples by saying that the hungry people around them don't have to go away. You (the disciples) give them something to eat. They complained, saying, "But all we've got is these three loaves and two fishes. What we have is not enough."

So, the disciples worried about how little they had to offer. "There are so many of those people down there," they might have said, "and our resources are so tiny." Jesus responded simply: Bring me what little you have and let's see what happens. So, he took the bread and broke it and blessed it and gave it to his disciples and they distributed it all to the crowds. And at the end of the distribution, all were fed, all were filled, and they had twelve baskets of leftovers.

One way to look at this brief exchange is to say that the disciples were thinking, like we often do, out of a theology of *scarcity*: we don't have enough to go around. We can't feed all of those people with our meagre provisions. Somewhat similar to the comments we hear so frequently today, that the UK (the 5th richest nation in the world) is so poor that we cannot afford to care for the poorest people among us. Those people say that we should quit all of those social programs for poor people because we can no longer afford them. That's just what the disciples thought - We can't feed those people because as a community we don't have the resources to do it.

Jesus on the other hand, had a theology of *abundance*: that is, share what you've got because ultimately God provides everything anyway. It is, of course, true that you and I can't feed everyone. It's true that there will always be suffering. It's true that you'll always have children going to bed hungry every night. We can't make these things go away. We can't end poverty for everyone, everywhere, forever. Jesus certainly did not feed all of the people in the world, nor did he try. But that is no reason to do nothing and let those whom you *can* save die.

I expect you will know the old story of the starfishes on the beach. A chap was on the beach after a storm rescuing starfish one by one. A friend came up to him and said "you can't save them all. You can't make a big difference." The man said back, "Yes, that's true, but it makes a pretty big difference to this one," and he threw another back out into the water.

I want to leave you this morning with a question; "Which is actually the greater miracle in this story? Is it that Jesus changed those few loaves into an abundance of food, or that Jesus changed the hearts of the disciples and taught them how to share? What's the greater miracle

for us? For Jesus to do all of the work for us, or for Jesus to change us to enable us to do it.

Do we have enough money to change the community? Do we have enough people to spread the word about the gospel? Maybe not. But Christ's theology of abundance says that we do what we can do and in the end we may see a miracle.

Music for reflection

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**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 at 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.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Diane Goodwin

Dear Lord,

You have promised to hear us when we pray. Help us quieten our hearts and minds now as we thank you for your faithfulness to us. You have called us by name, we are precious in your sight, our names are written on the palms of your hand. Help us to be faithful to you. You have told us that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We pray that we would be mindful of that every morning and that that would be our daily purpose.

May we know more of you and the power of your spirit day by day. And let us be open to your presence always. You come to us and

speak to us in many ways, we pray that we are always alert and prepared to hear you and follow your prompting.

Lord in your mercy.... Hear our prayer

Thank you father for the community in which we live and this church in which we worship you. We thank you for all who have gone before us and have been a part of the family of God in this place for over 800 years. Thank you for the contributions they have made that enable us to be here now. We ask for your wisdom and guidance for all those who lead us and make decisions for Joy, Gordon, Catherine, Angela and the PCC. And for all those who volunteer their services gladly, both in time and money to support this ministry. May they and their families know your peace, strength and presence daily. Thank you that so many people across the country and indeed the world are coming to online church services in these challenging times. We pray for the seeds of the gospel to be planted deep in all those tuning in and exploring the Christian faith. Help them be disciplined and looked after and may the fact it's online not hamper their growth in their faith. We pray for more people to come to know you and that you will use this awful pandemic to bring people to you.

Lord in your mercy.... Hear our prayer

We pray for a world in need of you, in need of your love and of your healing. There are so many headlines that bombard us with stories of hurt and suffering: The ongoing persecution of Christians in Nigeria; the humanitarian needs in Yemen; those who have lost their jobs in the current economic climate and face losing their homes; those who suffer mental or physical abuse. Help us to remember that whatever small way we are able to help is valuable in your eyes. Every drop in the bucket, every penny in the pot and every moment of prayer counts. Lord let us not forget them - you do not forget them. Wrap your loving arms around them and surround them with those who will love and care for them.

Lord in your mercy.... Hear our prayer

Loving God, we pray for all who have been hurt by the diseases, injuries, stresses and traumas of human life in a hard world. We pray for all who love and care for them and want to help. We pray for your comfort in their grief, hope amid their loss, and the balm of community with people who understand. Your word declares that you are near to the brokenhearted and you save the crushed in spirit and bind up their wounds. May they know your gentle touch in body, mind or spirit. We lift those on our prayer list, those known to us and those whose names are known only to you Lord.

We also remember all those who have gone before us and died in the faith and we remember those whose years mind falls at this time. Merciful Father, **Accept our prayers for the sake of your son our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer 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.**

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of your laws
and the works of your commandments;
that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever,
we may be preserved in body and soul;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power.

For you have created all things,

and by your will they have their being.

You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,

and by your blood you ransomed us for God.

From every tribe and language and nation,

**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb

be blessing and honour and glory and might

for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11)

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.

*Material from New Patterns for Worship. Compilation copyright © The Archbishops'
Council 2002*

Times and Seasons: The Liturgical commission of the Church of England