

Trinity United Reformed Church Wimbledon

Sunday 1 November 2020



Order of Service for Worship At Home including the celebration of Holy Communion

led by Mark Dennis

Trinity Elder & Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher

Our online service is made up of our own recordings and others in a [Youtube playlist](#). The service includes the sacrament of Communion; if you are joining at home, please have bread and wine ready.

Videos should play automatically one after the other, but if you get out of sync you can find the links in the transcript below.

[Click here to begin the service.](#)

Gathering in God's presence

Call to Worship

This is the day that the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
It is good to give thanks to the Lord
For his love endures forever

Hymn – Now thank we all our God (Tune: Nun Danket)

Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;

and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Prayer of approach

Almighty God
infinite and eternal in wisdom, power and love:
we praise you for all that you are, and for all that you do for the world.
You have shown us your truth and your love in our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Help us by your Spirit to worship you in spirit and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of confession

Lord God most merciful,
we confess that we have sinned,
through our own fault and in common with others,
in thought, word and deed,
and through what we have left undone.

We ask to be forgiven.
By the power of your Spirit turn us from evil to good,
help us to forgive others and keep us in your ways
of righteousness and love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Use either of these forms, or a different version/language if you prefer:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive
those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

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.

Listening to God's Word

[Bible reading: Psalm 34: 1-10; 22](#)

*The Bible reader will say all the words. The congregation is invited to respond by joining in saying the words in **bold print***

- ¹ I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- ² **My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.**
- ³ O magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together.
- ⁴ **I sought the Lord, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.**
- ⁵ Look to him and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
- ⁶ **This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord,
and was saved from every trouble.**
- ⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
- ⁸ **O taste and see that the Lord is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.**
- ⁹ O fear the Lord, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.
- ¹⁰ **The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.**
- ²² The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Bible reading: Matthew 5: 1-12

¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Sermon

Introduction

The gospel reading for today contains the beatitudes. Eight statements, each one of which could be the basis for a sermon on its own. But time, under present circumstances, is limited. So we shall have a whistle-stop tour of the beatitudes. The beatitudes are there to show us what God looks for in his followers. They present an ideal standard of perfection. We're all going to fall short of fulfilling them in many ways. So don't worry if you feel that you can't live up to them. Nobody can. They are something to aspire to; a goal; an ideal.

When we look at the beatitudes, we see that the first four are about our relationship with God. The second four are about our relationships with each other; with our fellow men and women. This ties in with what Jesus says elsewhere in the gospels about loving God; and loving your neighbour.

Our relationship with God

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
(Matt 5: 3)

To be "poor in spirit" means accepting that we have sinned and gone wrong; and need God's forgiveness. Jesus told a parable (Luke 18: 9-14) about two men who went to pray: a pharisee and a tax collector. Of the

two, it was the tax collector who said: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." That is our position, too.

We are in the same situation as the tax collector. We have nothing to offer; nothing with which to bargain with God. But God gives us salvation. It is free - and completely undeserved.

So, right at the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turns human expectations of the kingdom of God upside down. The kingdom is given to the poor, not the rich; the weak, not the mighty.

The second beatitude is one of the more puzzling:
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matt 5: 4)

'Mourning' is something that we associate, primarily, with bereavement. Particularly now, when the news daily reports the number of people who have, sadly, died from Covid-19. But it is not the sorrow of bereavement that Christ is referring to; but the sorrow of **repentance**.

This is the second stage of spiritual blessing. It is one thing to be poor in spirit. It is another to grieve and mourn over it. In several places in the gospels, we see that Jesus wept. He wept over the sins of others. Perhaps we should weep more over the evil in the world. And, if we do repent and mourn, comfort awaits us, in the free forgiveness of God.

The third beatitude contains a word that isn't used much these days:
"Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth." (Matt 5: 5)

What does it mean to be "meek"?

The word translated 'meek' in our Bibles doesn't have an exact equivalent in English. It means qualities like: 'gentle', 'humble', 'considerate'. True meekness requires a lot of self-awareness. We can only be gentle and humble towards others if we recognise that their criticisms of us may sometimes be accurate!

A truly meek person is genuinely amazed that God and other people can think as well of them as they do. This makes them gentle, humble, and sensitive in their dealings with others.

And, Jesus adds, these meek people "shall inherit the earth". This shows us that the way of Christ is radically different from the way of the world. Every Christian, then, can be like Paul in "having nothing, and yet possessing everything". (2 Cor. 6:10)"
So to the fourth beatitude:

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matt 5: 6)

This beatitude is about spiritual hunger. Christians should be relentless in the pursuit of righteousness. Remember, the beatitudes are aspirations - we won't all succeed all the time. We may think this is beyond us; but is it? One sign of an active Christian life is a healthy spiritual appetite. The very fact we are taking part in this service, online or in person, despite all the restrictions we're now living with, shows that we have a spiritual appetite. We want to worship God; to pray to him; listen to his word and hear what he is saying to us. We have all gone to some effort to do that.

So we can see that the first four beatitudes reveal a logical spiritual progression. To begin with, we are to be "poor in spirit". Next, we are to "mourn" over our sins and the evil in the world. Thirdly, we are to be "meek", humble and gentle towards others, allowing our spiritual poverty to affect our behaviour. Finally, we are to "hunger and thirst after righteousness", building up our spiritual appetite so that we develop and grow in our faith.

Our relationships with other people

So we're half way through the beatitudes. Now onto the second half, which are mainly about our relationships with other people.

The fifth beatitude says:

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy." (Matt 5: 7)

'Mercy', in the beatitudes, means 'compassion to those in need'. Very often, justice will demand punishment; but mercy will cry out for forgiveness. Christians should act mercifully, rather than with vengeance. Jesus showed mercy in his own life and dealings with people. The citizens of his kingdom must show mercy too.

The sixth beatitude is a call to sincerity:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Matt 5: 8)

We have seen that the beatitudes are about relationships - with God and with other people. So the "pure in heart" are those whose lives are transparent before God; and other people. Their hearts - their thoughts and motives - are pure, uncontaminated by anything devious or bad.

Again, this is an aspiration. The only person who ever was completely pure in heart was Jesus Christ. But we should strive for purity of heart. When we fail, we can confess our failings to God, who loves us and will forgive us.

We move on, then, to the seventh beatitude:
"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God."
(Matt 5:9)

Every Christian, according to this beatitude, should be a peacemaker. If we read the teachings of Christ, it is clear that we should never seek conflict or be responsible for it. Rather, we are called to actively pursue peace; and to strive for peace for all people.

And so to the final beatitude:
"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 5: 10)

This is inevitable, really, because however much we may try to make peace with some people, they refuse to live at peace with us. We know that not all attempts at reconciliation are successful. Perhaps we don't feel persecuted? Could this perhaps be because our faith isn't sufficiently obvious? No one wants to be persecuted, of course. But, on the other hand, what good is a faith that is so discreet nobody notices it? We should try to be a distinctive Christian presence in our world; in our workplace; in our community.

Conclusion

So we have seen in the beatitudes a picture of what it means to follow Christ. But we must remember that they contain the Christian ideal of perfection. They are an ideal. All of us are going to fall short of fulfilling them. Let us see the beatitudes as a pattern of Christian living we should all aspire to. Let us use that pattern to encourage us in our walk with God; and to show us how we can build up our relationship with Jesus Christ. Amen

Responding to God's grace

[Prayers of concern](#)

In our prayers of concern, we look to the wider world and also closer to home.

Let us pray.

The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle of the World Council of Churches prays this week for the multitudinous islands of Oceania, celebrating their diversity of peoples, cultures and natural environments. Lord, we join our prayers to theirs as they pray for their future with rising sea levels threatening

their existence; for those affected by earthquakes, volcanoes and cyclones; and for good governance for all, but especially with sensitivity for indigenous cultures.

Lord, we pray for all those who are making bad decisions about our world and the way our societies live within it. We pray for us all to have insight into the way some things will have to change and for the courage to make at least small changes. We pray for all peacemakers, whether between warring nations or political systems or local communities and families. Give them insight, strength and patience to keep working to reduce conflict.

Lord, within our world of increasing polarisation, we pray for those fomenting division. We pray for those caught up in the rhetoric, where it is easiest to define people as 'other' and then to blame them. We pray for those lost in misinformation and conspiracy theories. We pray for those cynically eager to use division and fear, for personal benefit.

We pray for those already disadvantaged who suffer disproportionately from the impact of Covid. Those who cannot work from home. Those who have no income if they do not go to a place of work. Those who have cramped and overcrowded living conditions, with shared facilities. Those with strained relationships within families. Those without facilities for online learning.

We pray for those who have lost jobs or businesses. For those who have lost careers. For those in debt. For those who may never find paid employment again. For those with illnesses other than Covid, who are going without treatment at this time. For the vulnerable who have lost their support workers. For the lonely and isolated.

In the quiet, we pray now for those in distress, who have asked for special prayer or who would have placed leaves on the prayer trees at the church.

Lord, even when so much appears so disastrous, we pray for the assurance of your arms around us to sustain us. Amen

Offertory

*This is an opportunity to set aside your regular financial contribution to Trinity's ongoing work and witness. Call to mind your gift now as you share in the prayer below. At home, you should also **uncover the bread and wine now.***

Almighty and most merciful God,
out of the fullness of your gifts
we bring before you our gifts and our lives.
Blessed be your holy name forever
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Dedication of contributions to 'For Others' Gift Day

On this special day in the life of our church, we thank you, Lord, for all the contributions that have been made to our 'For Others' Gift Day. We thank you for the generosity that has been shown; and we pray for the work of the charities – locally, nationally and internationally – that will benefit from the gifts that have been made. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Celebration of Holy Communion

As we gather in spirit, although physically dispersed,
we remember that Jesus was born of Mary;
he lived an ordinary life on earth;
he suffered and died for us; on the third day he rose again;
and he is always present through the Holy Spirit.
In his presence, and in the company of all the people of God,
past, present, and to come, we celebrate the Supper of the Lord.

Hymn: I come with joy, a child of God (Tune: St Botolph)

I come with joy, a child of God
forgiven, loved, and free,
the life of Jesus to recall
in love laid down for me.

I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread.

The Spirit of the risen Christ
unseen, but ever near
is in such friendship better known
alive among us here.

Together met, together bound,
by all that God has done
we'll go with joy, to give the world
the love that makes us one.

Holy Communion

Hear the gracious words of our Lord Jesus Christ:
'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who
believes in me shall never thirst. Him who comes to me, I will not cast
out'.

Let us hear again the words of institution of this feast, as they are given
by the Apostle Paul:-

"The tradition which I handed on to you came to me from the Lord
himself: that on the night of his arrest the Lord Jesus took bread, and
after giving thanks to God, broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is
for you. Do this in memory of me'.

In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said: 'This cup is the
new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this in
memory of me.' For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you
proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.

Let us pray:

With joy we give you thanks and praise,
almighty God; source of all life and love: that we live in your world;
that you are always creating and sustaining it by your power;
and that you have so made us that we can know and love you;
trust and serve you.

We give you thanks that you loved the world so much
that you gave your only Son,
so that everyone who has faith in him may not die; but have eternal life.

Holy Lord God, by what we do here in remembrance of Christ,
we celebrate his perfect sacrifice on the cross;
and his glorious resurrection and ascension;
we declare that he is Lord of all;
and we prepare for his coming in his kingdom.

Accept our sacrifice of praise; and, as we eat and drink at his command,
unite us to Christ, wherever we are, as one body in him,
and give us strength to serve you in the world.

And to you, one holy and eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we give praise and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ

Take, eat, this is the body of Christ, broken for you.
Do this in remembrance of him.

The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of
Christ.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for
all, for the forgiveness of sin: drink of it.

A short time of silence

Accomplished and concluded, O Christ our Lord, is the mystery which you
have ordained. For we have tasted your death, seen your resurrection;
and have been filled with your unending life.

Let us pray:

Most gracious God, we praise you for what you have given; and for what
you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people
in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life and
renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you and we ask
that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom; and that our
love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world;
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

[Hymn: For the healing of the nations \(Tune: Rhuddlan\)](#)

For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom,
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow brief life's span.

You, Creator God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

Blessing

Let us go now,
strengthened by grace, held in love, and nurtured through fellowship,
to do God's will and to be God's people.

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be upon us, and among all who are dear to us, whether near or far,
today and always. Amen