

15 May 2022

HYMN Now we come, our heavenly Father

Blessed be God: Father, **Son**, and Holy Spirit. **Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

And also with you.

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

Sentence of the Day

'I give you a new commandment,' says the Lord, 'that you love one another. As I have loved you, you also should love one another.' John 13.34

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.

We behold your glory, O God, in the love shown by your Son, lifted up on the cross and exalted on high: be glorified anew in the love we have for one another as disciples of the risen Lord Jesus, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

ACTS 11.1-18

¹ The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticised him ³ and said, 'You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.'

⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ⁵ 'I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was.

⁶ I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. ⁷ Then I heard a voice telling me, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." ⁸ 'I replied, "Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth."

⁹ 'The voice spoke from heaven a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." ¹⁰ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

¹¹ 'Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. ¹² The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house.

¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, "Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. ¹⁴ He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved."

¹⁵ 'As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: "John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift, he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?' ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, 'So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.'

Psalm 148

- ¹ Praise the Lord, praise the Lord from heaven: O praise him in the heights.
² Praise him, all his angels: O praise him, all his host.
³ Praise him, sun and moon: praise him, all you stars of light.
⁴ Praise him, you highest heaven: and you waters that are above the heavens.
⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were made.
⁶ He established them for ever and ever: he made an ordinance which shall not pass away.
⁷ O praise the Lord from the earth: praise him, you sea-monsters and all deeps;
⁸ Fire and hail, mist and snow: and storm-wind fulfilling his command;
⁹ Mountains and all hills: fruit trees and all cedars;
¹⁰ Beasts of the wild, and all cattle: creeping things and winged birds;
¹¹ Kings of the earth, and all peoples: princes, and all rulers of the world;
¹² Young men and maidens: old folk and children together.
¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is exalted.
¹⁴ His glory is above earth and heaven: and he has lifted high the horn of his people.
¹⁵ Therefore he is the praise of all his servants:
of the children of Israel, a people that is near him. Praise the Lord.

Revelation 21.1-6

- ¹ Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.
³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'
⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' ⁶ He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.'

John 13.31-35

- ³¹ When Judas was gone, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. ³³ 'My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: where I am going, you cannot come. ³⁴ 'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.'

Sermon

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and for the church.

God of Love, **hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

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 for ever. Amen.

Invitation to Confession

Christ our Passover Lamb has been offered for us, therefore we come to celebrate the festival.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, with a sincere and a true heart.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

HYMN Lord Jesus Christ

Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.

Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God for ever.**

Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right to praise you, faithful God, always and everywhere, for with your only begotten Son and life-giving Spirit, you are the one true God from everlasting to everlasting.

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us.

He is the true Paschal Lamb who was offered for us and has taken away the sin of the world.

And now we give you thanks that you raised him in triumph from the dead.

By his death, he has destroyed death and by his rising to life again has restored us to eternal life.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

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When the fullness of time was come, you sent your Son to be born of Mary. Bright image of your glory, he learnt obedience to you in all things, even to death on a cross, breaking the power of evil, freeing us from sin, and putting death to flight. You raised him from death, exalting him to glory, and the new day dawned. On the night he was betrayed your Son Jesus Christ shared food with his friends, his companions on the way. While at table he took bread, blessed, and broke it, and giving it to them, said: 'Take, eat; this is my body.' He took a cup of wine, and, giving thanks, he gave it to them, and said, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Do this in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Therefore, living God, as we obey his command, we remember his life of obedience to you, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and exaltation, and his promise to be with us for ever.

With this bread and this cup we celebrate his saving death until he comes.

Accept, we pray, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and send your Holy Spirit upon us and our celebration, that all who eat and drink at this table may be strengthened by Christ's body and blood to serve you in the world.

As one body and one holy people, may we proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom, with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours, eternal God, now and for ever.

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life. Amen

The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life. Amen

Most glorious Lord of life, we thank you that you nourish us in these Easter mysteries.

Fill us with the Spirit of love and unite us in faith, that we may witness to the resurrection and show your glory to all the world.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Hymn O worship the King

Blessing

Almighty God, who redeemed us through the resurrection of Christ, and has brought us out of slavery into everlasting freedom, give you joy and peace in faith and bring you to your eternal inheritance; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**



Such a short Gospel reading and so much material packed into it.

Let's get a little context here before we dive in too deep: This happens at the Last Supper, think Jesus washing feet, institution of the Communion, Jesus prophesying that Judas would betray him and Judas leaving.

Jesus knows that Judas leaving is a sign that his time is coming very close. As the door shuts behind Judas, a sense of excitement grips the narrative. It is as though Jesus is drawing the remaining disciples closer to himself, telling them new things, things he couldn't say when Judas was there, things he must now say quickly precisely because Judas has gone, and the time is short.

The farewell discourse, as it is known, goes for chapters and we will have a few readings from it over the next couple of weeks. These chapters have often been seen as amongst the most precious and intimate in the New Testament. They are full of comfort, challenge, and hope, full of the deep and personal relationship that Jesus longs to have with each of his followers.



This is only the second time that Jesus has spoken of the son of man being 'glorified' (in the previous chapter). Up until now he has talked about The Father being glorified and of the son of man being lifted up. Now he puts the two together.

That title 'Son of Man' is the most exalted title in John's gospel and is very strongly linked with Jesus' descent and ascent, that is his coming from and returning to God. When Jesus came to earth as a baby the presence of God became visible to the world, throughout his ministry this glorification continued but the decisive moment glorification is the unfolding of the events of Jesus' hour. In that hour, in Jesus death on a cross and return to God, the full glory of The Father and Jesus will be revealed. Who God is, who Jesus is and who they are to each other, and to us is fully revealed in Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.



Like pictured in Daniel the son of man will be exalted, coming on the clouds to the ancient of Days, and the whole scene will be the moment of God's glory. Jesus says: *Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.*

It sounds a lot like what we were talking about last week when Jesus said, 'The father and I are one' and saying that their work is a total unity. Jesus is awed with glory, with the coming events as the unveiling of God's glory, with his own vocation rushing towards its conclusion and bringing God's glory.



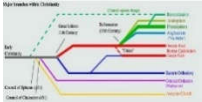
He is also almost overwhelmed by the fact that he is going to leave the disciples behind. He has only been with them a short while, and now he must go. Few teachers would be able to face such a moment without qualms. The disciples have learnt so little, understood so little, grasped so little of what he has been trying to teach them. How will they cope without him? In the next chapters Jesus promises the Holy Spirit and teaches some basic lessons but before that, he has something to offer them: the simplest, clearest, and hardest command of all: Love one another.



He describes it as a new commandment, but the newness isn't so much a matter of never having heard words like this before. It's a matter of the mode of this love, the depth and type of this love: love one another in the same way that I have loved you.

Jesus followers are asked to enter into the love that marks the relationship of God and Jesus. The participation in this relationship will be evidenced the same ways that Jesus' love is evidenced: by acts of love that join the believer to God. Keeping this commandment is the identifying mark of discipleship because it is the tangible sign of the disciples abiding in Jesus.

The disciples are to look back at Jesus' whole ministry, including this very night, his whole way and manner of life and see the pattern, its shape its example and power. To wash someone's feet, you have to think of yourself as only a slave or you do it in total love. Love is all about the other person, it overflows into service, not to show off, but because that is its natural form.



This is to be the badge that the Christian Community wears before the watching world. How can we not cringe with shame as we realise the way in which professing Christians have treated each other down the years? I had to do some Church History as I was studying, and I can tell you they are the saddest subjects I had to do. Each denomination or new mission is the result of Christians fighting and persecuting each other for minor differences in theology or personal differences. I'm sure that our Lord is so grief-stricken at the travesty the church has made of his command.

We have defined 'one another' so tightly that it has often meant love the people who are exactly like us. In our reading from Acts you can see this human tendency. When the Jewish Early Christians heard that gentiles were becoming Christians, they were rather shocked. Peter himself took some persuading but they did welcome the new converts and learn to love one another.

Jesus goes to all the churches; he loves all the people he has made and wants us to love them as well. It is only when we really do this that the world will know that we are truly his disciples. The Community Day in November is just a tiny step that we are taking in this direction.



God is working in all the churches and a time will come when all the churches will work together and be one body in each location. A time when we love one another even more than we love our traditions. Perhaps we will not give up the things we love, but they will become less important than working together.

When someone we don't know comes to this church, how much love do we extend to them? Do we truly make them welcome? If they are visitors, do we smile and chat or if they are new, do we invite them into our homes, arrange to meet for a coffee and a chat or do we just assume that they will make some friends and get on with our own lives? Being loving is not always convenient, it means effort and putting our own wants aside for a while.



John in his Revelation saw a new heaven and a new earth, the Holy city descending as a bride. Perhaps that is what it will take before we can truly love each other as he has commanded but, in the meantime, we will continue to strive for peace and his Kingdom to be fully known on earth.

When that day comes the whole trinity will be on earth and with us. The followers of the Lord *will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.* In the new Jerusalem, human beings are God's people from every tribe and language and people and nation. And they will love one another Just like Jesus on the cross, God the Father says, 'it is done'. Just as Jesus finished his work on earth by dying on the cross so the Father finishes his work in heaven. They worked together through history so that we can be with them.



Our job is to do what Jesus asked us to do, to love one another as Jesus has loved us. We model our love on a love that knows no limits, that know no boundaries and restrictions. The love that Jesus embodies is grace. Jesus gave his life to his disciples as an expression of the fullness of his relationship with God the Father and of his father's love for all. To love one another as Jesus loves does not automatically translate into one believer's death for another, nor even does it mean denying one's identity for others. Jesus did not suppress his identity, he lived his identity and vocation fully. Rather to love one another as Jesus loves us is to live a life thoroughly shaped by a love that knows no limits, by a love whose expression brings the believer closer into relationship with Jesus, and with one another. It is to live a love that carries with it a whole new concept of the possibilities of true community. This is not easy but the closer we get to the reality of this life the closer we come to our Lord.