

14 August 2022

Hymn TIS 658 I the Lord of Sea and Sky

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.**

### Sentence

'Is not my word like fire,' says the Lord, 'and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?' Jeremiah 23.29

### 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.

### Prayer of the Day

Everliving God, increase in us your gift of faith, that, forsaking sin and all that hinders us, we may run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Isaiah 5.1-7

<sup>1</sup> I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: my loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.

<sup>2</sup> He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

<sup>3</sup> 'Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. <sup>4</sup> What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?

<sup>5</sup> Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. <sup>6</sup> I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.'

<sup>7</sup> The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

### Psalms 80.1-2, 80.8-19

<sup>1</sup> Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, you that led Joseph like a flock: you that are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine out in glory; <sup>2</sup> Before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh: stir up your power, and come to save us.

<sup>8</sup> You brought a vine out of Egypt: you drove out the nations, and planted it in.

<sup>9</sup> You cleared the ground before it: and it struck root and filled the land. <sup>10</sup> The hills were covered with its shadow: and its boughs were like the boughs of the great cedars.

<sup>11</sup> It stretched out its branches to the sea: and its tender shoots to the Great River.

<sup>12</sup> Why then have you broken down its walls: so that every passer-by can pluck its fruit?

<sup>13</sup> The wild boar out of the woods roots it up: and the locusts from the wild places devour it.

<sup>14</sup> Turn to us again, O Lord of hosts: look down from heaven, and see.

<sup>15</sup> Bestow your care upon this vine: the stock which your own right hand has planted.

<sup>16</sup> As for those that burn it with fire and cut it down: let them perish at the rebuke of your countenance.

<sup>17</sup> Let your power rest on the man at your right hand: on that son of man whom you made so strong for yourself.

<sup>18</sup> And so we shall not turn back from you: give us life, and we will call upon your name.

<sup>19</sup> Restore us again, O Lord of hosts: show us the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

## Hebrews 11.29-12.2

<sup>29</sup> By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. <sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched round them for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

<sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, <sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

<sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were put to death by stoning; they were sawn in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated – <sup>38</sup> the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. <sup>39</sup> These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, <sup>40</sup> since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

## Luke 12.49-59

<sup>49</sup> 'I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup> But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!

<sup>51</sup> Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. <sup>52</sup> From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup> They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

<sup>54</sup> He said to the crowd: 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, "It's going to rain," and it does. <sup>55</sup> And when the south wind blows, you say, "It's going to be hot," and it is. <sup>56</sup> Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?

<sup>57</sup> 'Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? <sup>58</sup> As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. <sup>59</sup> I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.'

## Sermon

### Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 from the dead; he ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there 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.

## the prayers

Let us pray for all people and for the Church throughout the world.

## Response

Lord, in your mercy, **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.**

Jesus said: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. John 13.34

## Invitation to Confession

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table.

## Confession

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

**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.**

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 SOF 40 Be still for the presence of the Lord

## OFFERTORY

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 1

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

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.**

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

We give you thanks and praise for our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. By his death on the cross and rising to new life, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

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.**

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

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

Therefore, we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:

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

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread:

**so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.**

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 by faith with thanksgiving.

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

### **After Communion**

Gracious God, we thank you that in this sacrament you assure us of your goodness and love. Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and help us to grow in love and obedience that we may serve you in the world and finally be brought to that table where all your saints feast with you for ever.

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 TIS 571 Forth in your name, O lord I go

### **Blessing**

The peace of God which passes 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 Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen .

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen**

Yeshu'yahu (Isaiah) 5:5-6

"And now go to: I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it."

An interesting set of readings today. Lots of warnings of the coming judgement for Israel and for anyone who does not live wholeheartedly for the Lord.

Throughout the Old Testament vines and vineyards are often used as an allegory for Israel and the nations relationship to God. The Jews saw themselves as a vine which God had brought out of Egypt and planted in Israel, God was the gardener who had fed, watered, pruned, and protected the vine through the centuries and the nation had often become complacent and assumed that this care would continue forever because they were the chosen race.

However, God requires obedience not just lip service - true dedication and observance of his commandments. They continued to observe all the festivals and do the sacrifices, but they had forgotten that these rituals were to be the outside sign of a relationship with the living God and their inward life, so they forgot all God's instructions about looking after the poor, the widows, orphans and foreigners, they forgot all the rules about honest weights and caring for their neighbours but most of all they forgot to love God.



Although God loved his chosen people, he is also a God of Justice so he could not allow such behaviour to continue so from time to time we see warnings like in our reading from Isaiah today which mostly went unheeded and resulted in different forms of judgement. Sometimes crops would fail, sometimes the land would be invaded, sometimes the people were taken into exile, sometimes forced into bondage or loose in battle and sometimes God just withdrew completely.

In our Psalm today some such calamity has occurred, and the Psalmist is continuing the theme of the vine and begging God to come back and restore his people again. Notice that the Psalmist despite the dire circumstances still has faith and knows that their only hope is to return to God:

Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Cause Your face to shine,  
And we shall be saved!

Psalm 80:7 NKJV

*And so we shall not turn back from you: give us life, and we will call upon your name. Restore us again, O Lord of hosts: show us the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.*

And so, it continued, a cycle of rededication and gradually easing into complacency, then warnings and judgement again, sometimes the judgements were severe, and the nation decimated but always God was faithful and always a remnant remained. This is the history of God's chosen people: both the Israelites and the church. The church's rise and fall through the ages has not been wars, exile, and bondage but a continual rise and fall as God's people have sought him with all their heart or lived their lives as nominal Christians.



When Jesus came, there had been a drought of hearing God's word for 300 years: they were living under the Roman occupation and in the oppressive regime of Herod, with wealthy and arrogant high priests and the false agenda of the Pharisees. Jesus knew that in 70 AD there would be a big unsuccessful rebellion and many people would be killed and the temple destroyed for the last time. Jesus sees the crisis coming, of which his own fate will be a central feature (that is what he means by his baptism) and he is astonished and dismayed that so few of his contemporaries can see it. They are good at local weather forecasts but cannot read the times.

To what do we pay close attention and to what do we turn a blind eye? What things do we watch with the same close attention as a farmer pays to the weather or what areas of life have we so neglected that trouble in those areas may have reached crisis proportions without our knowing it?



Jesus has come to bring God's peace, but the work of redemption inevitably brings division also. Although the kingdom of God is characterised by reconciliation and peace, the announcement of that kingdom is always divisive because it requires decision and commitment. Once this message gets into households and there are people who made real commitments, there'll be no peace: families have and will continue to split up over it, especially in countries where it is not part of the status quo but in our culture, it tends to be more subtle.

When Phil and I were young marrieds, both sets of our parents thought our Christian faith was too vigorous, too committed and tried to convince us to settle down to being nice people who go to church and do good deeds but were not so dedicated to it. My mother was embarrassed when we went to PNG, because she thought we were asking people to pay for us to have a holiday.



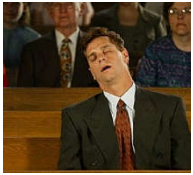
In those days because of exorbitant interest rates, defaults on loans were common so it was common for people to be dragged off to court. Once at the mercy of the legal system, a debtor had little chance to escape. Once in prison, he would not be released until he had paid the last penny. The only prudent things to do therefore was to settle with one's accuser before one got to the court, even on the way if necessary.

The warning is not to be taken merely as advice to people facing a lawsuit. Jesus knows that Israel is rebelling against God's plan to be the light of the nations and rebelling against Rome, so were liable to find themselves facing charges of sedition or worse. They should be seeking ways of reconciliation. Israel did not heed Jesus' warnings and Israel paid to the last penny.



Throughout the history of the church this passage has been read as a warning that each generation must read the signs of the times, the great movements of people, governments, nations, and policies and must react accordingly. If the kingdom of God is to come on earth as it is in heaven, part of the prophetic role of the church is to understand the events of earth and seek to address them with the message of heaven.

Because our commitment to Jesus shapes our values, priorities, goals, and behaviour, it also forces us to change our patterns of life and our response to current events.



Sometimes people have become too comfortable, in some churches the selection of bible readings omit all the passages that speak of judgement, warnings, or the stern demands of God's holiness. There are plenty of warnings in the Bible about the dangers of falling asleep on the job. If our message is unpopular and brings division, are we still prepared to follow Jesus?

There are people who have been outside the church for so long that they have forgotten anything except perhaps some sense of guilt and there are others who have never heard the gospel. We are not called to Bible bash them but to show Jesus' love to them, speaking Jesus' words of tenderness.



The writer of the letter to the Hebrews gives us a wonderful inventory of people who heeded the warnings and lived by faith. They achieved wonderful things and suffered incredible things. <sup>39</sup> *These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised,* <sup>40</sup> *since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*

The something better was Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. And thus, made it possible for us to be with him, to receive salvation and be able to be in relationship with God.



We (the church and each one of us) are the vine and God is the gardener, he wants the absolute best for us but when we do grow wrongly, he will prune us and show us the right way. We need to be careful to heed his direction and follow his light. He loves us but we can never take him for granted. Just giving lip service and going through the all the forms of Christianity will never be enough, we need to live our lives in total dedication to Him and listen to his direction every day or we are in great danger of God saying, "I never knew You". However, when we give our lives to him, he will constantly watch over us and walk with us through all the trial of life.