

20 February 2022

Hymn TIS 648

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

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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 of the day

Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. You will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Luke 6.35

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

God of compassion, keep before us the love you have revealed in your Son, who prayed even for his enemies.

In our words and deeds help us to be like him, through whom we pray, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Genesis 45.3-11, 45.15

³ Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still living?' But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.' When they had done so, he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. ⁸ 'So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

⁹ Now hurry back to my father and say to him, "This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. ¹⁰ You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me – you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute."

¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterwards his brothers talked with him.

Psalm 37.1-11, 37.40-41

¹ Do not vie with the wicked: or envy those that do wrong;

² For they will soon wither like the grass: and fade away like the green leaf.

³ Trust in the Lord and do good: and you shall dwell in the land and feed in safe pastures.

⁴ Let the Lord be your delight: and he will grant you your heart's desire.

⁵ Commit your way to the Lord: trust him, and he will act.

⁶ He will make your righteousness shine as clear as the light: and your innocence as the noonday.

⁷ Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him: do not be vexed when someone prospers, when they put their evil purposes to work.

⁸ Let go of anger and abandon wrath: let not envy move you to do evil.

⁹ For the wicked shall be cut down: but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land.

¹⁰ In a little while the ungodly shall be no more: you will look for them in their place, but they will not be found.

¹¹ But the meek shall possess the land: and enjoy the abundance of peace.

⁴⁰ Deliverance for the righteous shall come from the Lord: he is their strength in time of trouble.

⁴¹ The Lord will help them and deliver them: he will save them from the ungodly and deliver them, because they come to him for refuge.

1 Corinthians 15.35-50

³⁵ But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?'

³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

³⁹ Not all flesh is the same: people have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour.

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

⁴⁵ So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.

⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Luke 6.27-38

²⁷ 'But to you who are listening I say: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.

²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.

³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² 'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.

³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. ³⁷ 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'

Sermon

Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Let us pray for the world and for the church.

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

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.

But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

Invitation to Confession

Christ the Son of God has been revealed as a light to the nations.

Let us bring our darkness to his light, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

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.

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

Hymn Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread

OFFERATORY PRAYER

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.**

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.

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.

We thank you

that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may with joy behold his appearing, and in confidence stand before him who redeems us from sin and death and makes us heirs of everlasting 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.

Holy and gracious God, all creation rightly gives you praise.

All life, all holiness, comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you sent to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

Hear us, merciful Lord; through Christ accept our sacrifice of praise; and, by the power of your Word and Holy Spirit, sanctify this bread and wine, that we who share in this holy sacrament may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

Who, when his hour had come, on the night before he went up to the cross to make full atonement for the sins of the whole world, offering once for all his one sacrifice of himself, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way after supper, he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

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

Therefore, in obedience to his command, we commemorate and celebrate his saving passion and death, his mighty resurrection and ascension into heaven, and we eagerly await his coming again in glory.

We thank you that by your grace alone you have accepted us in Christ; and here we offer you a spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight.

Through Christ, receive this our duty and service, and grant that we who eat and drink these holy gifts may, by your Holy Spirit, be one body in Christ, and serve you in unity and peace. In your grace and mercy, bring us to the joy of your eternal kingdom with all the company of the redeemed. May we praise you in union with them, and give you glory through your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father eternal, in songs of never-ending praise:

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

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life. Amen

The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life. Amen

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Prayer after Communion

God of the nations, we thank you for nourishing us with this holy sacrament.

Guide us by your presence, that we may bring your light to those who dwell in darkness, and establish your justice in the earth.

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

Hymn160

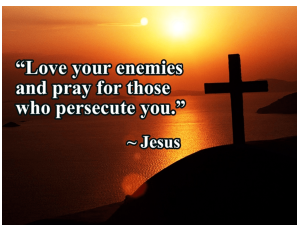
Blessing

May Christ the Son of God be manifest to you, that your lives may be a light to the world; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.



After the Beatitudes, Jesus continued his "Sermon on the Plain" with the gospel passage we read today. He is still talking to the twelve, plus the large crowd of disciples and a great number of people from all over Judea and he is still instructing them about how to live in the Kingdom of God and the instruction continue to be the opposite of how the world expects people to live.

He starts with that little aside: *to you who are listening*, and he is still talking to those who are listening today. It is very easy to know what the Bible says, or the basic principles of Christian life and yet not actually live them. Our Lord is looking for people who are listening to his voice and acting on it, not those who have all the answers intellectually and condemn those who don't measure up to their standards.



love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.

In our society, there are lots of examples of ways to get back at those who ill treat you or are just rude or decide to take a dislike to you for whatever reason. We love to watch the movies where the hero wins out in the end, all their enemies are thwarted, and the world is saved yet again.

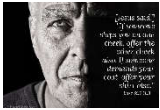
Social media is full of stories of people who quit their job and got back at their horrible bosses in clever ways or other ways people have won against others who tried to put one over them. These stories would not be so much fun if our hero or the person on social media had done good to those who hated them, blessed those who cursed them and prayed for those who illtreated them.

That is the way the world is, that is the ways humans easily behave, we are inherently selfish, and it is very hard to just let these things slip over us but



Jesus calls us to be new creations who follow him and love as he loved. He did love the Pharisees, he sometimes told them where they were going wrong, but he was delighted and very helpful when any of them, like Nicodemus, came to him for

help in turning their lives around. He died for those who hated him, cursed him and ill treated him. He even prayed that God would forgive his killers while he was on the cross. He loved them as well as all those who did or ever would follow him.



²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.

In Biblical times it was a common insult to slap someone beneath you on the cheek, it was a backhanded slap, basically saying: you are of no account, get out of my way. However, if the slap was a front handed slap, it was between equals, basically, you are my equal but I am cross with you. By offering the other cheek a person was saying, hit me again but recognise my worth. This is not being a door mat but accepting their wrath while maintaining one's own dignity.

If someone took your coat in those days it was probably not that they were stealing it but that they had sued you in a court to take your most valuable possession, if you offered them your shirt as well you were going that extra mile that Jesus talked about in other places or as Paul suggested in Romans, perhaps heaping burning coals on their head.

And the same principles apply to people asking and to people taking, our destiny, our worth is not tied up in our possessions and if needful we can let them go because we know that our real treasure is in heaven. This doesn't mean we should not look after our things but that we know where our real worth lies.



The point is that Jesus does not expect us to be walkovers, we are children of the king, but he does expect us to be non-violent, and non-aggressive, genuinely caring for the other person, and wanting the best for them without ever losing our own identity in the process. Never forget that God loves you as well as the other person and if they cannot see your true worth, you might be better loving them and praying for them from a distance rather than allowing them to use or abuse you.

We love the other, not because they will necessarily love us, we do good to others even if they cannot or will not even return goodness to us, we lend to others even if they never repay but we do all these things because we know that our heavenly Father behaves in this way. He is kind, he is merciful, he is love. The more we grow like him the more these will be true of us. We are no longer condemned, we are no longer judged, we are forgiven, and we have been given redemption, eternal life, a relationship with God and everything we need on this earth so we pass these incredible gifts on to anyone who will take them on this earth.





The kingdom that Jesus preached and lived was all about a glorious, uproarious, absurd generosity. These instructions have a fresh, springlike quality. They are all about bursting out energetically, like flowers growing through concrete and startling everyone with their colour and vigour.

But are they possible? Well, yes and no. Jesus' point was not to provide his followers with a new rule book, a list of do's and don'ts that you can tick off one by one. The point was to inspire, and illustrate, an attitude of heart, a lightness of spirit in the face of all the world can throw at you. And at the centre of it is the thing that motivates and gives colour to the whole: you are to be like this because this is what God is like.



God is generous, he provides good things for all to enjoy, the undeserving as well as the deserving. He is astonishingly merciful. He loves you and me, for goodness' sake. How can we his children, be anything less? Only when people discover that this is the sort of God, they are dealing with will they have any chance of making this way of life their own.

We recognise with Shame that large sections of Christianity down the years seem to have known little or nothing of the God Jesus is talking about. Many Christians believed in a gloomy or grumpy God, whose only concern was to make life difficult, a life of 'do not' but truly you cannot read this passage or the bible as a whole and believe such a thing. Jesus whole life was one of exuberant generosity, giving all he had to everyone who needed it. He was speaking about what he knew: the extravagant love of his Father and the call to live a lavish human life in response.



There are two particularly astonishing things about these instructions. First, their simplicity: they are obvious clear, direct, and memorable. Second: their scarcity. How many people do we know who really live like this? How many communities do we know where these guidelines are actually followed?

What is wrong with society? Has God changed? Or have we forgotten who he really is and who we really are? Let's live our lives in joyous love, reflecting God's love for everyone to everyone.