

26 June 2022

Hymn TIS 457 The church's one foundation.

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.

Sentence

Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for Jesus' sake will find it. Matthew 10.39

Prayer of Preparation [Let us pray.]

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

O God, the light of the minds that know you, the life of the souls that love you, the strength of the thoughts that seek you: help us so to know you that we may truly love you, and so to love you that we may fully serve you, whose service is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

2 Kings 2.1-2, 2.6-14

¹ When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel. ⁶ Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.' And he replied, 'As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them walked on. ⁷ Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. ⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?' 'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied. ¹⁰ 'You have asked a difficult thing,' Elijah said, 'yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours – otherwise, it will not.' ¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, 'My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!' And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two. ¹³ Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. 'Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

Psalm 77.1-2, 77.11-20

¹ I call to my God, I cry out toward him: I call to my God, and surely he will answer.

² In the day of my distress I seek the Lord, I stretch out my hands to him by night:
my soul is poured out without ceasing, it refuses all comfort.

¹¹ I will declare the mighty acts of the Lord: I will call to mind your wonders of old.

¹² I will think on all that you have done: and meditate upon your works.

¹³ Your way, O God, is holy: who is so great a god as our God?

¹⁴ You are the God that works wonders: you made known your power among the nations;

¹⁵ By your mighty arm you redeemed your people: the children of Jacob and Joseph.

¹⁶ The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and were afraid: the depths also were troubled.

¹⁷ The clouds poured out water, the heavens spoke: and your arrows darted forth.

¹⁸ The voice of your thunder was heard in the whirlwind: your lightnings lit the world,
the earth shuddered and quaked.

¹⁹ Your way was in the sea, your path in the great waters: and your footsteps were not seen.

²⁰ You led your people like sheep: by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Galatians 5.1, 5.13-25

¹ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. ¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. ¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Luke 9.51-62

⁵¹ As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, 'Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?' ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then he and his disciples went to another village. ⁵⁷ As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' ⁵⁸ Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' ⁵⁹ He said to another man, 'Follow me.' But he replied, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' ⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' ⁶¹ Still another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.' ⁶² Jesus replied, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'

Sermon

Nicene 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.

Prayers

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ has promised that you will hear us when we ask in faith receive the prayers we offer.

Response

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer

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, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and who ever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6.35

Prayer of Approach [Let us pray.]

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.

Confession

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

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.

Absolution

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.

Peace

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

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

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.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. 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.

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

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 Christ [the bread of heaven] keep you in eternal life.

The blood of Christ [the cup of salvation] keep you in eternal life.

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

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 .

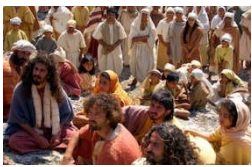
Dismissal

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



For most of us, coming to faith, becoming a follower of Jesus, was not radical in any way. I suspect the majority of us were brought up in the church and gradually over the years grew in faith and followed Jesus for ourselves. There might or might not have been a moment when we made a conscious decision but, in any case, it was hardly radical. We knew the door was open and we just slipped through.

In Jesus' time it was a very radical decision, a person who choose to follow Jesus was making a total break with their tradition, perhaps their family, and life as they had known it to that point. We hear reasonably regularly about Jesus calling his first disciples, the ones who became the original twelve but by the end of his ministry there were a large crowd of people who were following him every day. There were the women we know like the Marys, Martha, and Joanna but there were actually quite a few more although we assume that the predominance were men. Many of the disciples travelled with the group and others looked after them when they were in town or sometimes a bit of both.



These disciples came in various ways, some joined after being healed, others joined after seeing miracles or hearing Jesus preach, each one had their own story, their own reasons. In our gospel reading today we have a few responses to Jesus which are quite likely common responses.

What is not immediately obvious, to us, as we read this passage is that Luke has deliberately told it as an echo of Elijah's story, of which we read the ending today. You notice that he talks about the time for Jesus' ascension drawing near, when you would think that he would mention Jesus' death on the cross. He wants us to notice that just as Elijah ascended so does Jesus. Just as Elijah set out for Gilgal, so Jesus sets out for Jerusalem.



Malachi (3:1) declares that the lord will send a messenger to prepare the way (and later (4:5) says that that the messenger will be Elijah) and Jesus sends messengers ahead to prepare the way.

Jesus' messengers meet some opposition, Samaritans are very opposed to people going to Jerusalem and not terribly keen on Jews altogether, so this village rejected any possibility of offering hospitality. John and James, the sons of thunder, wanted to emulate Elijah and call down fire but Jesus rebuked them. Jesus was not Elijah, as earlier description of his identity have made clear, and his mission was not to destroy but to save and to reconcile.



That is one response to Jesus, total rejection, it's a common one today and no matter how frustrated we get with those who reject Jesus, his response is always the same: love and acceptance. That is what Jesus' journey is like, it's not a triumphant march, sweeping all resistance aside. It is the progress of the gospel of the kingdom, and as we know that means the message of love - of a grace so strong, so wide-ranging, and so surprising, that many will find it shocking.

Later the disciples came back to these villages and were able to bring many into the way. Our Lord continues to offer his love to those who reject him. Just as we follow his command For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself. (Gal 4: 14)

Now we meet three more would be disciples who are perhaps not quite understanding what being a disciple of Jesus really means.



The first one is super enthusiastic "I will follow you anywhere' but Jesus knows him and knows that this life is hard. Anything the master must endure, his disciples must also endure, including not having anywhere to lay his head. Does this man realise what he is promising or is he like the seed that fell among the rocks?

That mention that this man came as they were going along the road is a reminder of the ultimate destination of this journey. Jesus has told his disciples that he would be rejected and despised, could this man cope with such rejection? We are not told what the man did but it is usually assumed that he went away.



Jesus calls another but this man first wants to bury his father. The duty to bury the dead, especially your father was binding on all devout Jewish sons. From the sparse context it is not clear whether the father was already dead. He may have been pledging to follow, after having cared for his parents for the rest of their lives.

Jesus says that the priority of following him comes even higher than obligations to one's family. The saying should probably be understood to mean; 'Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead.' Those who have responded to the call of the kingdom are no longer dead, their concern should be with life and the living. Notice that this does not mean that we are no longer responsible for our family, what it does mean is that our loyalty to Jesus is higher than our responsibility to our family. In practise, often our Lord will ask us to care for our family as part of his call on our life.



The third man offers to follow Jesus but just wants to say goodbye to his family. This is the same request that Elisha had made when Elijah called him, in that case Elijah said 'go' and Elisha caught up with him a little later but in this case, Jesus emphasises that the call to discipleship is the first priority. Jesus emphasises again the unconditional demand of the request to follow. On the way to the cross there is no place for rash promises or misunderstanding regarding the cost of following Jesus.

If one looks back while ploughing, the furrow will be crooked. Jesus emphasises the unconditional demand of the call to discipleship. On the way to the cross there is no place for rash promises or misunderstandings regarding the cost of following Jesus.



Every one of us is susceptible to these obstacles to discipleship; lack of perception, lack of commitment, lack of steadfastness but perhaps we can learn from the failures of others. This scene which depicts the errors of would-be disciples who do not understand that Jesus is on the road to the cross, challenges us with the radical demands of discipleship. Because faithfulness would require Jesus to lay down his life, the call of discipleship to Jesus inevitably means unreserved commitment to the redemptive work of God for which Jesus gave his life. The radical demands of discipleship require that every disciple consider the cost, give Jesus the highest priority in one's life and move ahead without looking back.

The question comes home to us with renewed force. What does Jesus want us to do? Are we ready to follow him wherever he goes?

As we continue to travel on through life with Jesus, we come to know him better, give him more and more control of our life and continue to follow him without distraction every day.



And if we ever need it more explicit instruction we can read from

Galatians: The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

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