

25<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Hymn TIS 693

The minister greets the people.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### Sentence

Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. James 5.16

### THANKSGIVING.

Gracious God, we humbly thank you for life and health and safety,  
for freedom to work, leisure to rest, and for all that is beautiful in creation and human life.  
But, above all, we praise you for our Saviour, Jesus Christ, for his death and resurrection;  
for the gift of your Spirit; and for the hope of sharing in your glory.  
Fill our hearts with all joy and peace in believing; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Prayer of the Day

O God,  
from whom light rises in darkness for those who seek you:  
grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties,  
the grace to ask what you would have us do,  
that in your light we may see light,  
and in your narrow path may not stumble;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Jeremiah 32.1-3a,6-15

<sup>1</sup> This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>2</sup> The army of the king of Babylon was then besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was confined in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace of Judah. <sup>3</sup> Now Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him there, saying, 'Why do you prophesy as you do? You say, "This is what the Lord says: I am about to give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will capture it." <sup>6</sup> Jeremiah said, 'The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>7</sup> Hanamel son of Shallum your uncle is going to come to you and say, "Buy my field at Anathoth, because as nearest relative it is your right and duty to buy it." <sup>8</sup> 'Then, just as the Lord had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and said, "Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is your right to redeem it and possess it, buy it for yourself." 'I knew that this was the word of the Lord ; <sup>9</sup> so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. <sup>10</sup> I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. <sup>11</sup> I took the deed of purchase – the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, as well as the unsealed copy – <sup>12</sup> and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard. <sup>13</sup> 'In their presence I gave Baruch these instructions: <sup>14</sup> "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: take these documents, both the sealed and unsealed copies of the deed of purchase, and put them in a clay jar so that they will last a long time. <sup>15</sup> For this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land."

## Psalm 91.1-6, 14-16

<sup>1</sup> Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High: who abide under the shadow of the Almighty,

<sup>2</sup> They will say to the Lord 'You are my refuge and my stronghold: my God in whom I trust.'

<sup>3</sup> For he will deliver you from the snare of the hunter: and from the destroying curse.

<sup>4</sup> He will cover you with his wings, and you will be safe under his feathers: his faithfulness will be your shield and defence.

<sup>5</sup> You shall not be afraid of any terror by night: or of the arrow that flies by day,

<sup>6</sup> Of the pestilence that walks about in darkness: or the plague that destroys at noonday.

<sup>14</sup> 'You have set your love upon me,' says the Lord, 'and therefore I will deliver you:

I will lift you out of danger because you have known my name.

<sup>15</sup> 'When you call upon me I will answer you: I will be with you in trouble, I will rescue you and bring you to honour.

<sup>16</sup> 'With long life I will satisfy you: and fill you with my salvation.'

## 1 Timothy 6.6-19

<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup> Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. <sup>11</sup> But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup> In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you <sup>14</sup> to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> which God will bring about in his own time – God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, <sup>16</sup> who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might for ever. Amen. <sup>17</sup> Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup> Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. <sup>19</sup> In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

## Luke 16.19-31

<sup>19</sup> 'There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. <sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores <sup>21</sup> and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup> 'The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire." <sup>25</sup> 'But Abraham replied, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us." <sup>27</sup> 'He answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment." <sup>29</sup> 'Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." <sup>30</sup> "'No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." <sup>31</sup> 'He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Sermon

### Affirmation of Faith.

We believe in one God, who made and loves all that is. We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was born, lived, died and rose again, and is coming to call all to account.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who calls, equips and sends out God's people, and brings all things to their true end.

This is our faith, the faith of the Church:

We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### CONFESSION OF SIN

The following Confession may be introduced.

'Come now, let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson they shall be like wool.' Isaiah 1.18

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Let us now confess our sins to almighty God.

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love, but we have broken your holy laws and have left undone what we ought to have done. We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.

For the sake of your Son who died for us, forgive us, cleanse us and change us.

By your Holy Spirit, enable us to live for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God desires that none should perish, but that all should turn to Christ, and live.

In response to his call we acknowledge our sins. God pardons those who humbly repent,

and truly believe the gospel. Therefore we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Christ died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6.10–11

Hymn TIS 136

### THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER

**Let us pray for the world and for the church.**

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.

Notices

### THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers, feeding us with your word, and encouraging us in our meeting together.

Take us and use us to love and serve you and all people,

in the power of your Spirit and in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

hymn TIS 142

blessing.

May the God of peace equip you with everything good for doing his will, working in you what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## Why Doesn't God Answer my Prayers Like I Tell Him to?

Matthew 11:28-30

### INTRODUCTION

It is a common complaint that God doesn't fix things how and when we want, even when we ask nicely and do lots of good deeds. In Psalm 96 we can read it as though our Psalmist is granted an easy life because of their trust in God. However, by looking again, we see that our writer is in the midst of hardship, danger and uncertainty, but despite that he has peace of mind because he knows the character of God and rests in the knowledge that God is willing and able to help.

In the Psalm God is Holy, unapproachably pure, mighty beyond our imagining, repels evil, is the supreme power and authority over the earth and its creatures and people. All that is true, but there is a missing element in our typical observation of God's character. Our God is also meek and humble. Jesus, humbled himself to be God among us, foregoing all his privileges of divinity to be one of us. During the time of his humiliation he said that *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father and the Father and I are one*. We are also familiar with the phrase *Gentle Jesus meek and mild*. In other words, like Father, like Son if the Son will humble himself to be alongside us, our Father, God almighty, is not too proud to be humble and be alongside of us too.

In contrast we know that the world around us loves might and power. So that Vladimir Putin justifies his war in the Ukraine by wanting to make Russia Great again as it was in the days of Catherine the Great. Xi Jinping justifies his aggressive stance on the world stage to avenge the humiliation of China in the Opium Wars and to make China great again. Of course abuse of power is small scale too, I recall being at school when teachers stood you in the corner and threw chalk at you. We may share the sentiment *I don't want to go through things that don't kill me but make me stronger anymore*.

Samuel Butler (1684) wrote *A man who complies against his will is of the same opinion still*. Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) similarly wrote *Convince a man against his will he is of the same opinion still*. We see it often within ourselves that we can be forced to comply outwardly, but inwardly we rebel. The trick is to change the will, to renew a person from within. God wants people inwardly renewed in their hearts and minds, becoming in effect new people. He exercises patience to bring about profound change, hence the title *Good Shepherd*, or perhaps see him as a horse whisperer gently training a horse without using force or cruelty. We need to focus a lot more on the Wisdom, Patience and Love of God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but wants all people to be fully alive.

### THE MEEKNESS OF GOD

The term Meek has been corrupted, we assume that a meek person is weak, a doormat, a fawning pleaser of other people. But that is far from the meek Jesus we see in the Gospels. Only a strong person with rock solid integrity can be meek, and such is Jesus. Meekness is able to receive insult and offence with restraint, foregoing an angry, vengeful reaction. But

rather trying to resolve controversy peacefully and without compromising on integrity. Meekness is determined that what is morally right is done, but without aggression and violence. Working to bring about change in a way which most beneficial for all. Meekness upholds the rights of the minorities the marginalised and outcasts in a way which doesn't cause even more trouble. Meekness has the self-security to shoulder unfair blame, seek to understand the complainer and resolve the contentious matter. Meekness is powerful enough to enforce compliance, but waits for heart-change and engages peaceably with people to bring about change within.

Meekness is able to forgive the ignorant, deluded or confused and help them grow in understanding. Meekness shows kindness both to the enemy and the marginalised, it is able to deal humanely with the victim and the perpetrator and brings both to peace. Meekness doesn't destroy or kill, though it has the power to do so, but works to help all parties and resolves contention. Such was the work of Christ in his humanity and even now.

This same meekness and humility is seen from the start of human history in Genesis. Our Father always wanted a family, a community of faith to share his creative work and to make a very good world more perfect. The creating Lord God humbly walking with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, discussing plans to expand the Garden worldwide. We see it in Noah and his family, God making a fresh start to humanity humbly meeting with Noah to organise a means of rescue from the Flood and freedom to begin again. We see it in Abraham and his Child of Promise, God going out of his way to personally visit, wait for a meal to be prepared and make the promise while helping Abraham and Sarah come to terms with their doubts. We see it later in Moses and the Israelites on Exodus to the Promised Land granted what was in their day a humane Law Code designed to attract the neighbouring nations into joining God's holy people. We see it also in the Apostles and the Church growing a grass roots community of people who love their God and care for each other. We see it ultimately in the New Heaven and the New Earth where there is an innumerable community of faith. We may not see how this can be, but we have faith and confidence that God knows what he is doing.

#### MEEKLY YOKED

Our calling is to grow in meekness centred on our faith in our loving Father, Aboriginal wisdom puts it this way *We are all visitors to this time this place. We are just passing through. Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love...and then we return home.* The teachings of the apostles and their predecessors is that we progressively grow into Christ likeness, to take on his yoke and submit to his good authority. It isn't a one-off achievement but a continual growing in self-discipline and integrity. We should be like fresh, living streams flowing for the betterment of those we encounter. Not lurid green stagnant ponds which benefit no one. It does not mean freedom from trouble, but guidance and help through our troubling times, peace in spite of circumstance.

In my case God patiently waited about 60 years for me to hit a crisis. I was like a hiker in Scotland who following a path across an unstable scree slope above a precipice left the safe path and found himself inexorably, inevitably skidding down the slope, unable to work his

way to a safe place. The further he slid, the less stable the slope became, the faster he slid. After more than 24 hours he was found by a rescue team with a rope who put him back on the safe path. For me I resigned myself to going with the flow and off the edge. It was there that God caught me, He taught me and brought me to a better place. I am now freer, no longer a slave to powerful people in my life who wanted me to be what I could not be. I am now becoming more fully myself, under God. In other words, I am laying aside the world's harsh, irritating yoke and taking on the custom-made, comforting yoke of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

We are called to do a simple, yet profoundly difficult thing. We are to lay aside our personal ambition and agendas. No longer chasing after the World's priorities which have never, and will never satisfy. The extraordinary thing is, that is in surrendering our personal agenda to our loving Father, we receive it back again, but improved.

The theologian Jeremy Taylor puts it this way *Christ's yoke is like feathers to a bird: not loads, but helps to motion.*