

2nd October 2022

Hymn TIS 154 Great is Your Faithfulness

The minister greets the people and reads one or more of the following.

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: 'Who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves?' But I am among you, says the Lord, 'as the one who serves.' Luke 22:27

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

Faithful God, have mercy on us your unworthy servants, and increase our faith, that, trusting in your Spirit's power to work in us and through us, we may never be ashamed to witness to our Lord but may obediently serve him all our days. Through Jesus Christ our Lord and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen

Lamentations 1:1-6

- 1 How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave.
- 2 Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is none to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies.
- 3 After affliction and harsh labor, Judah has gone into exile. She dwells among the nations; she finds no resting place. All who pursue her have overtaken her in the midst of her distress.
- 4 The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to her appointed feasts. All her gateways are desolate, her priests groan, her maidens grieve, and she is in bitter anguish.
- 5 Her foes have become her masters; her enemies are at ease. The LORD has brought her grief because of her many sins. Her children have gone into exile, captive before the foe.
- 6 All the splendor has departed from the Daughter of Zion. Her princes are like deer that find no pasture; in weakness they have fled before the pursuer.

Psalm 137

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.
- 2 There on the poplars we hung our harps,
- 3 for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
- 4 How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?
- 5 If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.
- 6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.
- 7 Remember, Lord, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!"
- 8 Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is the one who repays you according to what you have done to us.
- 9 Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.

1 Timothy 1:1-14

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,
- 2 To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.
- 4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.
- 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.
- 6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.
- 7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.
- 8 So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.
- 9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life; not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,
- 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.
- 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.
- 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.
- 13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.
- 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you; guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Luke 17:1-9

Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. ² It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. ³ So watch yourselves.

"If your brother or sister^(a) sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. ⁴ Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

⁶ He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

⁷ "Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ⁸ Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? ⁹ Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?

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 256 From Heaven you came

THE MINISTRY OF 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.**

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 687 God gives us a future

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.**

Luke 17: 1-10

2.10.22

If you were listening to the Gospel reading today you may be slightly puzzled about the connection of these four sayings of Jesus.

It may appear that Luke has simply taken some random teachings & thrown them together to fill up a chapter or two in his book!
But this is not the case.

Luke writes with intention & purpose with the goal of offering a reliable portrait of Jesus.

What Luke is trying to show us is that Jesus is different from - & often in conflict with- the religious teachers of his day.

So let's try to understand the thrust of today's gospel.

Surprisingly enough it is all about Humility.

Humility in our attitudes to others.

Humility in our relationship to God.

The first teaching is a sideways swipe at the Pharisees & their rules & regulations.

They were sticklers for 'obedience' - obedience to their concept of God.

According to them everything had to be done correctly - all the i's dotted & the t's crossed. And woe betide anyone who didn't toe the line & who didn't keep their rules & rituals.

You see their ways were not God's ways. Their ways were all about pomp & ceremony, about being seen & honoured in the marketplace. Keeping up appearances!

So the disciples ask Jesus to 'increase their faith' so they can be 'good enough'

If the teachers of the faith were in error, how on earth would this lowly band of disciples ever make the grade?

Jesus responds by painting a picture of a faith so potent that the tiniest amount will explode your life.

A faith not of rules & regulations but of *relationship*, rooted in the knowledge of God.

This is a faith, not of quantity but of *quality*.

In the kingdom of the Messiah, it's not about what you know, but who you know.

Luke understood - and this is what he is trying to convey to us- *is that good works are the fruit of faith. We love others because He first loved us.*

Here is where humility comes in.

We are to be humble when teaching the young in the faith - not judgemental & harsh when they slip up or don't understand.

Patience, understanding & encouragement are required - also it helps to set a good example for others to follow.

In the case of Forgiveness - humility is especially difficult.

And as for forgiving '70 times 7', well that is a big ask. But isn't that what we receive from God day after day??

How easy it is to take the moral high ground:" I haven't done anything wrong, so if I choose to forgive you that makes me superior to you"

.Why should I go on giving you all that freedom?

But Jesus' approach is utterly different.

When we forgive someone, we are making ourselves their servant, not their master.

We are not to be self-righteous, haughty & proud of the fact that we can say 'I forgive you'

The point is that we are not scoring moral points at all.

We are to be humble, to take no advantage of the situation, to give the other person the generous & welcoming forgiveness that God has shown us in the first place.

That after all is the real source of humility.

The disciples, like us, realise this is difficult. That it will require more faith than they think they have.

Jesus responds to their request 'increase our faith' with a quick answer.

It's not great faith we need: it is faith in a great God.

Let me explain:-

Faith is like a window through which we can see something.

What matters is not whether the window is six inches or six feet high;

What matters is the God that our faith is looking out on.

If it is our Creator God, the God active in Jesus & the Spirit, then the tiniest little peep-hole of a window will give us access to power like we never imagined.

But beware - when we exercise this faith & see amazing results it may be tempting for us to become proud !

Remember today's topic.....humility. **Not I but God.**

Finally, the shocking lesson - that all we do, even the hard work we do for God, never for a moment puts God in our debt.

How often do we hear it said (& how many more times is it thought);

"I've done all this, I've given all that money, I've worked so hard - surely God will be satisfied with that!"

The answer is that all genuine service to God is done from gratitude, not to earn anything at all.

This doesn't mean that we are worthless, that we lack a proper sense of self-worth & self-love.

It does mean that we must constantly remind ourselves of the great truth: *we can never put God in our debt.*

It is all about Grace.

We are unworthy servants.

Humble people live under grace & are not looking for reward.

God is under no obligation to reward us for service.

We are called to be humble - not to lead others astray with false teachings

- to forgive as we are forgiven

- to have faith & keep our eyes on Jesus.

- to recognize our service falls far short & all our

gifts and blessings are 'Grace' from God.

“ Lord Jesus, our desire for significance & recognition can make us judgemental & prideful. Help us, by your Spirit to be mindful of your love & forgiveness, & enable us to show the same spirit to others’. Amen