

23 October 2022

Hymn

Greeting

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

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. Luke 18.17

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

O God, who alone can probe the depths of the heart, you hear the prayer of the humble and justify the repentant sinner: grant us the gift of humility, that, seeing our own faults clearly, we may refrain from judging our neighbour but rely solely upon your saving grace. We make our prayer through your Son, our Saviour, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Joel 2.23-32

²³ Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. ²⁴ The threshing-floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. ²⁵ 'I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten – the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm – my great army that I sent among you. ²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. ²⁷ Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. ²⁸ 'And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. ³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. ³² And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

Psalm 65

¹ You are to be praised, O God, in Zion: to you shall vows be paid, you that answer prayer.
² To you shall all flesh come to confess their sins: when our misdeeds prevail against us, you will purge them away.
³ Blessed are those whom you choose and take to yourself to dwell within your courts:
we shall be filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.
⁴ You will answer us in your righteousness with terrible deeds, O God our saviour:
you that are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the distant seas;
⁵ Who by your strength made fast the mountains: you that are girded with power;
⁶ Who stilled the raging of the seas, the roaring of the waves: and the tumult of the peoples.
⁷ Those who dwell at the ends of the earth are afraid at your wonders: the dawn and the evening sing your praises. ⁸ You tend the earth and water it: you make it rich and fertile.
⁹ The river of God is full of water: and so providing for the earth, you provide grain for us all.
¹⁰ You drench its furrows, you level the ridges between: you soften it with showers and bless its early growth.
¹¹ You crown the year with your goodness: and the tracks where you have passed drip with fatness.
¹² The pastures of the wilderness run over: and the hills are girded with joy.
¹³ The meadows are clothed with sheep: and the valleys stand so thick with corn, they shout for joy and sing.

2 Timothy 4.6-8, 4.16-18

⁶ For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. ¹⁶ At my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Luke 18.15-30

¹⁵ People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' ¹⁸ A certain ruler asked him, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ¹⁹ 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good – except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments: "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honour your father and mother.'" ²¹ 'All these I have kept since I was a boy,' he said. ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' ²³ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. ²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' ²⁶ Those who heard this asked, 'Who then can be saved?' ²⁷ Jesus replied, 'What is impossible with man is possible with God.' ²⁸ Peter said to him, 'We have left all we had to follow you!' ²⁹ 'Truly I tell you,' Jesus said to them, 'no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.'

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.

the prayers

Let us pray for the world and for the Church.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our 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

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

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.

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.

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

Christ has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross. **We meet in his name and share his peace.**

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 3

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.**

Preface

It is indeed right, it is our duty, our joy and our salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ your only Son our Lord.

For he is the true high priest, who has freed us from our sins and made us a royal priesthood to serve you, our God and Father. 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.

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 be 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

Living God, in this holy meal you fill us with new hope. May the power of your love, which we have known in word and sacrament, continue your saving work among us, give us courage for our pilgrimage, and bring us to the joys you promise.

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.

notices

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**



As the Lukan travel narrative nears its conclusion we have another set of contrasts, last week we had the persistent widow and the unjust judge, plus the Pharisee and the tax collector. In this passage Jesus blesses the children and calls the rich man.

The section we are in constantly returns to the theme of the kingdom, focussing our attention on the kingdom reversals of conventional wisdom and the radical demands that Jesus makes on all who seek to enter the kingdom of God or gain eternal life. The little children and the rich ruler do not interact but taken together they serve to illustrate what the kingdom requires.

Jesus' rebuke to the disciples still rings out in a world where thousands of children are treated as sub-human, as disposable commodities. Little children, he says are the ones who most truly show us what it means to accept and enter God's kingdom. There is something about the helplessness of children, their complete trust of those who love and care for them, which perfectly demonstrates the humble trust he has been speaking of all along.



We are not told why the children are being brought to Jesus, but as infant mortality rates were about 30% with disease, famine and war taking large percentages, presumably people were bringing children to Jesus because they had seen or heard that his touch could heal.

Neither are we told why the disciples try to stop people from bringing children. We may conjecture that they disregard the personhood of children, or that they wanted to protect Jesus' time for more important activities. They were acting like a celebrity's entourage by shielding Jesus from the public. By doing so, however, they demonstrate that they have again failed to understand the nature of the kingdom.

Jesus says, 'let the little children come to me', and thus gives expression to the gentle nurturing side of God. Wherever people in positions of power hinder others - the outcast, women, the poor, or children from entering the kingdom, it is always a mistake.



Jesus is not offering a romantic or sentimental view of children; he knew in the daily life of the village and through growing up as the oldest of the family, just how demanding and annoying they can be. But he sees the heart of what it means to receive God's kingdom; it is like drinking in one's mother's milk, like learning to see, and to smile, by looking at one's mother's eyes and face.

He explains his motive for receiving children: it is 'to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs'. Who else could be numbered among 'such as these'?



By contrast the ruler who appears so confident, so well organised, so righteous, looks into the face of the one he calls 'good' and turns away sad. He had hoped to impress Jesus with his piety and devotion; he had a clean moral record in keeping the well-known commandments. His question about what he needs to do to receive eternal life, Jesus' answer and the subsequent conversation with the crowd and the disciples enable us to see what is going on as Jesus approaches Jerusalem.

There is no change of scene between these stories. Had the ruler heard Jesus' pronouncements about the children and was his question a reaction to Jesus' sayings? Was he in fact saying, 'if these children enter the kingdom of heaven how do I enter?' He is asking about the nature of righteousness. In the context of God's covenant with Israel, the question of what one must do to inherit eternal life implicitly raises the much-debated question of the relationship between covenant, righteousness, and resurrection. At this time, the nature of resurrection and the basis for eternal life were vigorously debated.

The ruler's question assumes that the hope of eternal life depends on what one does or fails to do but the very word 'inherit' emphasises the hope based on God's promises of eternal life as part of God's blessing. He really is confused.



The ruler addresses Jesus as "good teacher" but Jesus immediately turns it back saying, 'No one is good but God alone'. God is the source of all goodness, the only one worthy of worship. If a person is good, it is through God's grace; implicitly, if Jesus is to be worshipped, it is because of God's vindication of Jesus through the resurrection.

Then we have the little exchange about the commandments which the ruler finds a little tedious, but Jesus is reminding him of the essentials of the covenant. Whatever else Jesus might say on the issue of eternal life is based on the reality of these commands. The new is not a departure from the old but an extension and completion of what God has been doing through human history.



And then we come to the crunch: Sell everything; give it away; and follow me. The ruler's treasure is his wealth, rather than a true desire for the kingdom or eternal life. His heart is here on earth with his wealth, no wonder he was sad, you can't take it with you, and he had no treasure in heaven. What Jesus said to the ruler, is not a new or arbitrary demand imposed on this man or members of his class; it is an expression of the basic truths of the kingdom. The children, the widows, the strangers, and the poor have a special place in God's care so those who would inherit the kingdom must also be committed to their care.

LOVE IS A CURRENCY THAT
FUNCTIONS IN REVERSE
THE ONLY WAY TO BE WEALTHY!
WITH IT IS TO
GIVE MORE OF IT AWAY

SHANE KOYZAN

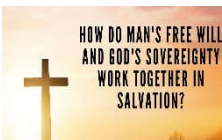
The ruler walks away sorrowful. Both Jesus and the ruler are sad and both for the same reason. Both realise that the ruler's wealth has hindered him from entering the kingdom. The ruler cannot bring himself to surrender the goods, and Jesus can neither overcome nor ignore the ruler's response. The price of free will is that God cannot force humans to make the right decisions in life. It is very poignant that the ruler has the spiritual sensitivity to be sad, but Jesus can do nothing further for him.

The rich find it difficult to experience God's sovereignty because their wealth turns them away from people in need and blinds them to their own need for salvation.



Jesus is putting into operation that for which most Jews had longed: God's kingdom, God's sovereign saving power operating in a new way for the benefit of the whole world. This means that from then on 'the age to come' is breaking in. It will come fully in the future, when all evil has been done away with, and those who belong will share eternal life. In this new age everything will be new fresh and free from corruption, decay, evil, bitterness, pain and death. There will be new opportunities, new joys and delights, heaven and earth will be joined, God and his children will live with each other.

All this is what Jesus was beginning. In our lives evil and death continue, Jesus himself faced the full force of the power of the old age but wherever he was and where people with humble and penitent trust accept that God's kingdom was active in and through him the life of the new age is present. '



Salvation depends on both God's power and our response to God's invitation to faithfulness. Through God's strength the faithful receive a bountiful reward - the experience of fellowship with God in the present and eternal life in the future. Again, free will and divine sovereignty are juxtaposed and equally affirmed. While God always calls for a human response of repentance and faithfulness, salvation is always an act of divine initiative and grace.

This new age breaks into our sad old world and the church is called in every age to be the sort of community where trust, love and selflessness is the norm. where we and the world around us can glimpse what God's new world is like and we learn to live that way more and more. If we can learn to humble ourselves, so that the humble may be exalted then before God the camel may yet make it through the eye of the needle.