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Service for the 20th Sunday after Trinity, 25th October 2020

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

O Lord, you have always been our home. Before you created the hills or brought the world into being, you were eternally God and will be God for ever.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.

Love your neighbour as you love yourself.

We have not been able to celebrate harvest in our usual way this year, but it seems appropriate that we should thank our Creator God for all His goodness and love to us...

HYMN: Come, ye thankful people

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Come, ye thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home;
all is safely gathered in,
ere the winter storms begin.
God our Maker doth provide
for our wants to be supplied;
come to God's own temple, come,
raise the song of harvest home.

2 All the world is God's own field,
fruit as praise to God we yield;
wheat and tares together sown
are to joy or sorrow grown;
first the blade and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear;
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.

3 For the Lord our God shall come,
and shall take the harvest home;
from the field shall in that day
all offenses purge away,
giving angels charge at last
in the fire the tares to cast;
but the fruitful ears to store
in the garner evermore.

4 Even so, Lord, quickly come,
bring thy final harvest home;
gather thou thy people in,
free from sorrow, free from sin,
there, forever purified,
in thy presence to abide;
come, with all thine angels, come,
raise the glorious harvest home.

Revd Dr Henry Alford

PRAYERS

Let us pray.

We praise you and adore you, Holy Lord God, the maker of all that is, our Lord and our God.

We praise you, wonderful God, for your wisdom. You have given us laws for life which are set out for the good of us all. You have given us your love, so that we might enjoy life in all its fullness.

In Jesus, you have given us a supreme example to follow and, by the Holy Spirit you have given us, the strength to obey. Creator God, may our lives be lived in righteousness as an example to all.

Holy God, we confess that we have not loved you with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. We confess that we have not loved our neighbour as we love ourselves and as we hope to be loved. Loving God, forgive us; make us holy, for you are all holiness.

A prayer from the URC Prayer Handbook...

Loving God, we thank you that you have commissioned us to participate in your very nature by living out your love here on earth. We thank you for the joyfulness of this commission and pray that we may enter into it with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind. Yet we are aware that this commission is full of risk and challenge. So we pray that you would keep us close and fill us with your delight and your love.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: St Matthew 22: 34-46

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together, ³⁵ and one of them, a teacher of the Law, tried to trap him with a question. ³⁶ "Teacher," he asked, "which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'³⁸ This is the greatest and the most important commandment. ³⁹ The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'⁴⁰ The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments."

⁴¹ When some Pharisees gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴² "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose descendant is he?"

"He is David's descendant," they answered.

⁴³ "Why, then," Jesus asked, "did the Spirit inspire David to call him 'Lord'? David said,

⁴⁴ 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet.'

⁴⁵ If, then, David called him 'Lord,' how can the Messiah be David's descendant?"

⁴⁶ No one was able to give Jesus any answer, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN: Day by day

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment*

Day by day, dear Lord, of thee three things I pray:
To see thee more clearly, to love thee more dearly,
to follow thee more nearly, day by day,

13th cent, attrib Richard of Chichester

ADDRESS: *Mrs Nancy McOnie*

Over the past few weeks, our lectionary readings have illustrated how the Pharisees tested and challenged Jesus in conversation with Him. They questioned Him about marriage and resurrection, about paying taxes, and now today about the central laws of their faith in the Commandments.

Like all Jewish children, Jesus would have been taught the first words of the Ten Commandments from His early days. They are the words used at the beginning of each Jewish service, as David Adam reminds us...

“Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.”

They were reminded that they must teach them to their children, to bind them on their hands, to fix them on their foreheads and to write them on the door post of their houses.

Some Jews took it very literally and put them in little leather boxes, ‘phylacteries’, which were attached to their wrists or foreheads. Jesus was obviously well used to saying these words without needing such reminders and, as we know, He lived up to them in His own life.

In His conversation with the Scribe, He reminded him also of the second commandment, “love your neighbour as you love yourself”. It was Luke, in his gospel, who illustrated this with the story of the Good Samaritan.

It would seem there are two challenges in this passage for the Church today.

- How do we pass on our faith to future generations?
- How do we find ways of loving others and caring for people with so many restrictions to observe?

Our harvest hymn reminded us that..

“All the world is God’s own field,
fruit unto His praise to yield.”

and we know from the words of Jesus that we must take our part in sowing the seed and gathering in the harvest; but it has never been an easy task.

In these past months, I have enjoyed listening to the service of Choral Evensong broadcast by BBC Radio 3 on Wednesday afternoons. Listening to the hymns and anthems has reminded me of our own music in church and choir practice. The service also includes saying The Creed, and that expression of our faith is also important to me. It is not our usual custom in the Non-

Conformist tradition, but it has reminded me that we need to find ways of passing on our faith to younger people: new ways are needed for sowing the seed!

The second commandment has also taken on a new meaning in these past months. There has been no opportunity for meeting people or showing our concern in a visit. However, I have had many telephone calls from friends & family – and have used this way of reaching out to others myself.

Prayer is also very important, as the poet Tennyson reminds us...

“More things are wrought by prayer than this word dreams of.”

He encouraged us to pray for ourselves and those who call us friends, concluding with...

“For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

I speak from experience when I say that prayer has been answered in these past weeks. “God is still on the phone” as one small child said, misquoting an old chorus.

We can also support those charities working in other countries to express our concern for the people we cannot reach. I am sure you have all found your own ways of loving others and following The Commandments in these past weeks.

The last few verses of our reading remind us that Jesus was always able to argue with the Pharisees politely but effectively. He answered this question with another: “What do you think about the Messiah – whose Son is He?” They were unable to answer.

It reminded me of the well-known words of Albert Schweitzer in his book ‘The Quest of the Historical Jesus’ and I will close with this thought...

“He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old by the lakeside.
He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word:
‘Follow thou me’ and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time.
He commands; and to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple,
He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall
pass through in His fellowship. And, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in
their own experience who He is.”

Thanks be to God, Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

At the words “Lord of grace glory”, please respond with “**lead us from despair to hope**”.

Let us pray

Loving God, we give you thanks today for all who have shared their lives and their faith with us. We pray for the church in all parts of the world and for all who teach the faith; for ministers and preachers, for Junior Church teachers, and for all involved in religious education in schools & colleges.

We pray for all who find faith difficult and for those who have lost their faith in these challenging days.

Lord of grace and glory: **lead us from despair to hope.**

We pray for our world and for all those who are working for peace, and for those with vision who seek to care for and conserve our planet. We pray for ecologists, for research workers and scientists. Loving God, you have given us a beautiful world: teach us to love it and show respect for the earth.

Lord of grace and glory: **lead us from despair to hope.**

We pray for all who are in special need today of our love and concern. For all whose lives are affected by Coronavirus in their work or their family life. We pray for the lonely and for all who mourn the loss of a loved one. We pray for all who are ill in hospital or in care.

We pray for members & friends of our own church fellowship, especially those who feel unable to share in worship. We pray for our own families and all who are dear to us.

Bless and keep us all in your love.

Lord of grace and glory: **lead us from despair to hope.**

Finally, we pray for all whom we have loved who now live in God's nearer presence. May we be found worthy to share with them the joys of His eternal kingdom.

We ask these prayers, together with the unspoken prayers of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

HYMN: Lead us, heavenly Father

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing,
if our God our Father be.

2 Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us:
all our weakness thou dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us,
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
lone and dreary, faint and weary,
through the desert thou didst go.

3 Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending,
pleasure that can never cloy:
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

James Edmeston

BLESSING

The love of God be in your heart,
the peace of God be in your mind,
the grace of God be in your dealings,
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest upon us and remain with us always.

Amen.