

**Tuesday 6 July 2021**

# Saints Thomas More and John Fisher



Thomas More (left) was born in 1478. He studied classics then law. Henry VIII spotted him and made him Chancellor. Thomas supported the king in his efforts to reform the clergy but disagreed over Henry's disputes with the papacy, caused by the king's desire to annul his first marriage. Henry imprisoned his chancellor. Thomas refused to take the Oath on the Act of Succession, which said the king to be the only protector and supreme head of the Church in England. He was executed for treason on this day in 1535, declaring that he died the king's good servant but God's first.

John Fisher (right) was Thomas More's close friend and ally. He was a brilliant academic who reformed the life of Cambridge University, through the wealth and influence of his patron, Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII. He was made Bishop of Rochester and was a good pastor to his small diocese. At first, Henry VIII admired him but relationships deteriorated when he opposed the king. Henry imprisoned him in the Tower of London and executed him two weeks before Thomas on 22 July 1535. He was sixty-six years of age.

**Sermon** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Liturgy and prayers of intercession** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1** [Firmly I believe and truly](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

## The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## The Preparation

**All 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.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**All** Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name.  
**Amen.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

## **The Gloria**

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

**All** Glory be to God in Heaven,  
Songs of joy and peace we bring,  
Thankful hearts and voices raising,  
To creation's Lord we sing.  
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,  
Glory be to God our King:  
Glory be to God our King.  
  
Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,  
Bore the load of this world's sin;  
Only Son of God the Father,  
You have brought us peace within.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,

**Now your glorious reign begin:  
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,  
You we praise with one accord.  
None in heav'n or earth is like you,  
Only you are Christ the Lord.  
With the Father and the Spirit,  
Ever worshipped and adored:  
Ever worshipped and adored.**

### **The Collect for Saints Thomas More and John Fisher**

O God, who in martyrdom  
have brought true faith to its highest expression  
graciously grant  
that, strengthened through the intercession  
of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More,  
we may confirm by the witness of our life  
the faith we profess with our lips.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

### **Responsorial psalm**

**All Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.**

When the Lord brought back the captives of Zion,  
we were like men dreaming.  
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with rejoicing.

**All Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.**

Then they said among the nations,  
'The Lord has done great things for them.'  
The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are glad indeed.

**All Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.**

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,  
like the torrents in the southern desert.

Those who sow in tears  
shall reap rejoicing.

**All Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.**

Although they go forth weeping,  
carrying the seed to be sown,  
They shall come back rejoicing,  
carrying their sheaves.

**All Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.** *Ps 126:1bc-2ab, 2cd-3, 4-5, 6*

## Second reading

A reading from the First Letter of Saint Peter

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God. For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator. *1 Peter 4:12-19*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 For I'm building a people of power** ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, "I am the Messiah!" and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but

the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

‘Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But anyone who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

‘So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; someone on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house; someone in the field must not turn back to get a coat. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath. For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, “Look! Here is the Messiah!” or “There he is!”—do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.’ *Matthew 24:4–13*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## **Sermon**

Jesus knew all about persecution. He was himself persecuted from the moment his baptism revealed that he was the long-promised Messiah. He also knew Jewish history and how all the prophets had been persecuted. There were many reasons why they were persecuted but underlying all of them was one simple reason. Evil.

Jesus and the prophets before him wanted to bring about a spiritual revolution. They wanted to bring about universal discipleship and the usher in the Kingdom of God—so a world characterised by love, holiness, and righteousness. The powers of evil (then as now) thought the world was/is their own and so wanted to keep their own position. They therefore did everything to stop Jesus and the prophets. And the best way of stopping a servant of God was to remove them permanently, hence (in Jesus’ case) the passion and crucifixion. Thomas More and John Fisher were beheaded. Countless disciples have been killed since. The count is rising fast.

The powers of darkness knew their role well and their aim was horribly true. Jesus was therefore not so much threatening his disciples as warning them what to expect. Jesus was saying to them, to Thomas More and John Fisher, and to all of us today, that the powers of evil will try to stop Godliness. They always work through people, just as God wants to work through us. Jesus is saying that the spiritual struggle is a proxy battle: it's good against evil but fought between human beings.

Jesus knew this truth and so tried to teach it to his disciples. Years later—today!—he teaches us through Scripture. We are part of that same spiritual struggle.

And Jesus was clear that we cannot avoid taking sides. It's horribly simple: we are for God or against him. Refusing to enter the battle is to take sides against God.

We therefore have a choice: on the one hand, we can have a life that is relatively quiet and unimpeded by strife, but the judgement at its end will be awful; or we can strive for God and try to live the lives that God requires, but ending with a warm welcome on judgment day. That idea lies at heart of St Peter's message today: to paraphrase, 'We can suffer now or later.'

This message can sound negative and grim. It is, but only in a small part because God rewards those who serve Him. The people who give Him their lives in true service and discipleship find their lives returned, but God has altered, enhanced, and bejewelled those lives by sending them His Holy Spirit. And the Spirit gives fruit of overwhelming love, irresistible joy, and other-worldly peace. Serving God in this way gives meaning and balance. Jesus himself said he came to give us 'life and life in its fullness' (John 10:10). That's why John Fisher went to the execution block 'with a quiet smile' and why Thomas More said he felt God's peace.

These anecdotes point to a central truth that we often ignore. The battle between good and evil may look like a tug of war with us in the middle, but it's not equal. God is greater and bigger. He has something of greater power than all the arsenals against us—God has love because God *is* love. And love always wins.

So, to summarise today's readings: we can look through one end of the telescope of faith and see saints and ordinary people like us trying to live Christian lives and being hurt and persecuted for our faith; or we can look through the other end of the telescope of faith and see what's really going on: the spiritual battle continues through us and God has deemed us worthy to be a part of his company of disciples.

Many of us feel persecuted for our faith. Maybe we are. Jesus speaks truth and context into our lives. He then asks us to continue in that faith. He does so because the benefits are literally out of this world.

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

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

## Prayers of intercession

We pray for strength to follow Jesus.

Saviour, we hear your call.

**All Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

**All Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Unless you change and become humble like little children, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

**All Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Happy are the humble; they will receive what God has promised.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

**All Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Be merciful as your Father is merciful; love your enemies and do good to them.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

**All Help us to follow.**



Jesus said: 'Love one another, as I love you; there is no greater love than this, to lay down your life for your friends.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

**All Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Go to people everywhere and make them my disciples, and I will be with you always, to the end of time.'

Saviour, we hear your call.

**All Help us to follow.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 He who would valiant be** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

God give you grace to follow his saints  
in faith and love and steadfastness  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 For all the saints** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
And now we give thanks, most gracious God,  
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses  
and glorified in the assembly of your saints.  
The glorious company of apostles praise you.  
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.  
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.  
We, your holy Church, acclaim you.  
In communion with angels and archangels,  
and with all who served you on earth and worship you now in heaven,  
we raise our voice to proclaim your glory,  
for ever praising you and saying:

**All 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.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
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.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with Thomas More, John Fisher, and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All** We do not presume  
to come to this 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 our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Almighty God,  
who on the day of Pentecost  
sent your Holy Spirit to the apostles  
with the wind from heaven and in tongues of flame,  
filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel:  
by the power of the same Spirit  
strengthen us to witness to your truth  
and to draw everyone to the fire of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen

**All** Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.