

**Tuesday 14 September 2021**

# Holy Cross Day



The cross on which our Lord was crucified has become the universal symbol for Christianity, replacing the fish symbol of the early church, though the latter has been revived in recent times. After the end of the persecution era, early in the fourth century, pilgrims began to travel to Jerusalem to visit and pray at the places associated with the life of Jesus. Helena, the mother of the emperor, was a Christian and, whilst overseeing excavations in the city, is said to have uncovered a cross, which many believed to be the Cross of Christ. A basilica was built on the site of the Holy Sepulchre and dedicated on this day in the year 335.

**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 appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear a hymns please hover the mouse over the 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 Lift high the Cross**

(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 himself carried up our sins in his body to the tree,  
so that, free from sins,  
we might live for righteousness;  
by his wounds we have been healed.  
Let us confess our sins.

**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 Holy Cross Day**

Almighty God,  
who in the passion of your blessed Son  
made an instrument of painful death  
to be for us the means of life and peace:  
grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ  
that we may gladly suffer for his sake;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All Amen.**

### **First reading**

A reading from the Third book of Moses called Numbers

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.' Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.' So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live. *Numbers 21:4-9*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

### **First reading**

You who fear the Lord, praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

For he did not despise or abhor

the affliction of the afflicted;

he did not hide his face from me,

but heard when I cried to him.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;

my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied;

those who seek him shall praise the Lord.

May your hearts live for ever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember

and turn to the Lord;

and all the families of the nations

shall worship before him.

For dominion belongs to the Lord,

and he rules over the nations. *Psalm 22:23-28*

### **Second reading**

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Jesus, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—

even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,  
so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. *Philippians 2:6–11*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Majesty, worship His majesty** ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

## **Gospel reading**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. *John 3:13–17*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## **Sermon**

When I was young, one of the highlights of the spring was staying with my grandfather. There, each Good Friday, two teams of students from nearby Wye college had a tug of war—a tug of war with a difference, for the teams were positioned either side of the small local river. It was disastrous for the weaker team: its members not only lost the tug of war but also got very wet! The only way to stay safe was to ensure that both teams were equally matched. The rope was in tension and that tension was the same from both ends.

As soon as we examine the panorama of the Christian story, we see a tug of war

at play. As with everything, we start with God. Our God is holy; indeed, He is so terrifyingly holy that He cannot mix with anything that is sinful, for it would be consumed, just as ice cannot co-exist with red-hot metal. This God is high and lifted up. He seems remote and untouchable. We say he is *transcendent*. But this same God is also active in our world. We see him at the very beginning of the creation story in Genesis 1 in the form of the Holy Spirit, hovering over the deep. He creates us, sustains us, enlivens us. In a word, he is *here*. To describe this different side of God's nature, we need a different term and say He is *immanent*. Between these two extremes of remote and present, transcendent and imminent, untouchably pure and willing to become as we are, we discern a tug-of-war: a tug-of-war played out in a vertical way. Like the tug of war near my grandfather's house, the two teams have to be evenly matched: if God is made out to be only remote then we cannot approach Him and He cannot approach us. Prayer simply cannot happen. But if God is not irresistibly holy, then he is diminished, and becomes too 'pally'—the God who is 'my best friend.' No: any God worth following needs to be both transcendent and imminent, and at the same time. The two exist in tension, and that tension is creative.

But we are Christian people—followers of the man who was executed for his beliefs. Again, as soon as we look at this Jesus, we see a tension, a tug-of-war between two irreconcilable opposites. At once, he is Jesus the man. He was a Palestinian Jew, a peasant locked in space and time just as we are. But this Jesus is also God: he is God incarnate, literally, 'God 'en-fleshed.' This God is here, living in and among us. We discern another tug-of-war: this time played out on the earth and horizontal. And again, it's disastrous if one side loses: if we stress Jesus' humanity at the expense of his divinity, we feel free to pick and choose which of his commands we listen to. But if he is God and not man, then what's the point? Of *course* he could live a perfect life; of *course* he was able to *talk* to God because he was God! Jesus is both God *and* man.

We see two separate tugs of war at the heart of the Christian story. A vertical tension and a horizontal tension. And taken together, they describe a cross. It is on the cross that we see both Jesus the man and Jesus the God; we also see a transcendent God stooping to become imminent to the point of experiencing a pain so excruciating that he died.

When I was young, we used see the tug of war and cheer when one team won and the other got wet. The tug of war at the heart of the Christian Gospel is different. We simply cannot let one side win; it would be a *disaster* if one side won. God is both imminent and transcendent; Jesus is both man and God. Our task is to accept it and believe it.

This tension can be creative ... if we allow it to be. But the only way to accommodate such a tension is to seek to live according to both sides of each tug-of-war. We must allow the God in whom we believe to be both God above and God down here, transcendent and imminent; we must treat Jesus as both God and man. The only way to achieve *that* is with the aid of the Holy Spirit, who fuels our faith. Understanding the Cross therefore requires that we accommodate all three persons of the Trinity.

The meaning of the Cross is fathomless. We can mine it for a lifetime and still find new insights. But to even start to understand it, we need to discern these two tugs of war. They form a Cross, with Jesus as the fulcrum.

## 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

Let us pray to the Father through his Son,  
who suffered on the cross for the world's redemption.

Fill with your Spirit Christ's broken body, the Church ...

Give to Christian people everywhere a deep longing to take up the cross and to understand its mysterious glory.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

**All Lord, save us and help us.**

Bless those who lead the Church's worship ...

In the preaching of the word  
and the celebration of the sacraments,  
draw your people close to you.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

**All Lord, save us and help us.**

Give your grace to those who preach your word to the nations ...

Help us to witness to the faith we have received  
by our words and in our deeds,  
and daily conform us more and more to Christ,  
that we may glory in his cross.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

**All Lord, save us and help us.**

Look in your mercy upon the world you loved so much  
that you sent your Son to suffer and to die ...

Strengthen those who work to share  
the reconciliation won at such a cost upon the cross.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

**All Lord, save us and help us.**

Bring healing by the wounds of Christ  
to all who are weighed down by pain and injustice ...

Help the lonely and the betrayed, the suffering and the dying,  
to find strength in the companionship of Jesus,  
and in his passion to know their salvation.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

**All Lord, save us and help us.**

Welcome into paradise all who have left this world in your friendship ...

According to your promises,  
bring them with all your saints  
to share in the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

**All** Lord, save us and help us.  
Holy God, holy and strong,  
holy and immortal,  
have mercy on us.

Merciful Father,

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

### **The peace**

Once we were far off,  
but now in union with Christ Jesus we have been brought near  
through the shedding of Christ's blood,  
for he is our peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All** And also with you.

**HYMN 3** [Be still, my soul](#)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

Christ crucified draw you to himself,  
to find in him a sure ground for faith,  
a firm support for hope,  
and the assurance of sins forgiven;  
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 Crown him with many crowns** ([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 and good,

our duty and our joy,

always and everywhere to give you thanks,

holy Father, almighty and eternal God,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Today we celebrate with songs of praise

the cross, the victory-sign of Christ.

Once through the fruit of the forbidden tree we fell,

now through this tree our Saviour cancels all our sin.

An instrument of shameful death

has become for Christ a throne of glory.

The power of the life-giving cross

reveals the judgement that has come upon the world

and the triumph of Christ crucified.

And so, with choirs of angels

and with all the heavenly host,

we proclaim your glory

and join their unending hymn of praise:

**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 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**

Faithful God,  
whose Son bore our sins in his body on the tree  
and gave us this sacrament to show forth his death until he comes:  
give us grace to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for he is our salvation, our life and our hope,  
who reigns as Lord, now and for ever.

**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.