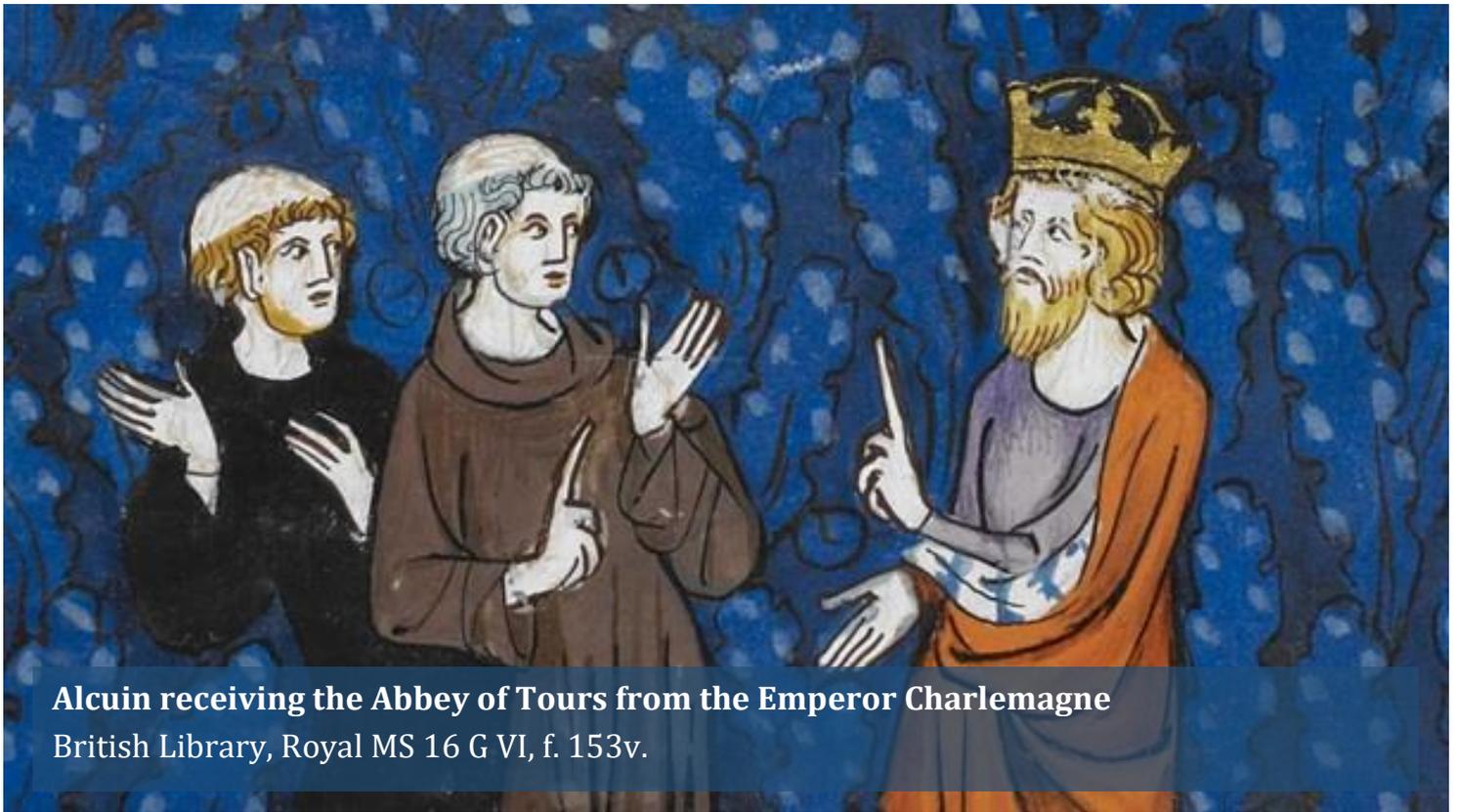


Friday 20 May 2022

St Alcuin of York



Alcuin receiving the Abbey of Tours from the Emperor Charlemagne
British Library, Royal MS 16 G VI, f. 153v.

Alcuin came from a noble Northumbrian family. Although we don't know the date and place of his birth, he was probably born in the year 735 in or near York. He entered the cathedral school there as a child, continued as a scholar, and became its Master.

In 781, he went to Aachen as adviser to the Emperor Charlemagne on religious and educational matters and as Master of the Palace School, where he established an important library. Although not a monk (he was a deacon), in 796 he became Abbot of Tours, where he died in the year 804.

Alcuin wrote poetry, revised the lectionary, compiled a sacramentary and was involved in other significant liturgical work.

Sermon © Nicola Williams.

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Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

Prayers of intercession © St Alcuin, via St Matthew's Church Westminster.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear 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 I will rise—the wisdom of God [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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 Alcuin of York

God of Wisdom, Eternal Light,
who shone in the heart of your servant Alcuin,
revealing to him your power and pity:
scatter the darkness of our ignorance
that, with all our heart and mind and strength,
we may seek your face
and be brought with all your saints
to your holy presence;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
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 Prophecy of Isaiah

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown

of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Isaiah 61:10—62:3

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Colossians

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

Colossians 3:12–16

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 In all thy wisdom Father God [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

The Samaritan woman at the well said to Jesus, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' *John 4:19–24*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

What are the gifts of God that we need to be mindful of in our lives? Love, honesty, patience, kindness ... all of these and more. But what about Wisdom? Wisdom is often thought of as something that we either have or don't have (and we all like to think that we have some degree of it, in fact, most of us I imagine would like to think that we have rather a large share of this gift).

Alcuin did have wisdom. He advised many, including the noted Charlamagne, and he was prized for his contributions to courtly and monastic life. A writer, poet, translator and advocate for education and learning, Alcuin must have amassed great wisdom, but what is Wisdom and why is it important?

The start of the book of proverbs makes it clear just how important wisdom is, in fact much of the book of proverbs is concerned with what is and what is not, wise.

Depicted as a female, wisdom should be sought at all costs:

*Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme;
therefore get wisdom.*

Though it cost all you have, get understanding (Proverbs 4:6-7).

and

*Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7).*

Solomon was famously wise and was asked to decide which of two women was mother to a baby. He could have simply picked either woman but what if he had got this decision wrong? What if by Solomons actions, a child was torn from its real family and raised by a stranger who had goodness knows what intentions for the child? That would have been an injustice and so Solomon did what came naturally to him, he used his wisdom and asked for the child to be torn into two pieces that each woman would have part of it. Of course, the actual mother would not tolerate this and so, when she revealed herself with protests, the child was restored back to her.

But how do we get wisdom, what should we do with it when we have it? Why is it a gift from God and what is it for?

We can get some wisdom by simply growing older:

Wisdom belongs to the aged and understanding to the old (Job 12:12).

We experience things, learn from them and grow in wisdom ... but there are plenty of old people out there who lack wisdom, so this cannot be the only way.

We can read and apply ourselves to learning and absorb knowledge from what we read and learn, but this only gets us so far and anyway there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom, and it is the application of wisdom that is important, and this is something that we cannot learn from books. And so just how do we get wise?

Michael Mitton in his book 'A Heart to listen' tells us that listening is the very best way to get wisdom and I tend to agree.

*Listen to advice and accept instruction,
and in the end you will be wise. (Proverbs 19:20)*

I don't mean to listen simply to another person and take on board what they are saying because what they are saying might well be unwise in its nature. Michael means to listen as Jesus listened. To listen with the whole heart and mind and with our eyes as much as with our ears. People say things but their body language and demeanor can give away completely different stories. Think about Jesus at the well. He comes across a Samaritan woman and observes her, listens to hear, hears her words and also the words she doesn't speak and then he speaks truth back to her; He shows that in his listening he has absorbed not just what she has said but what she hasn't said, what she probably means to say and what she wishes we could say and he takes all of this and responds with wise words. Jesus listens to us all in the same way. In this story Jesus also shows us that sometimes we need to take a risk. Technically, as a single man, Jesus should not have even spoken to the lone Samaritan woman, but he risked it and because he did, a whole village was saved!

God asks us to listen to others, he asks us to be wise and gives us the ability to use our ears, our eyes and our wisdom to heal each other which, I suggest, is what wisdom is actually for.

*Reckless words pierce like a sword,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing (Proverbs 12:18).*

It is interesting that throughout the Bible, but especially in Proverbs, speaking is not so much advised if one wants to appear wise!

*When words are many,
sin is not absent,
but he who holds his tongue is wise (Proverbs 10:19).*

We can grow in wisdom when we are prepared to look at another person, even someone who we know that we disagree with or do not like, and really take the time to listen to them. If we take the time to meet them in what they are saying rather than simply judge them for what they say, if we take the time to think about

why they are saying what they are saying and ask ourselves what they might not be saying, we tune ourselves in to them, we give them our precious time, we think carefully about them and we demonstrate that we love them and ... most importantly, we think before we speak.

And when we do all of this, we grow in wisdom and our response, when we do give it, is better thought out, it has the potential to show that we care and, most importantly, it has the potential to heal! We will have grown in wisdom, and we will continue to do so as long as we keep up this practice of listening as Jesus listened.

The fact that Jesus spent so much time with taxmen and sinners; He dined with them, sat with them, listened to them and loved them tells us just how prepared Jesus was to listen to people who were not necessarily going to be in his friendship group, who were not necessarily His 'type' of people.

Jesus grew in wisdom just as we grow in wisdom. I am sure that he had a great deal of inherent wisdom, but he learned along the way that his salvation was for all and not just for the chosen few as he first believed. He learned many lessons in his ministry and we are shown this in order that we too can learn. If Jesus had to grow wise, then we too as imitators of Christ must grow wise in any way that we can. Some of us may not be able to read, some of us may be poor communicators, but each of us can listen in some way.

Alcuin must have been a very spiritual and wise man to be so in demand as he was. When we think of the wise, and those who have become wise such as Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama, we think of people who listen, who learn, and who speak thoughtfully, not hastily. Mother Teresa was full of wise sayings—one of my favourites is 'nobody knows the good that a smile can do'—and Nelson Mandela managed to speak well enough to unite a fractured, broken society desperate for peace.

We may not have an Alcuin quote but we do know that he spent his life mixing with the learned and the powerful and managed to remain useful to both. Perhaps his wise words healed, perhaps they instructed and perhaps they inspired those around him to be better. We will never know but we can know the power of wisdom in our own lives: by listening, learning and thinking before we speak, we can become wise and affect the lives of those around us and that is a blessing to all.

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

Eternal Light, shine into our hearts,
Eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil,
Eternal Power, be our support,
Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance,
Eternal Pity, have mercy upon us;
that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength
we may seek thy face and be brought by thine infinite mercy
to thy holy presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen *Alcuin*

Almighty God grant all go well with thee.
Be an honour to the Church,
follow Christ's word,
clear in thy task and careful in thy speech.
Be thine an open hand, a merry heart.
Christ in thy mouth,
A life that all may know
a lover of righteousness and compassion.
Let none come to thee and go sad away.
Hope of the poor, and solace to the sad,
Go thou before God's people to God's realm,

that he who follows thee may come to the stars.
Sow living seeds,
words that are quick with life,
that faith may the harvest in human hearts.
In word and example
let thy light shine in the black dark
like the morning star.
Let not the wealth of the world nor its dominion
flatter thee into silence as to truth,
Nor king, nor judge, yea nor thy dearest friend
muzzle thy lips from righteousness.

Written by Alcuin in the year 800 to Ethelhard, Archbishop of Canterbury.

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 [Take my life and let it be](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)
[Take my life and let it be](#) (different version)
[Take my life and let it be](#) (traditional version)

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 The perfect wisdom of our God ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))
The perfect wisdom of our God (different version)

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 ** 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

Merciful God,
who gave such grace to your servant Alcuin
that he served you with singleness of heart
and loved you above all things:
help us, whose communion with you
has been renewed in this sacrament,
to forsake all that holds us back from following Christ
and to grow into his likeness from glory to glory;
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.