

Tuesday 17 August 2021

James the Deacon



James was a Roman citizen. He was never ordained as a priest hence his epithet of 'deacon.'

He was a member of the mission sent by Pope Gregory to Christianise the Anglo-Saxons from their native Anglo-Saxon paganism. He accompanied Paulinus of York on his mission to Northumbria. It is unclear when he actually arrived in England. What is clear is that he stayed near Lincoln after Paulinus left Northumbria and continued his missionary efforts.

In his history of the English Church, Bede, says that James died 'at some time after 671'.

Sermon and prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

More information about James the Deacon @ [Catholic Online](#).

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 **Father God, I wonder**

(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 James the Deacon

Everlasting God,
whose servant James helped carried the good news of your Son
to the people our own land:
grant that we who commemorate his service
may know the hope of the gospel in our hearts
and manifest its light in all our ways;
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 book of Judges

The angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior.' Gideon answered him, 'But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" But now the Lord has cast us off and given us into the hand of Midian.' Then the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you.' He responded, 'But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.' The Lord said to him, 'But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them.' Then he said to him, 'If now I have found

favour with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. Do not depart from here until I come to you, and bring out my present, and set it before you.' And he said, 'I will stay until you return.'

So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them. The angel of God said to him, 'Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth.' And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the Lord; and Gideon said, 'Help me, Lord God! For I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.' But the Lord said to him, 'Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die.' Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it, The Lord is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites. *Judges 96:11-24*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Psalm

A reading from the Book of Psalms

- ⁸ Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.
- ⁹ Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.
- ¹⁰ Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.
- ¹¹ Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.
- ¹² The Lord will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
- ¹³ Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his steps. *Psalm 85:8-end*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 **Do not be afraid**[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, 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.' When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, 'Then who can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.'

Then Peter said in reply, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first. *Matthew 19:23-end*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Today's readings are those dictated by the Lectionary for today, 17 August, rather specifically than for James the Deacon. But they speak to everyone who wants to be like him because they seem to illustrate something of his life. The first reading concerns the call of Gideon, who was in most respects a complete nobody at the time. The Gospel records the first disciples giving up their meagre lives to follow Jesus. And the psalm reiterates that 'steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other' if we follow and accept the call of God.

We know essentially nothing about James except his role as Deacon, which is a Greek word meaning 'servant.' His job description required him to serve the Church and its leaders. We can celebrate his readiness to serve as a disciple (a safe assumption given his name) but effectively nothing else, though his tasks will have ranged from the mundane through to vital depending on the circumstance.

James' human biography was the perfect life story for someone entering heaven. It's therefore strange that his life will have involved a series of paradoxes: he is famous for being anonymous; he did not write any books but his name was written

in the book of life; he did not lead but we can usefully follow his example; he was mandated to act but all his actions were issued in the name of his superiors. Following James' example therefore involves holding both ends of a contradiction at the same time, which can only be achieved with the help of God. To paraphrase Jesus, 'For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.' That's why our response must be supernatural.

Being a deacon, James was a servant of God. Normally that service will have involved serving his neighbours. It is the same when we serve God. Like James, our 'serving of neighbour' will inevitably involve work that helps build the Kingdom of God, though in terms of day-to-day activity it will often look more like goodness and love. That we build the Kingdom of God while our individual actions are lost to history explains Jesus' command that we give with one hand while the other is ignorant of its action. It also fulfils Jesus' requirement not to work in order to be first. That's why James' role involved building the Kingdom of God rather than building anything earth-based. In James' case, it meant evangelising and Church planting. In our case, it will always appear as our looking to God rather than to self.

Scripture tells us that God is Spirit and that God is love. That's why our servanthood will have the Kingdom of God as its primary purpose, with love as the means to that end. The things that God wants us to build will be spiritual and we can only achieve that building with love. After many centuries, all we can know concerning James' case is that he shared the love of God. What remained after his death will also have been love.

We learn from James in proportion that we also work for God and don't count the cost: we neither look for personal reward nor do we aim for a place in the history books. Rather, God wants us to work for Him alone. That work will look like the role of a deacon, a servant, a person who gives love in every way possible.

In a Christian context, 'love' is always a doing word rather than a feeling. Perhaps that's why sharing the love of God can be difficult. The best way to ensure that love keeps flowing and growing is to give it away. A true servant of God will therefore love on a prodigal scale. They will love and love and love. They will pray, asking God how to love and whom to love. They will think of loving and plan ahead in order to maximise that loving. All the time, their love will bear the hallmarks of God which, like a symbol stamped on a bar of pure gold, authenticates it and demonstrates God. In this way, Christian love becomes a sacrament because it points beyond itself to the source of its potency, to God.

Today in the Church calendar we remember James the Deacon although, in reality, he is anonymous and unknowable. All that remains is his service and his

love. God similarly calls us to be deacons, servants, of God. To that end, he calls each of us to lives of service and extravagant love.

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

‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness’ ([Galatians 5:22](#)). Fill us with your Spirit that we may love more and build your Kingdom here on earth as it is in Heaven.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

‘Love is the doorway through which the human soul passes from selfishness to service.’ Dear Lord, fill us with your love and help us to reveal you to all those who need you. To that end, empower our love.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

‘For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but one of power, love, and self-discipline’ ([2 Timothy 1:7](#)). Dear Lord, your Scripture tells us there is no fear in love. Take away any fear or impediment to serving you: help us to love you and our

neighbour to the uttermost.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

'The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty warrior. He will exult over you with joy. He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy' ([Zephaniah 3:17](#)). Dear Lord, help our love to grow, develop, and transmute, so we can more fully experience you in your servanthood and glory.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

Merciful Father,

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

The peace

We are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, through Christ our Lord, who came and preached peace to those who were far off and those who were near.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Dear Lord and Father of mankind ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;
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 Father, we adore you ([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 James 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

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.