

Friday 24 May 2024

John and Charles Wesley



John Wesley (left, 1703–1791) and Charles Wesley (right, 1707–1788) are among the most notable evangelists Britain ever produced. As young men, they formed a party which came to be derisively called 'Methodist' because they methodically set about fulfilling the commands of scripture. In due course they learned that works cannot save and discovered salvation by faith in Christ. The turning point was a conversion experience that occurred on this day in 1738. Afterward, the brothers carried that message to all England in sermon and in song. John Wesley is credited with staving off a bloody revolution in England such as occurred in France and elsewhere.

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Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Martyn Atkins.

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 hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

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

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

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 O for a thousand tongues

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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.

We run the race set before us,
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.

Therefore let us lay aside every weight,
and the sin which clings so closely,
bringing them to Jesus in penitence and faith.

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

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for John and Charles Wesley

Almighty God, in a time of great need
you raised up your servants John and Charles Wesley,
and by your Spirit inspired them to kindle a flame of sacred love
which leaped and ran, an inextinguishable blaze.
Grant that all those whose hearts have been warmed at these altar fires,
being continually refreshed by your grace, may be so devoted
to the increase of scriptural holiness throughout the land
that in this our time of great need,
your will may fully and effectively be done on earth as it is in heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the book of Psalms

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul, ◆
and all that is within me bless his holy name.
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, ◆
and forget not all his benefits;
- 3 Who forgives all your sins ◆
and heals all your infirmities;
- 4 Who redeems your life from the Pit ◆
and crowns you with faithful love and compassion.
- 8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, ◆
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 He will not always accuse us, ◆
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, ◆
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, ♦
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, ♦
so far has he set our sins from us.
- 13 As a father has compassion on his children, ♦
so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him. *Psalm 103:1-4, 8-13*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Letter of St James

Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Above all, my beloved, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No' be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. *James 5:9-12*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 In Christ alone

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Jesus said to the disciples,
'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.'

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All Glory to you O Lord.

[Jesus] went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. And crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them.

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female ... For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

Mark 10:1-12

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

John Wesley started out as an Anglican priest, but later went on to create the Methodist Movement. He later identified the occasion of his conversion as 28 May 1738 during his time attending a Moravian service. In context, he has been feeling unhappy and unfulfilled for some time and even going to church had become a chore. This is how he described the moment when everything changed:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

Incidentally, this incident helps explain why many Methodists describe the event as 'Aldersgate Day'. From that day onward, Wesley preached a message of personal salvation by faith, focusing on the fact of God's grace as a free gift that He gives to all of us.

It's interesting that Wesley had been a priest for some years before he had this personal experience of God's love. Maybe some of us identify with that chronology:

we may have been church-goers all our lives, we may have heard hundreds of sermons and sung hundreds of hymns, but until that moment when God touches us personally, our faith comes at second hand. We believe it because we have been told to, not because it has penetrated our hearts.

For some of us, that moment of conversion is dramatic: examples include Moses who saw a burning bush (Exodus 3:2 ff.); while ministering in the Temple, the prophet Isaiah had a vision of God (Isaiah 6); the prophet Ezekiel had a vision that traumatised him to the extent he could not eat (Ezekiel 1 ff.); St Paul experienced a flash of light from heaven that knocked him to the ground and blinded him for several days on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–19). By contrast, most of us—perhaps fortunately—don't experience anything so dramatic. Faith may come to us as a 'still, small voice of calm' (1 Kings 19:11–13). Our hearts are 'strangely warmed', and we simply understand, without intellectual acrobatics, that God loves us and that his grace is free for all of us.

These moments of awareness of God's grace don't come all the time: they are there to keep us going when things are tough and to remind us of the heaven which is our goal.

They are often to be found in the small things: the joy of a baby's antics, the colour of a beautiful flower, a sunset, a card from someone who loves us, laughter with friends. We need to look out for them and recognise them for what they are, and use them to feed our faith and keep us enduring until the end.

R S Thomas' poem *The Bright Field* sums it up beautifully, so here it is:

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realise now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

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

Resourceful Holy Spirit of God,
We thank you for your servants, John and Charles Wesley.

That you fuelled their zeal
and tempered it with divine grace;
brought them through dark times,
enlightened and renewed.

That you warmed their needy hearts,
assured and shaped them by your active holiness.
That through their willingness,
you worked out Your purposes of hope, mercy, and justice.

Somewhat daunted, we stand today in their footsteps.
In a world of new challenges and old needs,
in a time like no other.

But undaunted, we humbly ask you to do in us,
what you did in and through them.

We pray for those know to us who are in need of any kind.
We pray that they will know the blessing of your presence.
We pray that their hearts, too,
will be warmed by your love and the knowledge that you will never leave them
or forsake them.

We pray for those who have passed from this life to the next.
We remember before you those who are mourning the loss of a loved one and we
pray for your healing in their grief.
May those who have died rest in peace and rise in glory.

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 **And can it be**

([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

God, who has prepared for you a city with eternal foundations,
bring you, with all the saints,
to the eternal and triumphant joy of that city;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Dear Lord and Father

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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
that we should give you thanks, praise and glory,
almighty and everlasting God,
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

For after his resurrection
he sent out his apostles and evangelists
to preach the gospel to all nations
and lead us in the way of truth.
Himself the chief cornerstone,
he founded his Church upon the apostles
firmly to stand for ever
as a sign of your holiness upon earth
and a living witness to all
of the way that leads to heaven.

And so with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven
we lift our voices and join in 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 John Wesley, Charles Wesley, 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.