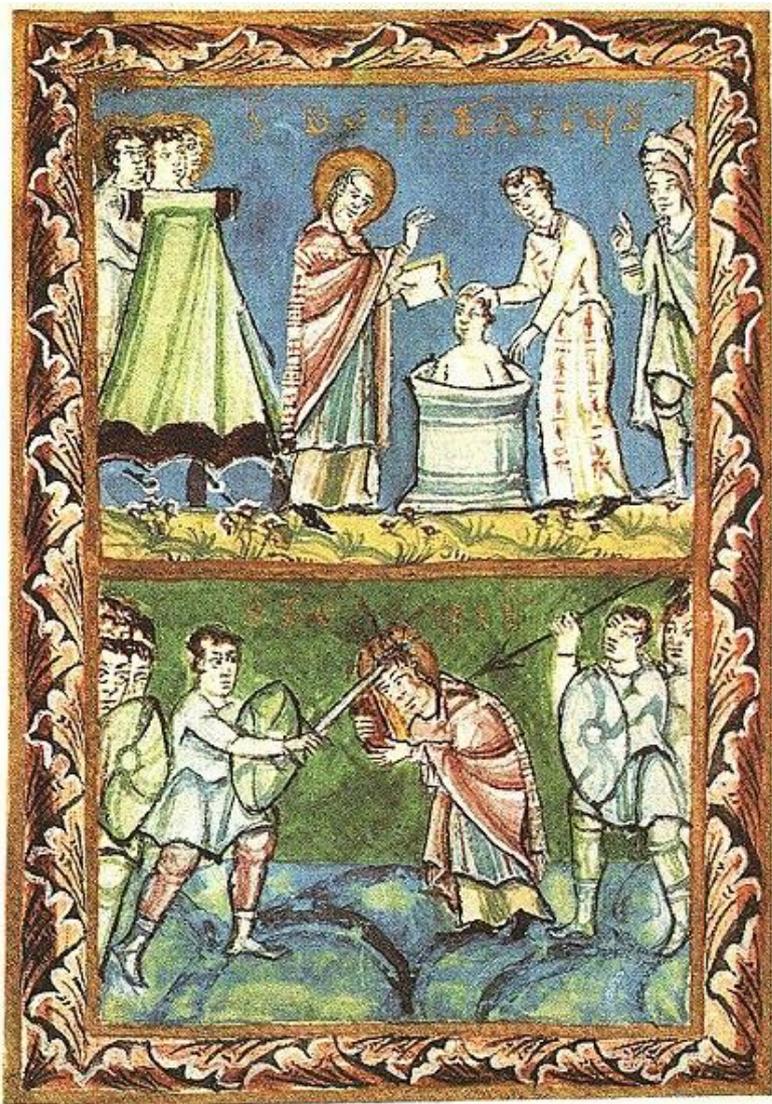


Wednesday 5 June 2024

St Boniface



Boniface was born at Crediton in Devon in about the year 675 AD; he took the name Boniface when he entered the monastery in Exeter as a young man. He became a Latin scholar and poet; in 716, he was ordained at the age of thirty but rejected a safe career in the English Church, preferring to follow his hero Willibrord as a missionary to Frisia. In 722, the pope consecrated him as bishop and sent him to work in Hesse and Bavaria.

He founded a string of monasteries across southern Germany and, to ensure that evangelising could continue, made sure that each was a place of learning.

Boniface became Archbishop of Mainz in 732 from where he consecrated many missionary bishops. He worked for the reform of the Church in France and ensured that the more stable Rule of St Benedict was adhered to in its monasteries. He crowned Pepin as the Frankish king in 751 but was already very old. While waiting for some new Christians to arrive for confirmation,

he was murdered by a band of pagans on this day in the year 754.

He has been judged as having a deeper influence on European history than any other Englishman.

Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

Image St Boniface baptising and his martyrdom, from the C11 *Sacramentary of Fulda*, fol. 126.

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 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 [Come holy ghost, our souls inspire](#) (click here 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.

The saints were faithful unto death

and now dwell in the heavenly kingdom for ever.

As we celebrate their joy,

let us bring to the Lord our sins and weaknesses,
and ask for his mercy.

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.

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

The Collect for Polycarp

God our redeemer,
who called your servant Boniface
to preach the gospel among the German people
and to build up your Church in holiness:
grant that we may preserve in our hearts
that faith which he taught with his words
and sealed with his blood,
and profess it in lives dedicated to your Son
Jesus Christ 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 the Prophet Isaiah

The Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honoured in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength—he says, ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’ Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, ‘Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.’

Thus says the Lord: In a time of favour I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' They shall feed along the ways, on all the bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. *Isaiah 49:5-10*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified. *1 Corinthians 9:19-27*

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 Luke

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house!” And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near!’

Luke 10:1-11

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

We remember Boniface as an evangelist. We talk about Evangelism fairly often in the Church. Yet Jesus said, ‘The fields are white unto harvest’, meaning that people are yearning to fulfil the spiritual side of their natures. Where are they? After all, we open the Churches and freely invite people in—where are they? That ought to be the question at the back of our minds as we look at today’s passages.

We must start by noting that all of Jesus’ life was lived for others. But he did not live for others in an aimless way, but *in order to save the lost*. After all, one of his more startling phrases—startling to his opponents, that is—was to say that he did not come for the righteous but for the sinners. In a nutshell, Jesus’ ministry *was* evangelism—he came to bring in the lost. So, before we start, we must remind ourselves again and again that evangelism is about love—love for the lost. God doesn’t so much demand that the lost come home to him as *desire* that they return.

Evangelism is love.

It is usual to take our second passage as advice on the training necessary for the spiritual life, but if we read the preceding paragraphs, we see that St Paul was in fact talking about evangelism. And as we read this passage in the light of evangelism, we see St Paul, the master evangelist, expressing his own secrets for success when bringing in the lost.

First, we see St Paul exhorting us to run the race—but *which* race? Surely, in context, he is talking about the race for souls, saying ‘Do you not know that many run this race but only one gets the prize?’ St Paul wants us to know that a soul can only be ‘owned’ by one. Jesus said the same thing: ‘No one can serve two masters, either he will love the one and hate the other, or he will hate the first and love the second’. We, as evangelists, must see that we are to snatch souls away from everything that is not of God.

We *must* be aware that every single soul is coveted by a whole host of people, but at heart it is a matter of two: God wants souls won for His Kingdom and the powers of evil also want them for themselves. So we, as Christians, will be up against the devil’s troops: materialism—advertisers and other advocates of buy, spend, own; other religions—Islam, Hinduism, the cults, the New Age movement, yoga. All these concerns want a person’s soul. And we, as evangelists, are in the same race as these others. We and these other concerns all run after the same souls.

If that is the race, do we not know that only one can win the prize? If the person’s soul can only be won by one group alone, then the race is urgent. Materialism is insistent, so we must be insistent. RUN: catch the prize. There must be an urgency as we go about our race to save souls.

But we often don’t move, let alone run. But God does run: consider the parable of the Prodigal Son. As soon as the Father (who is God) sees his son (representing the one in need of salvation), God *runs* toward him, and flings his arms around his beloved son. If we picture the scene in this parable, we’ll see that God’s house is a long way in the distance by now. And then God dresses the son; he binds his wounds; he feeds him. But the parable also expresses urgency: no man in the Middle East would ever run if he thought he was being watched. In short, we see God putting dignity aside, because his compassion for the lost son was so overwhelming.

And do we move, or do we expect the people outside to make the first move. The church often gets it wrong because we do not go out—reaching *out* to those *outside*; rather, we open our doors and invite people in. It’s not ‘outreach’ but ‘in grab’! Where’s that in the Bible?

‘Run so as to get the prize’ means that **evangelism is urgent**.

Evangelism is love and evangelism is urgent. St Paul then says, 'I bruise my body, and make it my own master'. In other words, we are to evangelise in a costly way. No pain, no gain. Evangelise all the time so that it becomes both second nature and a way of life.

In the Gospels, Jesus often expresses that costliness: he touched lepers, a woman who was blessing and therefore ritually unclean, walked through forbidden Gentile territory; the list is long. Even today to say that someone is a 'leper' means that we think he is in some way 'untouchable'. As always, Jesus did not choose the soft option. If we are to be like Jesus, then we should be mixing with the unclean in our society—the prostitutes (there are probably several hundred in Rochdale and Littleborough); mixing with drug dealers (there are scores and scores of them); mixing with drug addicts (there are thousands of them!). Or do we keep the Gospel to ourselves?

'I bruise my body, and make it my own master' means that **evangelism is costly**. Evangelism is love; evangelism is urgent; evangelism is costly. The passage also tells us, 'Do not beat the air'. In the advertising world, it is well known that if you do not grab the attention of a potential consumer within 20 seconds, then a sale has been lost.

Do not beat the air; do it for real. This passage is our official sanction not to pull our punches, because too much is at stake. There is a trend these days toward so-called 'low-charge' evangelism, which usually means a softly, softly form of compromise. St Paul would have had none of that. Do not compromise; let every punch count. Sock it to them *straight*.

And 'stop beating the air' is a metaphor intended to imply that we must not *pretend*—pretend to be a boxer; we must not pretend to be evangelists; we must not pretend to love as Jesus loved. Until we stop being unwilling to touch lepers, our evangelism will be seen for what it is: cheap pretence.

So we stop beating the air, because **evangelism is about truth**.

So ultimately, evangelism is a matter of obedience. Is our evangelism based on love? Is it urgent? Is our evangelism sacrificial in its cost? Are we truthful to ourselves as we evangelise? Jesus says, 'The fields are white to harvest, but the labourers are few'. Will you be a labourer? If 'Yes', then evangelise with urgency. Evangelise with all that you have, giving sacrificially, and evangelise truthfully.

And if you *are* willing to evangelise this way, then Jesus himself tells us how we will be received when we die. We will come before God in awesome judgement, and He will say to us, 'Well done, good and faithful servant: come inside, and enjoy my rest.'

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

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 Cast your eyes upon Jesus

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

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 I cannot tell

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

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 salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For following the example of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,
your holy martyr Polycarp shed his blood for the glory of your name.
His death reveals your power made perfect in our human frailty.
You choose the weak and make them strong
in bearing witness to you
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
With joyful hearts we echo on earth
the song of the angels in heaven
as they praise your glory without end:

**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 Boniface 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

God,
who gave us this holy meal
in which we have celebrated the glory of the cross
and the victory of your martyr Boniface:
by our communion with Christ
in his saving death and resurrection,
give us with all your saints the courage to conquer evil
and so to share the fruit of the tree of life;
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.