

Sunday 25 August 2024

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity



Sermon and prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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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 hymns 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 He who would valiant be

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

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.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life. Therefore, 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

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 the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
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 First Book of Kings

Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands to heaven. He said, 'O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. Therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, "There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me." Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David. 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; that your eyes may be

open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, "My name shall be there," that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive.

'Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name—for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm—when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built. *1 Kings 8:22–30, 41–43*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak. *Ephesians 6:10–20*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [Firmly I believe and truly](#)

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

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said, 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.' Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.' *John 6:56-69*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Today's second reading from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians describes a subject often called 'spiritual warfare' which is, in some respects, an unfortunate phrase. Let's start at the beginning.

Clearly, we as a church have many problems: we have issues with the building, problems with vandalism, and look at the area! I can almost hear everyone shouting out, 'Oh no, we will need money ... and fast!' which is all true. But the biggest problem is that we as Christians are not growing toward God. Our sanctification is incomplete, and every other problem we experience as a church can be attributed to that lack. Let me explain.

At the heart of the Christian Gospel is God. His power is infinitely greater than any power of evil, although it can often seem otherwise. God is all powerful and all

loving. He never sleeps, never rests, never stops loving. That fact, surely, underwrites the good news of the Gospel that we as Christians need to proclaim again and again to the entire world. That is the reason for the cross.

But we also need to note how the powers of evil will do anything to avoid our following this infinite God nor do they want us proclaiming the goodness of God and His love. Indeed, in a sense, the whole activity of the disincarnate powers of evil (in this world) are working to stop us living and proclaiming the love of God, and praying to God, and worshipping God. In a sense, the triumph of evil is made complete every time we forget God even before we do anything against Him.

Any church that is growing and proclaiming Christ is doing good, so the powers of evil will do anything to stop it using everything at their disposal: they are attacking us through the church building—we are distracted and bothered; cold, wet, and down; they promote divisions and tempt us to make our worship dull and unadventurous. They do all of this to take us away from God. That's what the powers of evil always do.

That's what today's second reading is saying: we must protect ourselves from the powers of evil. In a sense, St Paul states the obvious: whatever the powers of darkness do, we do the opposite:

1. The powers of darkness operate through deceit and misinformation. One of their names is 'the father of lies'. We therefore embrace truth and cling to it. We use the belt of truth, because it covers the stomach, which until recent times was through to house the drives and emotions. (We still talk of a gut instinct.) We protect everything with the strong, broad belt of truth.
2. The powers of darkness easily dominate our thoughts, so we protect the mind with the helmet of salvation. The idea is simple enough: we must counter every bad thought and every petty distraction by reminding ourselves we are saved through the Lord Jesus: almost as a litany, we repeat again and again, 'I *am* saved', 'I *am* forgiven', 'Jesus died for *me*', 'I *am* a child of God', 'God loves *me*' and so on, reiterating the truths of salvation. This stout, strong helmet therefore protects our mind from anything that says otherwise.
3. The powers of darkness also want to determine our emotions which were usually thought to originate in the heart. To protect the heart is a breastplate which Paul labels the plate of righteousness. In effect, he's suggesting that all emotions need to originate from a desire for a moral life, lived in accordance with the commandments, especially the new Commandment to love as Jesus loved. This breastplate is worn to protect the heart from all desires to withhold that righteousness.

4. The sword of the Spirit is a different element within the list as the others are *defensive* but this sword is *offensive*. But being the sword of the Spirit means that God wields it: God wages the battle against the powers of darkness and also protects us. the key is the last sentence of Paul's exhortation.
5. Paul tells us to pray: he says, 'Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication', where the 'every' cannot be overemphasised for he wants and desires and yearns to protect us, His children.

It's time to summarise. Perhaps we can say that a suit of armour (if well maintained) covers the entire body and in exactly the same way this spiritual armour protects the whole soul. But look at photos of armour in museums and stately homes. If well maintained, good armour is also bright and shiny so reflective. If we wear the whole armour of God, anyone looking at us will see God reflected.

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

Lord, give us the belt of truth: promote in us a radical truth. Help us to grow in truth, speak truth, seek truth, promote truth, and thereby live the truth, for the Lord Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Lord we pray for your guidance, love, and protection:

All Hear our prayer.

Lord, protect our hearts with the breastplate of righteousness: help us wear your love with honour, protecting our virtue and compassionate morality.

Lord we pray for your guidance, love, and protection:

All Hear our prayer.

Lord, encase our minds with the helmet of salvation: each time we feel tempted, remind us to rehearse the story of Your loving purposes for our lives—that You sent Your Son for us, that he died for us, that he was raised to life for us, that he reigns on high for us, that he intercedes for us, and that through him we are saved.

Lord we pray for your guidance, love, and protection:

All Hear our prayer.

Lord, defend us with the shield of faith: protect our going out and our coming home, defend us body, mind, and spirit with a genuine faith. Protect our faith from certainly and naïve pretence.

Lord we pray for your guidance, love, and protection:

All Hear our prayer.

Lord, give us the sword of the Spirit: protect us and preserve us. Take away all pride, that we never think of ourselves as self-sufficient, but ask whenever we need Your help.

Lord we pray for your guidance, love, and protection:

All Hear our prayer.

Merciful Father,

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

The Peace

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All And also with you

HYMN 3 We are marching in the power of God [\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

HYMN 4 We are standing on holy ground [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The Dismissal

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you

and give you his peace;

and the blessing of God the Almighty:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Holy, holy, holy [\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels 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 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 our creator,
you feed your children with the true manna,
the living bread from heaven:
let this holy food sustain us through our earthly pilgrimage
until we come to that place
where hunger and thirst are no more;
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.