

Christ Church, Ipswich

Sunday 12th September 2021

Sunday Worship

Hello, I hope you are well.

Next week, Sunday 19th September, will be our Harvest Sunday Parade Service. As usual and as we are able, we are all invited to offer our support to FIND, the Ipswich Foodbank, Operation Agri and Commitment for Life, through our financial giving. For those who wish to donate food items, please bring any non-perishable food donations to Church and leave them in or near the box at the back of the sanctuary as you arrive. FIND will also be able to use any financial donations we make to buy food for those in need. If you would like to give this Harvest time, please either send a single cheque to John, our Treasurer, made payable to 'Christ Church, Ipswich' or give to Christ Church by online bank transfer with 'Harvest' in the reference box. Unless you would like to give specific amounts to one or two of our three charities (if so, please let John know), John will arrange for all gifts to be evenly shared with all three. For bank transfers, please use sort code 40-52-40 and account number 00028412.

This morning, our readings will be Isaiah 50:4-9a and Mark 27-38. In our Gospel Reading, we will hear Peter acclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus explains that he must suffer and die and be raised again. Peter protests but is rebuked by Jesus, who also says that anyone who follows him must first deny themselves and take up their cross.

Let us worship God together:

Call to worship

Come to worship,
to be comforted and disturbed,
challenged from our complacency,
but also offered forgiveness
and the hope of abundant life.
Come to Jesus, prophet, priest and king.

Opening prayers

Lord, you walked with your disciples from village to village.
And on the way you talked to them about many things.
Some things were not easy to hear or to understand.
We meet you here today, Lord, to hear these things too.
You don't call us to sit doing nothing.
You want us to be on the move:
taking risks to change our world and save our lives.
Help us, then, to draw close to you,
to be ready to listen. Then to act. **Amen.**

Creative God,
you called us into your kingdom,
and adopted us as your children.
Redeeming Saviour,
you showed us how to be servants,
denying ourselves to serve others.
Sustaining Spirit,
you give us strength to take up our cross
in the service of the kingdom of God.
Teach us to serve others,
and in doing so, to serve you. **Amen.**

R&S 261 At the name of Jesus

At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season,
to receive a Name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
he became a witness,
faithful to the last,
and returned victorious,
when from death he passed.

In your hearts enthrone him;
there let him make new
all that is not holy,
all that is not true.
He is God the saviour
He is Christ the Lord,
ever to be worshipped,
trusted and adored.

When this same Lord Jesus
shall appear again
in his Father's glory,
there with him to reign,
then may we adore him,
all before him bow,
as our hearts confess him
King of glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-77)

***A word of welcome and a prayer with our children and young people
before they go to Junior Church.***

A prayer of adoration

Most merciful and gracious God,
we offer you our heartfelt love and praise
because your Son, Jesus Christ,
was willing to risk everything for the whole world.
Even for us.
We come to worship you,
earnestly seeking your will for us –
however risky that might be, as you are worthy of our all. **Amen.**

A prayer of confession and assurance of forgiveness

Forgiving God,
You have asked us to bear fruit in our lives
and to share our faith with others.
Yet so many times we have failed you in doing this.
We have let you down and let ourselves down.
Our thoughts and words have failed you;
we have missed opportunities to speak up for our trust in you,
choosing to remain silent instead of witnessing for you.
Our discipleship has been weak and often non-existent.
We are conscious of our weaknesses and our faults.
Our faith has been shallow, and we have failed you in many ways.

In your forgiving mercy and grace
cleanse our hearts and minds that we may better serve you
and so that we can feel strengthened
to follow you more faithfully each day.

We thank you, gracious God, for your love and grace which flows over our lives
and leaves us renewed and ready to serve you wholeheartedly. **Amen.**

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

O God, may our lips proclaim your praise
and testify to the good news you bring.
You are our great and awesome God,
whose word does great and awesome things –
we are privileged to be part of your story,
to be recipients of your love and grace.
We praise you, God of heaven and earth,
we give you all the glory. **Amen.**

R&S 38 Thou whose almighty word

Thou whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight;
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel-day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

Thou who didst come to bring
on thy redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
now to all humankind
let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy dove,
speed forth thy flight;
move on the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light!

Holy and blessed Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide,
let there be light!

John Marriott (1780-1825)

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Servant's Humiliation and Vindication

⁴ The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he awakens—
awakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
⁵ The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backwards.
⁶ I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.
⁷ The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
⁸ he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
⁹ It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Gospel Reading

Mark 8:27-38

Peter's Declaration about Jesus

²⁷ Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' ²⁸ And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' ²⁹ He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' ³⁰ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Reflection

Our Gospel story today is set in Caesarea Philippi, a predominantly Gentile city quite some way northeast of Galilee. In fact, only Jesus' visit to Sidon took him further north while he was on his journeys. There is, of course, another journey taking place here as Jesus journeys with his disciples as they explore who he is. He questions them about popular opinion regarding his identity. We hear the same suggestions as those possibilities mulled over by Herod (Mark 6:14-16), (John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets), and it seems as though the public recognise Jesus as a prophet; this is certainly a step in the right direction!

The disciples, however, are in a privileged position as they've had plenty of opportunity to hear Jesus' teaching and see his actions, and Peter quickly declares that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. In this section, Mark's theme of a 'messianic secret' makes sense because the title had connotations of a warrior king, and that is not what Jesus has in mind at all. Here, it immediately makes sense because what follows shows that Peter is still a long way off from a full understanding of Jesus' role as Messiah. That this might require Jesus to also take on the role of the suffering servant horrifies Peter. This is surely just a natural human response from Peter. But Jesus refers to such a reaction when he accuses Peter of setting his mind 'not on divine things but on human things'. Referring to Peter as 'Satan', well, this never ceases to be shocking, does it? But then, with further reflection, we remember how Jesus does not completely condemn Peter and actually Jesus later entrusts him with a significant leadership role within the continuing Christian community.

We then heard Jesus addressing his wider followers as he then spoke also with 'the crowd', and we may hear in these next words Mark addressing his own community – and us. In these verses, Jesus confronts his listeners with the responsibility and dangers of following the Messiah: that the way to abundant life is through suffering and death.

'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?'

Jesus' message here is disturbing. He says that they, too, must suffer. However, as with his own suffering, theirs will also be purposeful, and will be a path to finding a God-filled life. For disciples, then and now, in a way the choice is quite straight forward: follow the way of the world and you will lose your life; follow the way of the cross and you will gain the only life worth having. A choice has to be made.

As we reflect on our choices, we are very much aware that over the last 18 months, we have had reason to reflect quite deeply on our choices and on what makes for a good life. There has been a lot of re-evaluating lately, hasn't there? Working from home, when might we go out and where might we go and who might we see, can we go shopping locally, what about funding the NHS, how can we remain faithful to God as a Christian community... I am sure you can think of many other re-evaluations that you have had to engage with. We have also had to give up things such as going into school, going to church, going out, socialising and exercising in order to try and stay safe and well... what have you had to let go of? We have had to adapt to life with new and different risks. Perhaps this helps us to consider the risk that Jesus talks about: that we might miss what he's really about and how he is calling us to live. Perhaps living through such a turbulent season, means we are better positioned to grapple anew with the demanding call to discipleship and with the choices before us as a Gospel people. What might it mean for us to take up our cross, deny ourselves and follow Jesus? The cost of discipleship is about us choosing, in our time and context to say 'yes' to God, to follow in the way of Christ and fully offer ourselves in service to growing the kingdom of God in our world today, such that an abundance of life is not just our experience but is an experience for all, and especially for those in dire need. Amen.

A moment for reflection

Prayer

Lord, following you can feel difficult.
Often our hearts are in the wrong place;
our eyes keep wandering away from you.
But you call us to utter commitment –
to take up our cross and come after you.
Give us courage to go wherever you lead us. **Amen.**

R&S 371 Take my life, and let it be

Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure-store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79)

Ours prayers of intercession

So many people in our world today are taking huge risks with their lives for causes they believe in. We think particularly of those in Afghanistan who have taken to the streets to protest about the rule of the Taliban. It's difficult to comprehend how frightening and disorientating it must be for the Afghan people to be living with this rapidly changing reality and so we pray for safety. For those showing huge courage, we ask that their voices are heard, and that we in the west keep listening, thinking and praying for them. We pray that leaders with influence use the power they have to guide those who desperately need it to safety.

Loving God draw close to the people of Afghanistan,
may we see and be inspired by those who take risks for justice.

Caring is very much in the news this week and we are reminded of both the cost of care in pounds and pence and the personal costs for those who do the caring. Thank you Lord God for everyone who cares. Whether for elderly relatives, for people with disabilities, or for the frail and infirm in care home settings. May we never devalue the care givers. And as we as a society wrestle with the cost of care, help us not to lose sight of the human lives that are deeply affected by care needs and caring. Thank you that you are a God who deeply cares for us all. Help us to understand the full meaning of being cared for and cared about by our Creator.

Loving God draw close to all who give care,
may we see and be inspired by those who care so diligently for others.

We are aware of many different people and groups fighting hard for climate justice; trying to bring to our attention the peril the world is in and effect change. Thank you for people who care deeply about the environment and are not afraid to use their voice to speak about it. We pray for everyone preparing for the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow later this year. We particularly pray for the young people who are mobilising their friends and classmates. Thank you for their thoughtful concern and the energy they devote to thinking about such huge global issues. May they be determined rather than daunted by the scale of the challenge and be encouraged in their pursuit of change.

Loving God, draw close to the people around us who fight continually for climate justice,
may we see and be inspired by those who speak up and make us listen.

Many of us will have examples of Christians around this world facing persecution and danger. Brothers and sisters who live in countries hostile to their beliefs and for whom expressing their faith is a highly provocative act. Please draw near to everyone who is in danger today because they follow Christ. Help persecuted Christians around this world find safe spaces to express their faith and, for those for whom there is no safe space, may they know your deep love for them. May they powerfully feel the presence of your Holy Spirit and hold onto the promise of the Gospel.

Loving God draw close to all for whom discipleship is costly,
may we see and be inspired by those who choose to worship you whatever the circumstances.

God of love, we pray also for those on our hearts today.

We hold Pat Smith in our thoughts and prayers at this very sad time.

Saddened to hear of the sudden loss of Nellie's grandchildren's Mum,
 we pray for all the family in this time of grief.

We pray for Janet Wilson and we pray especially for her daughter Susan who is receiving care in hospital after sadly having a fall.

We pray for Margaret Widdowson as she recovers following surgery on Wednesday.

We keep Joan and Frank in our prayers.

We bring other friends and loved ones before you in a moment of quiet.

Loving God draw close to those in need, we pray
may they experience your comfort, love, hope and healing.

Finally, we pray for ourselves. Whatever circumstances face us in the week to come may we face them in the knowledge that you are always with us. May we learn how to let go of the things of this world that weigh us down or distract us from serving you.

Loving God draw close to all of us this week as we work out what discipleship means,
may we see and be inspired by those who model lives of faith and service. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

G to G 30 There is a Redeemer

There is a Redeemer
 Jesus, God's own Son
 Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
 Holy One,

*Thank you, O my Father,
 for giving us your Son,
 and leaving your Spirit
 till the work on Earth is done.*

Jesus, my Redeemer
 name above all names,
 precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
 O, for sinners slain.

Thank you, O my Father...

When I stand in glory,
 I will see His face,
 and there I'll serve my King forever
 in that holy place.

Thank you, O my Father...

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A sending out prayer

God, may we go with your praise on our lips, and your love in our hearts. May we be prepared to give our whole lives to you, whatever that means, wherever it leads. Help us to follow you, Jesus. **Amen.**

The Blessing

And the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 be upon us and all those we love, this day and always. **Amen.**

The Grace

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
 be with us all, for evermore. Amen.**

With love and best wishes,
Neil

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