

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, RASTRICK

Welcome to Morning Worship

27th September 2020

Click on the underlined links to take you to safe content on the internet.

If you are able light a candle as you start the service and if others are in the house encourage them to reading some of the service with you.

Introduction

This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We have come together in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.



Prayer of Penitence

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So, let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Together we pray:

**Lord God, we have sinned against you.
we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us
and restore to us the joy of your salvation,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hymn: [Be still and know that I am God](#)

1. Be still and know that I am God...
2. I am the Lord that healeth thee...
3. In thee, O Lord, I put my trust...

Author unknown, based on Psalm 46

The Word of God

Both readings this morning present challenges to two different groups of people. In the first reading, at a time when the Jews were in captivity in Iraq, the prophet Ezekiel points out to them their sinning ways and challenges them to repentance and a return to God's ways.

The challenges in the second reading are set by Jesus to the Jewish leaders, the day after Palm Sunday when He had entered Jerusalem on the donkey to the acclaim of the crowds. The Jewish leaders have failed to recognise who He is; there is a sense of challenge and of judgement in the words of Jesus'

First Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25 -end read by Norman Lake

Second Reading: Matthew 21: 23-32 read by Hilary Cartwright

Reflection prepared by Canon Michael Storey

When I had a look at the readings for this morning I was a while before I could see what I thought God was trying to say through them. Some weeks God's message is clearer than in other weeks.

In summary, I began to see that Ezekiel's message to the Jews of his day was like a personal challenge to me, personally, and all of us, as Christians trying to live as God wants us to live. In the Gospel reading it seemed to me that, as followers of Jesus, we are being challenged to challenge wrongs in the world, as best we can.

So, let's have a look at Ezekiel.

He lived in captivity in Iraq, (Babylon in Bible language) The Jews had been taken into captivity and Jerusalem laid waste. While in captivity, the Jews, seemed to have lost their faith and were not living godly lives. In the first 4 verses it appears as if they were blaming their parents and upbringing. Verse 2 sets out this belief: "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge". This suggests, I think the old debate, much discussed in teacher training.

Is it Nature or Nurture which decides what sort of people we become? Can we blame our family tree for all the various faults we can find in ourselves? Or is it that, how we think and believe, is taught to us both in the home, in school and in the world of life after school?

Ezekiel's answer to the issue is that we are all God's, and each has to make his or her own decision. And, of course, we do, whether we think we are the product of nature or nurture, or, more likely, a mixture of the two. In the further verses he says that, however we behave, we are encouraged to "repent and live" as God is a forgiver. So, as individuals, as we all know, we are called to do right but are aware of God's forgiveness.

Now, let's consider the Gospel reading. Here we have, instead of Ezekiel, Jesus presenting a challenge to the Jewish religious leaders. It was the day after Palm Sunday – Jesus had been acclaimed by the people in Jerusalem, who were looking for a Messiah. Sadly, on entering the Temple, Jesus found things being done very improperly – cheating with finance.

In our reading Jesus was challenged by the Jewish Leaders. On what authority had He upset the moneylenders? They obviously hadn't accepted Jesus as the Messiah. He tried them with a parable – 2 sons of a man – one who, eventually, did what was required, and the other who had made a promise and broke it.

Jesus could see more faith in tax collectors and prostitutes. Those who should have recognised Jesus had failed, like the second son had failed.

It seems to me that this puts the focus on people who believe, to challenge those who are in the wrong; so a different challenge than the one presented by Ezekiel, which was an internal personal challenge.

What is there out there in the world today which needs the challenge of Christians???

Plenty, as always.

As some readers of The Yorkshire Post will know, I often challenge the Government, when I think it has lost its Christian roots. A big pet hate of mine is the huge amount of money spent on gambling in so many different ways. Football shirts with "Betfred" printed on them. Lottery tickets sold in shops. Casinos, happily, as I see it, having to close @ 10.00pm from now on. I think I can link gambling to the financial cheating in The Temple. We shall all have our pet hates which we could challenge

So.... simply, set out in our readings this morning: 2 levels of responding to God by Ezekiel and Jesus. Ezekiel the personal challenge to everybody...to live up to Christian standards personally. Jesus – As Christians, not to be afraid to challenge authority, where those in authority have lost the plot.

So this week, perhaps we can all check ourselves and our responses, and, hopefully, react for Jesus, and start this as we listen to the hymn "Fight the good fight."

Hymn: [Fight the good fight](#)

Fight the good fight with all thy might;
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right:
lay hold on life, and it shall be
thy joy and crown eternally.

2 Run the straight race through God's good grace,
lift up thine eyes, and seek his face;
life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

3 Cast care aside; upon thy Guide
lean, and his mercy will provide;
lean, and the trusting soul shall prove,
Christ is its life and Christ its love.

4 Faint not, nor fear, his arms are near;
he changeth not, and thou art dear;
only believe, and thou shalt see
that Christ is all in all to thee.

Words: John Samuel Bewley Monsell
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The Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of intercession prepared by Margaret Ellis

Almighty God, as we are gathered together, remotely or in person, joined in hope and in faith, we ask you to minister to our needs.

God of all creation, you hold the depths of the earth in your hands. Fill our souls with your wonderful love and light. Give us strength and courage to reflect that love and light in the world. Let us never shrink back from who we are in you or hide our light inside ourselves. Hear us today as we pray for a world too often darkened by hatred, evil, power and greed.

Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

God of compassion and grace, we share with you our love and concern for people in a dark place today. We pray that they will find your strength in the compassion and love of those around them. We pray for tolerance in our society. Let your light shine through the darkness of all their pain and their suffering.

Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

Creator God, refugees continue to flee from crisis throughout the world. We pray for all those who have willingly invested their time and energy in serving the most vulnerable in the world that they will find opportunities to rest, and will be strengthened for their work. We also remember aid workers working in places and situations that are no longer newsworthy because of the pandemic; give them the encouragement to continue their invaluable contribution of love and care for those people rebuilding their lives after man-made or natural disasters.

Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

Loving God, we pray for abundant life for anyone we know who has recently been given bad news about their health or the health of a loved one. Lord, help us know what to say and when to speak. May we always be ready to give practical help when we are able.

Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for our church family. We especially pray for our PCC who continue to face challenges throughout the interregnum and for those who bring services to the congregation to maintain contact with all. We pray that God will guide the person he has chosen for the role of new vicar here at St. John's and St. Matthew's, to hear, and respond to, his or her call. We pray for our neighbours and friends and all those who live in our community. May they be aware of your presence and know that you are with them. We pray for our friends in Mara, especially our link parish of Nyakiswa as they face challenges of crop failure and the ongoing issues of the pandemic.

Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for our Queen and the Royal Family, members of Parliament and all in authority as they face so many challenges, that they may govern our country with wisdom and understanding and for the good of your Church and all people.

Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

Merciful God, we entrust to your unfailing and tender care those enduring pain or illness, afraid or in isolation, knowing that whenever danger threatens, your everlasting arms are there to hold them safe. We pray especially for those on our prayer list and those known only to ourselves. Comfort and heal them and restore them to health and strength. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love. Gracious God, give skill, sympathy, and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a cure.

Strengthen them with your Spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health.

Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

Father God we commend to your eternal presence those who have recently died. Comfort them and all who mourn; give them a patient faith in this time of darkness and strengthen them with the knowledge of your love. Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

Gracious God, we thank you for this time together in prayer and as we look forward to the week to come, we pray for an awareness of your love and support in all we do.

Merciful Father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

A Prayer for Church Growth

God of Mission

Who along brings growth to your church,

Send your Holy Spirit to give

Vision to our planning

Wisdom to our actions

And power to our witness.

Help our church to grow in numbers,

In spiritual commitment to you,

And in service to our local community,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

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.

The Collect for today

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know

what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
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. Amen

Hymn: [Guide me, O thou great Redeemer](#)

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
Feed me 'till I want no more,
Feed me 'till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow.
Let the fiery cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield,
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction.
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs and praises, songs and praises,
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee

Words (Welsh): William Williams
Translated: Peter Williams
Public Domain

Final Prayer

Lord of creation,
whose glory is around and within us:
open our eyes to your wonders,
that we may serve you with reverence
and know your peace at our lives' end,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Our service ends with the Grace,
**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

[J G Walther: Chorale Prelude: Werde munter mein Gemüte](#)

Played on the Conacher organ, St John the Divine, Rastrick
by Gordon Balmforth For the congregation during lockdown