

The Bride Valley United Service for Sunday 31st July 2022

This service has been prepared by Revd Jane Williams and is available on 01308 293062

Opening Sentences

Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all you that dwell in the world,

You of low or high degree, both rich and poor together.

My mouth shall speak of wisdom and my heart shall meditate on understanding. Psalm 49:1-3

How shall I sing that Majesty
which angels do admire?
Let dust in dust and silence lie;
sing, sing, ye heavenly choir.
Thousands of thousands stand around
thy throne, O God most high;
ten thousand times ten thousand sound
thy praise; but who am I?

2 Thy brightness unto them appears,
whilst I thy footsteps trace;
a sound of God comes to my ears;
but they behold thy face:
they sing because thou art their sun:

Hymn: How shall I sing that majesty

Lord, send a beam on me;
for where heaven is but once begun,
there alleluias be.

3 How great a being Lord, is thine,
which doth all beings keep!
Thy knowledge is the only line
to sound so vast a deep:
thou art a sea without a shore,
a sun without a sphere;
thy time is now and evermore,
thy place is everywhere.

John Mason (c.1645-1694) CCLI Licence 2370586

Invitation to Confession

By the mercies of God, let us confess our sins and present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him, which is our spiritual worship.

Prayers of Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit: Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart: Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided: Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Collect

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; 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.

Old Testament Reading: Ecclesiastes 1: 2, 12-14, 2: 18-23

Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

I, the Teacher, when king over Israel in Jerusalem, applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to human beings to be busy with. I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.

I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me —and who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labours under the sun, because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom

and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

New Testament Reading: Colossians 3:1-11

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.

But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

Gospel Reading: Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.’ But he said to him, ‘Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?’ And he said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’ Then he told them a parable: ‘The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, “What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?” Then he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.’

Sermon:

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”

This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

These words are the summary of the law which make up the first part of the BCP or Order Two service.

The response to this summary of the law is: “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.” These are, as it says on the tin, a summary of the law, a way of summarising the 10 Commandments in the words of Jesus. We are to love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength and to love our neighbour as yourself. This sentence, this summary, contains all we need regarding the law and the prophets.

We’re going to hear our Gospel reading again and I want you to listen and ask yourself, do I hear this summary of the law anywhere in the parable?

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Then he told them a parable:

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Did you hear anywhere in that parable the summary of the law, you are to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength and to love our neighbour as yourself? No? Me neither. It would be easy to think of this parable as a tale of woe against greed and wealth, and of course, it isn't ... not ... this. This man is actually acting shrewdly, he could sell his excess crops, but he wouldn't get a great price because there were lots of crops being sold at harvest time; he could add onto his existing barns but then he'd be leaving less land for crop growing later on. But what he has forgotten in all his shrewdness and wealth accumulation for himself, is what it might mean to be wealthy towards God. The way in which God's idea of what a rich life looks like and his idea of what a rich life looks like are completely different. Our reading from Colossians made this point clear too with the words, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth... When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. Put to death whatever in you is earthly – greed, anger, wrath, malice.” Etc, the list was fairly substantial! But the point of both of these readings is how we live in Christ and Christ lives in us, by the way in which are wealthy towards God and look to Christ. Looking to Christ means keeping the summary of the law, to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength and to love our neighbour as yourself.

So how do we 'put to death' what is earthly, the qualities in us that we regret but also those things that are actively harming or damaging ourselves and those around us? And how do we reconcile this with the fact that we are earthly, we are human and we are fallible? I think this is where we need to be honest about what it means to follow Christ, and about those things that are incompatible with following Christ. If we choose God, truly choose God, then we are not to allow greed in such excess that others live in poverty, whether this is individual or corporate. The rich man in the story would've been more akin to a business or company – wealthy enough to own land and hire workers. It is criminal when rich companies do not pay their taxes. It is illegal when people are trafficked or exploited with no hope of fairness or freedom. It is scandalous when supplier's prices are raised so much that people cannot afford to eat or use electricity or heat their homes. It is wrong when these values are called unrealistic or that those who hold to them do not live in the real world, because this is only the 'real world' if we allow it to be, if we choose to adhere to those values of greed and wealth over God's values of justice and righteousness and love.

The reality here is that to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength and to love your neighbour as yourself is something we all have to choose to do, and choose to do again and again and again. God made the world and is so utterly in love with his creation and with us, that when we too choose to love God, neighbour and ourselves, then we become part of this love and reflect God's image. In this love redemption lies, in this love wealth that reflects God lies, in this love hang all the law and the prophets. *“Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.” Amen.*

Prayers of Intercession

Gathered together in the love and fellowship of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit; let us pray for the church and for the world and let us thank God for his goodness.

Father of all, we your church, give thanks and praise for all those, especially here in the Bride Valley and along the Chesil who walk with us on our journey of faith. May we grow in grace that we shine as a light in the world. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

In the world we ask a blessing on the people of Ukraine and all who are struggling with conflict. We pray for politicians throughout the world, that they may grow in wisdom and integrity.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for all churches throughout the world, that they may be places of inspiration, peace and consolation to those who enter, we bring before you all the bishops attending the Lambeth Conference. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Loving Lord; we know your presence with us always; in times of sadness and in times of joy. In times of health and in times of illness. We bring before you today all those who are sick in body or anguish of mind. In a moment of quiet we remember anyone known to us personally who needs our prayers today. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for all those among our families and friends who have died; those we love but see no longer. May they all rest in peace and rise in glory. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Rejoicing in the fellowship of St Michael and all the Saints and Angels, we commend ourselves and all people to God's unfailing love.

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

And now we join our prayers together in the words of the Lord's Prayer:

**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.**

1 How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss -
The Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.

2 Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.

Hymn: How deep the Father's love for us
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life -
I know that it is finished.

3 I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart -
His wounds have paid my ransom.

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The Peace

God has made us one in Christ.
He has set his seal upon us and, as a pledge of what is to come,
He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 1.22)

The peace of the Lord be always with you **and also with you.**

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