

# AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 26<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## 2nd Sunday after Trinity

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

*Hymn Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?*

1 Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown,  
in you and you in me?

2 Will you leave yourself behind  
if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?

3 Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean,  
and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean  
in you and you in me?

4 Will you love the 'you' you hide  
if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around,  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

5 Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.

In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

*John L Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019)*

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### *Confession*

To be a follower of Christ is not easy; at times the difficulties come from outside ourselves; at others, from inside ourselves. Let us turn to Christ and ask for pardon for our failings, and the strength to remain faithful to him.

Lord Jesus, you strengthen us when we are weak.

Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

You give us courage when we are afraid.

Christ, have mercy, **Christ, have mercy.**

You give us the support and example of our fellow Christians.

Lord, have mercy, **Lord, have mercy.**

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

*The Collect (special prayer for today)*

Faithful Creator, whose mercy never fails: deepen our faithfulness to you and to your living word, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

### *Reflection*

I wonder if you, like me, sometimes made up excuses at school to explain why my homework wasn't in on time. As a teacher, I soon realised that nothing really changes where late homework is concerned; the excuses are just updated. No more, the dog spilt ink over my work; more likely, the cat trod on my computer and deleted my work!

In our Gospel reading, something more important than late homework is at stake. It is the challenge to follow Jesus with the whole of our lives. But the excuses are just as ingenious. So, let's look at the setting. Jesus is heading towards Jerusalem; he 'set his face towards Jerusalem.' He has told his disciples that he is going to be betrayed and killed, and he has also spoken of his rising again. And now he is heading for his crucifixion. His earthly mission is rapidly gaining momentum. There is a growing sense of urgency. And it is in the shadow of the impending cross that we need to consider the excuses that we read about in the Gospel.

Jesus and his disciples were in Samaria; they were among a people who hated the Jews, and who were hated by the Jews. They refused to acknowledge Jerusalem as the legitimate place for worship. Yet this was the place of the cross, the place of Jesus' resurrection, and the heart of his ministry. Clinging to past hurts and arguments prevented them from receiving Christ; prevented them from receiving the future on offer through him.

The first would-be disciple clearly did not consider the cost. Although he appears keen to follow Jesus, Jesus' response is one which brings us up with a jolt. There are those who seek to spread the Gospel, and recruit new followers by giving the impression, the false impression, that being a follower of Jesus will take away all your problems. What Jesus' response spells out to us is that whilst others – the foreigners and the invaders have places to live, but the Messiah has nowhere. Was that first would-be disciple, are we, ready to pay that kind of price? The call to follow Jesus is cross-shaped. It is costly. It will bring hardship and difficulty, today just as then.

The second man had a different problem. He was trapped by other duties. Whilst it may appear to us that his father is dead, it is unlikely that his words meant that. Within

middle eastern cultures, the burial would have taken place within 24 hours of the death, and the man would most likely have been with the family mourning the death. Instead, the sense is more that his father is old and frail, and the man wants to wait until his father's death, and then follow Jesus. I will do it, but not yet.

But Jesus' mission is urgent. The cross will not wait. He must follow now, on the way to Jerusalem. And Jesus' call to us is urgent. Indeed, it is positively inconvenient. How often do we want to follow Jesus, live how he calls us to, when it suits us? The last man's request seems natural and innocent. But it implies that he considered himself to be under a greater authority; that of his family; his parents. But Jesus will have none of it. In the light of the cross, his is the highest authority. The call of Jesus takes precedence.

These appear to be such simple, everyday things, but they stopped people responding to the call of Jesus – not being able to let go of the past, not counting the cost, wanting to wait for a more convenient time, not putting Christ first. 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'. Can we claim to be any different? Today, his call is still costly, urgent and pre-eminent. Above all, it is still a call that is made in the shadow of the cross. 'for whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.' And that cross is what most of us would like to avoid. **Amen**

*Prayers*

Holy God, you have called us to pray together, and here we are.

We pray for those called to lay and ordained ministry in your Church, and for those at present testing their vocation. We lay before you the work that needs doing, and ask you to provide people to do it.

We ask in Jesus' name **give us the courage to answer your call**

We pray for those called to serve you in positions of authority and influence; for all leaders to see true greatness as service, and true strength as humility.

We ask in Jesus' name **give us the courage to answer your call**

We pray for those called to marriage, and those called to the single life; for parents and grandparents, sons and daughters; for acceptance of what we cannot change and strength to live the Christian life in our present situation.

We ask in Jesus' name **give us the courage to answer your call**

We pray for those whose lives are full of disappointment, disillusion and discontent; for all who struggle with great perseverance in difficult circumstances. We pray for your strength, encouragement and direction.

We ask in Jesus' name **give us the courage to answer your call**

We pray for those called, through death, into eternal life and freedom from their pain and suffering. Receive them with mercy, and welcome them into your kingdom.

We ask in Jesus' name **give us the courage to answer your call**

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

*Prayers by Susan Sayers*

*Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us*

**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.**

**And 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**

*Hymn O Jesus, I have promised*

1 O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve thee to the end;  
be thou for ever near me,  
my Master and my Friend:  
I shall not fear the battle  
if thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if thou wilt be my guide.

2 O let me hear thee speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will;  
O speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
O speak, and make me listen,  
thou guardian of my soul.

3 O Jesus, thou hast promised  
to all who follow thee,  
that where thou art in glory  
there shall thy servant be;  
and, Jesus, I have promised  
to serve thee to the end:  
O give me grace to follow,  
my Master and my Friend.

4 O let me see thy foot-marks,  
and in them plant mine own;  
my hope to follow duly  
is in thy strength alone:  
O guide me, call me, draw me,  
uphold me to the end;  
and then in heaven receive me,  
my Saviour and my Friend.

*John Ernest Bode (1816-1874)*

*We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now*

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits you have given me,  
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.  
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

*We pray God's blessing on each other*

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and those whom you love and pray for, this day and for evermore. **Amen**