

# AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020

17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

*To prepare ourselves for our worship, we reflect on the day and on our relationships.*

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What will I try to do differently in future?*

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

We have the freedom to say 'yes' or 'no' to God. Sometimes we abuse our freedom, but God in his goodness calls us to repentance. Let us call to mind our sins, and ask God to give us the graced of true repentance.

Lord Jesus, you guide the humble in the right path.

Lord have mercy

**Lord have mercy**

You show the path to those who stray.

Christ have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

You seek out and save the lost.

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)*

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; 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**

## READINGS

### *Psalm 19*

The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.  
There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;  
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,  
which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,  
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.  
Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them;  
and nothing is hidden from its heat.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.  
But who can detect their errors?  
Clear me from hidden faults.  
Keep back your servant also from the insolent;  
do not let them have dominion over me.  
Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

## GOSPEL READING

### *Matthew 21:33-end*

‘Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.

When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.

Finally he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.” So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.’

Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures:

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes”?

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.’

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

## REFLECTION

We are quite familiar with the parables of Jesus, and in today’s Gospel reading we hear a story in which the words and images stand for something other than what is being said at the time. For once, even the chief priests and Pharisees could see the veiled meaning in this story; God is the landowner, the land of Israel is the vineyard, the Jewish religious leaders are the tenants, the Old Testament prophets are those who came to collect the dues, and Jesus is the son who came and was killed.

So how does this relate to us today? The central point of the story is the idea of the children of Israel rejecting God, and nowadays, that rejection still goes on.

Sometimes it is quite blatant; the acceptance of the intricate beauty of the world in which we live whilst denying absolutely the role of the Creator; putting our whole existence and that of our environment down to random chance, and the vagaries of different atoms and molecules coming together.

At other times people profess to being 'spiritual' without any reference to God. They turn their back on the Bible, discipleship or service and turn instead to something vague which centres on their own well-being, and makes them feel good.

And then, just as we reject God by denying him as creator and sustainer of the universe, so we reject him when we reject some of God's people for reasons of our own. As human beings we are capable of doing the most terrible things to others when we can define them as less worthy, less human, less valuable than ourselves. Once another human being has been turned into 'the other', there is no limit to what we will do, or allow to be done to them.

The *Black Lives Matter* campaign highlights the obscenity of the slave trade, and its shameful legacy felt in today's world more than 200 years since the British slave trade was abolished. We reject God when we reject or marginalise any of his people; the holocaust, the gulags in the USSR, apartheid in South Africa, ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, and Africa. In China, Myanmar and India groups of people are victimised because of their religion or class, and around the world, native peoples are being driven from their traditional lands. All these things happen because the perpetrators refuse to accept the humanity of other people.

We have the example of Jesus who sought out the marginalised and the despised, those whom society saw as beyond the pale. He taught us to love our neighbour as ourselves, to love one another as he loves us. And when we reject some of God's people, we, like the chief priests and the Pharisees, reject the God who made them and us and who loves us all.

**Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.**

**Be with us today, as we offer ourselves to you.**

**Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves,  
and keep us in your care. Amen**

Loving God, guide your Church into ways of spiritual beauty and gracious wisdom. May your word be spoken out with passion and heard with humility and joy. Sustain and feed us so that we bear the fruit in abundance.

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

Loving God, may justice and righteousness flourish in this place, this country, this world. Bless those who work to right what is wrong and mediate where there is conflict. Raise up leaders who are happy to serve and protect them from power's corruption.

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

Loving God, we thank you for the nurturing we have received, and pray for our children and young people as they grow. Protect them from evil and strengthen them in faith; may they continue to be yours for ever.

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

Loving God, give comfort and healing to all who are in any kind of need, sorrow or pain. May they sense your reassuring presence and know that you are with them, wherever their journey takes them.

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

Loving God, we pray for those who have died to this earthly life, and now see you face to face. We remember your mercy, and commit our loved ones to the safety of your keeping.

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

Loving God, we thank you for all the care and attention that you lavish on us; make us worthy of our calling and continue your ongoing work in us.

**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**

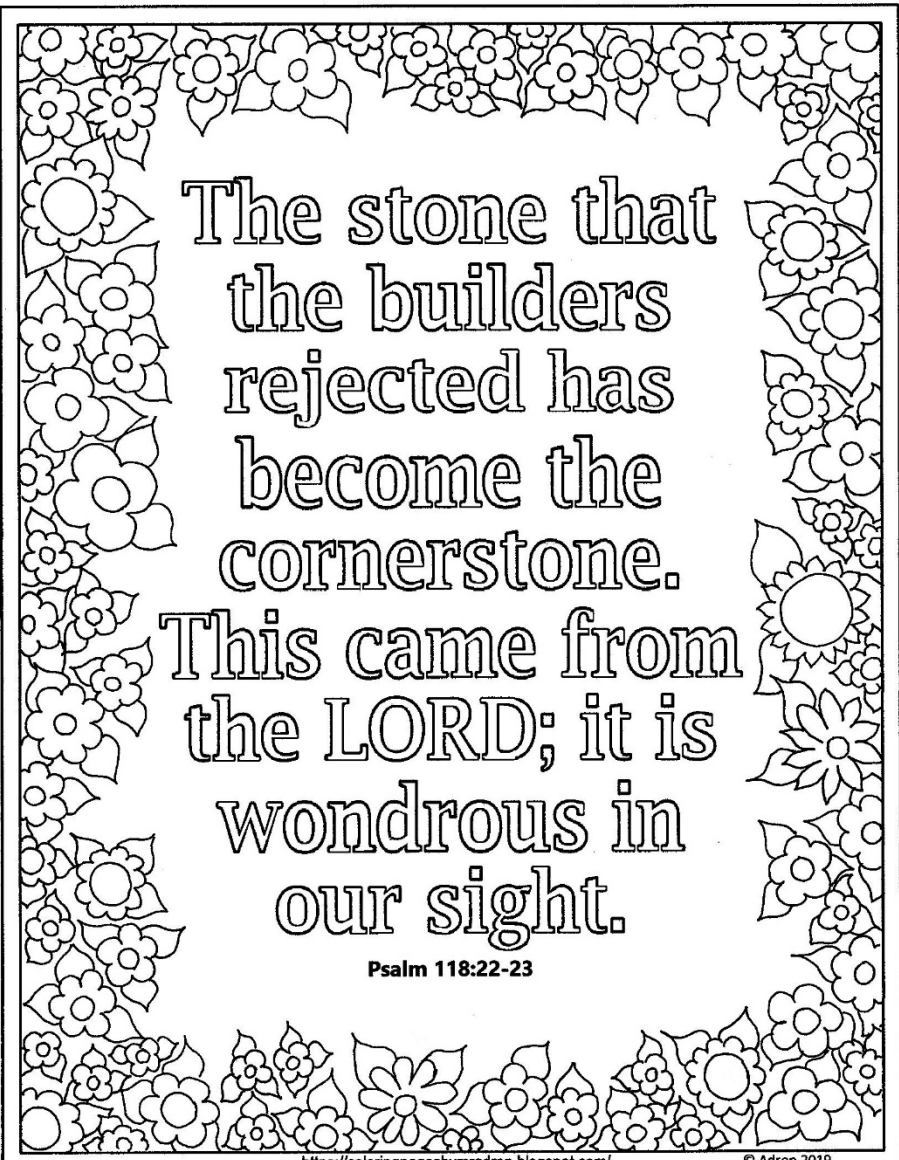
*We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now*

**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*

May the Lord bless you with a strong faith, a joyful spirit, and a loving heart.  
May you act rightly, love sincerely, and walk humbly with your God.  
May the Lord watch over you, keep you in his care, and bless you with his peace.

**And may the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you and remain with you, and those whom you love and pray for  
this day and for evermore.  
Amen**



The stone that  
the builders  
rejected has  
become the  
cornerstone.

This came from  
the LORD; it is  
wondrous in  
our sight.

Psalm 118:22-23