

Prejudice

Call to Worship

The world belongs to God,
The earth and all its people.
How good it is, how wonderful,
To live together in unity.
Love and faith come together,
Justice and peace join hands.
If Christ's disciples keep silent
These stones would shout aloud.
Open our lips, O God,
And our mouths shall proclaim your praise.

Affirmation

With the whole church
We affirm that we are made in God's image, befriended by Christ, empowered by the spirit.
With people everywhere
We affirm God's goodness at the heart of humanity, planted more deeply than all that is wrong.
With all creation
We celebrate the miracle and wonder of life; the unfolding purposes of God, forever at work in ourselves and the world.

Hymn StF 317 – 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,
Faithfully he bore it Spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious When from death he passed:

Bore it up triumphant With its human light,
Through all ranks of creatures To the central height,
To the throne of Godhead, To the Father's breast;
Filled it with the glory Of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone him; There let him subdue
All that is not holy, All that is not true;
Crown him as your captain In temptation's hour:
Let his will enfold you In its light and power.

Online Worship – 15 November 2020

Leader – Alan Jackson

For this same Lord Jesus Shall return again,
With his Father's glory, With his angel train;
All the wreaths of empire Meet upon his brow,
And our hearts confess him King of Glory now.

Prayer of Intercession

Blessed are you, eternal God,
to be praised and glorified for ever.

Hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:
make us all one, that the world may believe.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you:
that the life of Christ may be revealed in us.

Strengthen all who minister in Christ's name:
give them courage to proclaim your Gospel.

Inspire and lead those who hold authority in the nations of the world:
guide them and all people in the way of justice and peace.

Make us alive to the needs of our community:
help us to share each other's joys and burdens.

Look with kindness on our homes and families:
grant that your love may grow in our hearts.

Inspire us to have compassion on those who suffer from sickness, grief or trouble:
in your presence may they find their strength.

In this strange time let us reach out to those who are fearful, lonely and purposeless:
may we touch their hearts, even if we may not touch their hands.

We remember those who have died:
Father, into your hands we commend them.

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory:
bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Silence

Heavenly Father,
**you have promised to hear what we ask in the name of your Son: we pray you to
accept and answer our prayers, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve
in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

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.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

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Reading: Jdg 4:1-7

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, now that Ehud was dead. So the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help.

Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, ‘The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: “Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the River Kishon and give him into your hands.”’

Barak said to her, ‘If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.’ ‘Certainly I will go with you,’ said Deborah. ‘But because of the course you are taking, the honour will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.’

Talk – Remarkable

This is a quite remarkable passage – but perhaps more remarkable than it seems on the surface.

The comment usually made is that it is remarkable that Israel is led by a woman: Deborah.

We have a stereotype of ancient times, whereby women were oppressed, virtually enslaved; the idea that a woman could become the leader of Israel is quite startling to us – especially as elsewhere in the Book of Judges women do indeed seem to be treated as mere possessions.

But there is something even more remarkable about this passage, and about Deborah’s rule over Israel – and that is that no one is surprised by it. As far as the writer of the book is concerned, and, if the traditions it builds on are accurate, as far as the people at the time are concerned, there is nothing at all surprising, nothing even worthy of comment, in a woman ruling over Israel. Deborah is a perfectly normal unremarkable woman ruler of Israel, not the freak monstrosity in a sea of enslaved women that our prejudices tell us she is.

It is so easy, isn’t it, to prejudge things. To prejudge situations, prejudge people, prejudge societies, on the basis of our own preconceived ideas. We have seen ourselves how, in a certain other country, police have over and over again prejudged black people, used force, fatal force, where no force was needed. We have seen in our own country politicians claiming that the poor are all drug-users and drunkards, and if they would only stop dealing heroin and buy food at cheap stores like Waitrose or Marks & Spencers there would be no need for free school meals.

But it’s easy to point the finger at others. How much do we work on prejudice and assumptions? How often do we see without actually looking, hear without actually listening, condemn without actually understanding?

I was reminded this week of something that happened to me when I was a child: I was sent to the local Methodist Sunday School every Sunday so that my parents could have a bit of peace and quiet, I think, and the Methodist minister was militantly antiCatholic – convinced that the next king of England would be a Catholic, and would crush Protestantism and turn the country back to the Pope. And being a child, naturally I believed him. But then one day a Catholic lady in our street gave me a couple of blades of grass, grass that the Catholic Archbishop had blessed preparatory to building a new church. She

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didn't give them to me to spread the word, or to teach me to be catholic – she gave them to me just to be nice to me. And I thought – they're just grass really, but how nice of her to think of me! Catholics aren't nasty people like the minister said, they're actually kind and thoughtful. And I started to look and listen to the real Catholics, and how nice they were – and I learned a hard lesson about how wrong I'd been to see Catholics without looking, and to hear Catholics without listening, to condemn Catholics without understanding.

If we learn to open our eyes and look, if we learn to open our ears and listen, then we will see people as they really are – sisters and brothers of Jesus, sharing his light deep within them; we will find that same light of God burning within our own hearts, we will see the wonders God has done for them and for us – and maybe we can look at ourselves, hear ourselves, understand ourselves, forgive ourselves, and learn even more about what God has done for them, for you, for me.

Hymn StF 345 – And can it be

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain? For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies! Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries to sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore, let angel minds enquire no more.

He left his Father's throne above— So free, so infinite his grace—
Emptied himself of all but love, and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free; For, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray— I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Prayers of Confession & Commitment

Holy God, Maker of all

Have mercy on us.

Jesus Christ, Servant of the poor

Have mercy on us.

Holy Spirit, Breath of life

Have mercy on us

Let us in silence confess our faults and admit our frailty.

Silence

Before God, with the people of God, I confess to my brokenness:

To the ways I wound my life, The lives of others, And the life of the world.

May God forgive you, Christ renew you,

And the Spirit enable you to grow in love.

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Amen.

Before God, with the people of God, I confess to my brokenness:

To the ways I wound my life, The lives of others, And the life of the world.

May God forgive you, Christ renew you,
And the Spirit enable you to grow in love.

Amen.

Hymn StF 673 – Will you come and follow Me

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.

The Grace

Gathered and scattered

God is with us

In suffering and hope

God is with us

Now and always

God is with us

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