

*For personal meditation before the service begins:*

Almighty God,  
we praise you for the many blessings you have given to those who worship you in this house of prayer: and we pray that all who seek you in this place may find you, and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, may become a living temple acceptable to you; 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.

Pre-service music

Anne Quigley – There is a longing in my heart

Preparation

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

*Silence is kept.*

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

Song (ACF 110)

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You  
to receive the food of Your Holy Word.  
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;  
shape and fashion us in Your likeness;  
That the light of Christ might be seen today  
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.  
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us  
all Your purposes for Your glory.

Teach us Lord, full obedience,  
holy reverence, true humility.  
Test our thoughts and our attitudes  
in the radiance of Your purity.  
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see  
Your majestic love and authority.  
Words of power that can never fail;  
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

CCLI Song # 4615235  
Keith Getty | Stuart Townend  
© 2005 Thankyou Music (Admin. by SCM Hänssler)  
CCLI Licence No. 546960

## The 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.

**Amen.**

The first reading is from the First Book of Kings, Chapter 3, verses 5 -12.

**Our hearts and our minds are open.**

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

"Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

From Psalm 25 (ACF 119)

*To you, O Lord, I lift up, I lift up my soul, my God.*

Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths.

Guide me in your truth, for you are my God, and for you I will wait.

*To you, O Lord, I lift up, I lift up my soul, my God.*

Good and upright is the Lord; he shows us the way.

He guides the meek to justice, he teaches the humble to follow his ways.

*To you, O Lord, I lift up, I lift up my soul, my God.*

Your way, O Lord, is kindness to those who are true.

Your friendship is with those who love you; you reveal to them your Word.

*To you, O Lord, I lift up, I lift up my soul, my God.*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew, chapter 13, verses 44 – 48.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Homily

Did you follow the news about the intense haggling which went on during the European Union Summit last week? The heads of state came together to tie up the loose ends of a financial assistance package. This was designed to fight the economic damage caused by the Corona pandemic. Through this, they wanted to signal generosity and solidarity.

Instead, it went on as though they were at a bazar, until finally, an agreement was reached.

But I thought that beats everything when President Orbán of Hungary threatened a veto, because the aid was to be contingent on each state's compliance with the rule of law. He openly admitted that he thinks little of the rule of law, not even trying to hide such an assertion. Yes, he was even brazen enough to threaten to blackmail his colleagues as he attempted to assert his own interests.

To be honest, I sometimes get scared when I see this attitude spreading. More or less democratic countries are turning into autocratic ones, led by politicians like Duda, Erdoğan, Putin, Bolsonaro, and Trump. Where does a sudden longing come from, among so many people, for someone to dictate the direction we are to go? Where does so little trust in the functioning of democracy come from?

I would like very much to send all these autocrats the ancient text from the 1st Book of Kings that we just heard.

It is known from biblical studies that even with Solomon "all that glitters is not gold" - he did not use only gentle persuasion to assert his interests. He was a power politician. He waged wars to expand his sphere of influence. So it could be that our wonderful biblical text was only court propaganda, nicely portrayed by the state press - okay, there wasn't actual printing at that time.

But perhaps the author wanted to write something to the power politician Solomon and all his successors in their family book. Because it says not only how someone becomes a mighty and feared ruler, but also a great and wise one. A hearing and discerning heart is what is needed. That sounds like so little. And yet that is exactly what matters.

Cross-checking shows that this is the case. If we ask why things are currently going the wrong direction in many countries, it becomes clear that it is connected to this: the powerful don't listen either to each other or to their people and certainly not to God. They don't ask because they think they already know everything.

Some don't listen to God because they're religious fundamentalists. No matter whether Islamic or Christian, Jewish, Buddhist or Hindu fundamentalists: they do not listen to God because they think they already know what God wants. Exactly these "defenders of God" are the least obedient to him - they don't listen to him.

Autocrats don't listen to other people either. Anyone who questions their bloated ego is perceived as a threat. So they push away all those that contradict them, having only yes-men around them. They are therefore, no longer corrected by anyone.

Someone who doesn't listen to anyone else is dangerous. Because, who has an absolute monopoly on wisdom?

The Book of Kings says clearly: wisdom can only be acquired through a listening heart. It comes only through learning from God and other persons. It comes through openness, not a lack of it. It comes only by careful listening, especially to your own conscience, and discernment. There are other deficits and not only among the world's autocrats. Between many democratic politicians in our country there is a cut-throat style which contributes to the fact that the reputation of democracy has been damaged. I mean the kind of style which doesn't allow any goodwill toward a political opponent, but only has an eye on the effect it has on the public. I mean the style of not letting others finish what they have to say and endlessly rambling on. I mean the style of not just being silent when I have nothing meaningful to say on a subject. More objectivity and more listening to each other would be a real blessing.

We also need to know how valuable peace is, respect and love for one another and mutual support. It needs to be recognized that it is worth making a real effort so that it happens.

Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God is like an extremely precious pearl, or like a treasure buried in a field.

Peace and love are the main hallmarks of the Kingdom of God; they are immeasurably valuable like a treasure. They are not simply given to you, says Jesus.

You have to look through many valuable pearls and then, at some point, you may come across the pearl that surpasses all others. But then you can't just grab the pearl or just take the treasure out of the field: there is a price to pay. The merchant sold everything, the gospel says, to be able to afford the pearl; the tenant did everything to be able to buy the field. Peace is such a pearl, it is such a treasure: it takes a lot of effort to permanently hold on to it, but it's worth the effort.

This commitment includes the willingness to really listen. To hear what my opponents really need, why they fight like this, why they are anxious and afraid.

But also listening for - and this is usually neglected - what I really need myself; what I really care about. And to discern what is not really important, where I might be fighting myself unnecessarily.

And then to present a side and talk to each other about it, talk until compromises can be seen, until traces of a new path become visible that can work without violence.

A path that will undoubtedly cost me something - because if I simply take everything I want by force, there will never be peace.

It is alarming that this simple message from the Bible still seems so unthinkable. But there is no alternative if humanity should find its way out of the vortex of violent communication.

Amen

## Intercessions

Loving God,

Jesus announced the coming of your kingdom. Hoping for the Kingdom of God here on earth, we pray:

- for all who like King Solomon have positions of power within the state and society. Grant them wisdom to benefit all people as they discharge their duties and teach them to distinguish right from wrong. Our Father in heaven – **your kingdom come!**
- for Christians throughout the world. Give us a discerning heart so that we can recognise how you speak into our lives and listen to each other, particularly at this time as we search for a new minster. Our Father in heaven – **your kingdom come!**
- for all who are seeking, often without knowing what they seek. Let them find the treasure that you have prepared and help them to see that it is your Good News which is the finest pearl of great worth.  
Our Father in heaven – **your kingdom come!**

Loving God, give us a discerning heart, so that we may receive your peace. This we pray in the name of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

In the language of our hearts, let us pray as our Saviour taught us.....

## A sign of Peace

In the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body. Let us pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

## Song (SoF 493)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God  
and His righteousness,  
and all these things shall be added unto you,  
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

Man shall not live by bread alone,  
but by ev'ry word

that proceeds from the mouth of God  
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,  
He shall direct thy paths,  
in all thy ways acknowledge Him,  
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

CCLI Song # 1352

Karen Lafferty

© 1972 CCCM Music (Admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.)

Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing

CCLI Licence No. 546960

Thanksgiving Prayer

Lord God our Father,  
we pledge ourselves to serve you and all humankind,  
in the cause of peace,  
for the relief of want and suffering,  
and for the praise of your name.  
Guide us by your Spirit;  
give us wisdom;  
give us courage;  
give us hope;  
and keep us faithful now and always. Amen.

The Blessing

May the Father from whom every family  
in earth and heaven receives its name  
strengthen you with his Spirit in your inner being,  
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
+ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

**Amen**

Go in the peace of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

Post-service music

Benedetto Marcello

Allegro from Sonata in G major for treble recorder and basso continuo.