

Morning Prayer 30th August 2020

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Service with Peter Widdess



Personal preparation before the service begins.
Please take time to remember where you are,
and why you are here.
Give thanks and become still in the presence of God

Prelude

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you.

And also with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.



SoF 393

Morning has broken,
Like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken
Like the first bird;
Praise for the singing,
Praise for the morning,
Praise for them springing
Fresh from the Word.

Sweet the rain's new fall,
Sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall
On the first grass;
Praise for the sweetness
Of the wet garden,

Sprung in completeness
Where His feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight,
Mine is the morning,
Born of the One Light
Eden saw play;
Praise with elation,
Praise every morning,
God's re-creation
Of the new day.

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Let us pray using Psalm 133

How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!
It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
**running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.**
It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
**For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.**
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
**As it was in the beginning,
is now and shall be for ever.**

The Collect for today, the 12th Sunday after Trinity.

All are guests at your table:
grass and flowers, birds and fish, sheep and cows.
We, your children are also here.
Let us in trust and obedience place ourselves
in your hands, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The first reading is taken from Amos 9:11-15

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God
Our hearts and our minds are open

“In that day
“I will restore David’s fallen shelter—
 I will repair its broken walls
 and restore its ruins—
 and will rebuild it as it used to be,
so that they may possess the remnant of Edom
 and all the nations that bear my name,”
declares the Lord, who will do these things.
“The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman
 and the planter by the one treading grapes.
New wine will drip from the mountains
 and flow from all the hills,
 and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.
“They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.
 They will plant vineyards and drink their wine;
 they will make gardens and eat their fruit.
I will plant Israel in their own land,
 never again to be uprooted
 from the land I have given them,”

says the Lord your God.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The reading is taken from John 15:1-5

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to
John

Glory to you, O Lord

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He
cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while
every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it
will be even more fruitful. You are already clean
because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in
me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by

itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

On Tuesday Creation Time begins. Every year since 2010 the churches in Europe celebrate ‘Creation Time’ in September. The initiative for creation time came from the Orthodox churches of Europe, particularly from the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew. In the German church context there was considerable opposition to the idea of creation time. The Catholic Bishops conference said, “the church calendar is full, anybody could come with a wish for this day, that week or period of time. We can’t have that.” As always the Evangelische Kirche in Germany agreed with the Catholic Church and added, “we have Harvest festival anyway, so we don’t need creation time.”

But how does the Creed begin: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth – nothing there about “harvest”. And creation comes before belief in Jesus or the Holy Spirit. I am reminded of a service we attended a few years ago in the University Church in Cambridge, Great St. Mary’s. As a student I had listened to many great preachers there giving us important thoughts. But on this occasion, a Sunday morning in the holidays, the children’s choir sang a song in praise of creation from John Rutter which included the memorable line – “thank God for gravity which helps us to stay on our seats at school.”

There are good reasons to celebrate harvest, the thankfulness for not only having been able to harvest the food which will feed us in the coming year, but also an awareness that the success of our harvest doesn’t

only depend on our work but on many other things as well, weather, the earth, society in the sense of the peace in which long term work on fields is made possible, and not least God. Harvest is a celebration driven by the need for rest and joy after the hard work is successfully completed.

Awareness of creation, of giving thanks to God for being the creator of heaven and earth, is different. Everything which exists on earth, in the solar system, in all the space in the universe comes from the creative will of God. The creation narrative at the beginning of the bible says: God saw that it was good. But at the same time we experience natural disasters, drought and floods, earthquakes and disease, and in these pandemic times, a virus which brings humankind to a full stop. Can that be good?

We live in a state of development in which we have to a large extent made the world into a form which is very convenient for us. Anything which is inconvenient is very quickly thought of as bad, something which we need to change or improve so that it can be seen as good.

Thomas Cranmer lived in a very different world in the early 16th century when he wrote the Book of Common Prayer. As I reread it recently, I was struck by how seriously he takes the possibility of natural disasters, plague, the sweat or other infectious diseases. Social distancing and caution about infection are a natural part of life in Cranmer's times.

But are there not two sorts of goodness?, moral goodness, the quality and intention of an act, and goodness in the sense of something well made, good for what it does.

Patriarch Bartholomew asks us to think about these pandemic times as a mirror of society and the way we use or misuse the good gifts of creations.

Two examples:

Firstly, the Church of England sent to all ministers an information sheet about the consequences of the virus in Great Britain. The incidence of infection in different parts of the population reflects social status and wealth

– the whites are the wealthiest and healthiest and the Bangladeshi are the group in Great Britain most seriously affected. In other words the virus puts serious moral questions about power, wealth and class in society.

Secondly, it may well be the case that the virus lived in coexistence with certain wild animals in China, and has sprung over to us humans at the point in which its living space was so encroached upon that it had no alternative. In other words the virus puts serious moral questions about the way in which society uses and misuses the land, earth, creation in which it exists.

The bible texts in our service this morning come from the national service of the German churches for Creation Time, which has for obvious reasons been cancelled this year. The bible takes seriously the fact that things go wrong.

Amos is preaching against the elite in Israel which thinks it can manipulate weights and measurements for its own benefit at the cost of the poor and weak in society. They also think that they make clever political alliances with other countries. Amos says, we are heading for a disaster. However, Amos reminds his listeners of the love of God, who will restore his people. He gives them a picture of life in its fullness: They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit.

In the picture of Jesus as the true vine, we are given a picture that things go wrong in God's good creation. God needs to prune and cut out the branches which will not be able to bear fruit. I think of the vines which I have or have had in my garden. I had to get rid of one because it was attacked by the kirschessig fliege (*Drosophila zuzukii*), all the grapes were changed into vinegar. Another just suddenly died – an insect in the ground had cut through and eaten the main root of the vine.

Normally when we hear of Jesus, the true vine, and the branches which are pruned because they bear no fruit, we think of faith or lack of faith, of moral or theological goodness as against evil. We set ourselves under

pressure to better ourselves, to improve ourselves, to believe more sincerely and seriously. I want to suggest to you today a reading in creation terms. Jesus is saying to us: look to where your life, indeed all life, comes from, from God. Jesus says very clearly – you cannot separate yourself from creation, and think that you can manipulate, change or improve it for your own convenience. Do not saw off the branch on which you are sitting, but remember where your roots are, in the joy and love of God, the creator of all and everything.

To him be glory now and forever.

Amen



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Refrain:

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful:
The Lord God made them all.*

The purple-headed mountains,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky.

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.

CCLI Song # 1510282
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Intercessions (by William)

We pray together for Christ's confident and assertive Church. Our prayers are offered humbly and thankfully, and in a living hope that you will continue to inspire her in unity with your truth. Let all that ask to do so live in harmony with your love.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

Lead all nations in the way of righteousness and peace; and direct all rulers, that under them Your people may be godly and quietly governed. May justice be administered impartially, and may wickedness be punished proportionately, so virtue, truth gentleness and kindness may flourish. We pray especially for divided communities in the United States of America. Bring your peace to those hurting, and reassure those that are scared of change. May understanding and charity flourish and fill the hearts of all, regardless of their politics.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

Enlighten with Your Spirit all those who have a public voice; that the whole world may be filled with the knowledge of Your truth. Give your heavenly grace to all people and especially to the congregation of Your Anglican Church in Freiburg, that with a gentle heart and the deepest respect, they may hear and receive Your holy word, may we serve You in solid faith and upright decency all the days of our lives.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

Comfort and reassure all who in this brief life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity. And we give into to Your loving care all those who have left this life pleading that you grant them refreshment, light and peace.

We give warm-hearted thanks for all those who carry Your grace as the light of this world; and we pray that, rejoicing in their fellowship and following their good examples, we may be partakers with them of thy heavenly kingdom.

And praise the Spirit, three in One:
O praise Him, O praise Him!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

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The Blessing

May God lead us from death to life,
From lies to truth,
From despair to hope,
From fear to trust
And the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
come upon you and remain with you always
Amen.

The Conclusion

Go in the peace of Christ
Thanks be to God.

Postlude