

Morning Prayer 30th September 2020

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Service with Iris Gertschar



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 us.
This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

🎵 ACF 78 Lead me Lord

1 Lead me, Lord, lead me in your righteousness,
make your way plain before my face.
For it is you, Lord, you, Lord only,
that makest me dwell in safety.

2 Teach me, Lord, teach me truly how to live,
that I may come to know you,
and in your presence serve you with gladness,
and sing songs of praise to your glory.

CCLI 5667897

Let us pray with words from Psalm 119

Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.

Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.

Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.

Turn my heart toward your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.

Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.

Fulfill your promise to your servant,
so that you may be feared.

Take away the disgrace I dread,
for your laws are good.

How I long for your precepts!

In your righteousness preserve my life.

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 13th Sunday after Trinity.

Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

The first reading is taken from Ezekiel 33:7-11

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

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, ‘You wicked person, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved.

“Son of man, say to the Israelites, ‘This is what you are saying: “Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?”’ Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?’

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The reading is taken from Matthew 18:15-20

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily about some Aspects of the “Ten Commandments”

Wow, Jesus gives us a great challenge in today’s gospel: “If your brother commits a sin, go and take the matter up with him. "Yeah, I knew it, Christians don't have to be nice all the time! Telling somebody straight that he is on the wrong path helps him to change and develop.”

But: Do I really know right from wrong?

And: How do I find my way to that humble, wise attitude which doesn’t sound like me accusing the “sinning person” in a patronising way. That doesn’t help anybody.

Thinking about these questions I decided to take a step back and to begin with the cleaning of **my** house. Maybe that helps to find a helpful attitude to support others dealing with their chores, too. I remembered a book I once read about the Ten Commandments and what better pathway to a clean inner house could there be than the way God himself gave to his people? The book's name is "Reading the Ten Commandments Anew - Towards a Land of Freedom" by Brother John of Taizé and I would like to present to you some (out of many) very different aspects that spoke to me when I re-read it now. I hope they will give you something to take home with you, too.

First aspect:

If you look at it strictly it is an already biased interpretation of the Hebrew original to speak of *commandments*. More precise would be to speak of

sayings or *statements* than to use a word that has the connotation of rule or even order that already puts a lot of people off. Consequently if you follow the Jewish tradition the first *Word* – as brother John speaks of the commandments – is not rule for life at all:

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” (Ex 20:2)

The Hebrews are supposed to tell their children:

... he brought us out from [Egypt] to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. (Dt 6:23.24)

So, "far from telling us what we need to do to earn God's good graces, the first WORD tells us simply who God is and what God has done for us. To use a later Christian distinction, it is not "law" but "gospel":

God loved first – we see it here and at so many places in the bible. And he does not deliver his people from slavery to leave them behind in the desert. He provides them with a way of life so that they might always prosper and be kept alive. God has freed you, and this is the way in which you can live in his freedom. By the way: There is only a very small step from here to “I am the way” (John 14:6).

And now with a big jump to the fifth word and the next aspect from this book I would like to present to you:

“Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. (Ex 20:12)

This has nothing to do with “Obey your parents!” spoken to a child. If you look at the language again, you can also say: “Consider your parents as important.” and the people addressed are the whole people comprising grown up men and women. There is a lot in

this word. Not only that we accept that we are not our own source and realise that everything we have and might have accomplished has its basis in the gifts we received and in the end comes from God. Also it is connected to the realisation that I am not what I make of myself, "but rather, "I am a unique person called to accept, develop and use the gifts I have received for the benefit of the human community to which I belong." That means I am called to honour the gifts that I have been given and become a responsible, caring adult myself.

Furthermore – and I think this is even more important today than it was in biblical times – we are called to value the old, those whose productive times might lie behind them, those who might not be able to earn their esteem any more or defend their dignity. How do we treat people who suffer from dementia? Like stupid children we can wield power over? I saw that so often while I was working in a care service. Do we really take the effort to support them within our society and communities without forcing our value system upon them? There are so many who are left behind at the mercy of institutions whose most important goal it is to generate profit.

And now – living in Corona times – there are so many who are not allowed to leave their care homes or live like prisoners in their own flats because the people they depend on say so. I see that we can't just ignore the risks of other people dying from infections. We need to be involved but at the same time there is the danger that many 'carers', led by their own fears, act beyond reason and fail to treat those cared as full equal people. It's the old people who pay the price, not them. How do we as a Christian community deal with these problems?

I would like to end with some thoughts about the special view that we as Christians have on the Ten Words, our inability to be the faithful disciples we want to be and to accept God's gifts that can help us to find our way to him.

Brother John writes: "Defining the ideal society does not bring it about. It is not enough to tell people, "If you want to be free and happy, you must live in this way," for this to happen."

And he shows that Pentecost that we deem a Christian feast originally is a Jewish holiday: The Feast of Weeks, Shavuoth. Shavuoth celebrates "what happened on the holy mountain: the covenant with God made concrete in the gift of the Torah. Pentecost is the feast of the covenant, the remembrance of the gift of the Torah, and thus in a real sense the day of the TEN WORDS."

For us as Christians Pentecost also marks the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the church.

Here, in the church, in this community, we are not on our own when it comes to doing the chores – regarding our inner life and our outer environment as well.

And: We may trust that the Holy Spirit working within us will make true, day by day, what he promised already long ago:

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors;

**you will be my people,
and I will be your God."**

(Ezk 36:26-28)

♪♪♪ Create in me a clean heart

Create in me a clean heart, oh God
And renew a right spirit within me
Create in me a clean heart, oh God
And renew a right spirit within me

Cast me not away from Thy presence, oh Lord
And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation
And renew a right spirit within me

Songwriter: Keith Green
cf. Psalm 51:10-12

Intercessions (by Solveyg)

“Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” says the Lord. So let’s pray in Jesus name:

In this Creationtide we pray for our world, you’ve entrusted us. Let us not forget about all the many dangers apart from Corona like climate change, hunger and wars, which are going to destroy your creation. Every day we hear and see politicians and people on the streets fighting and shouting to each other instead of listening with respect. We pray, that You, o Lord, will lead them back to the path of Your love and enable them and all of us to see, that it is much more important to take care of Your creation than treating the own opinion as the only truth.

Still struggling with Corona virus help us, o Lord, with Your faith, peace and wisdom. Let the voice of sanity be stronger than the noise of conspiracy and misuse of power. Help people, who are disclaiming or even doubting, the virus and necessity of keeping hygienic rules to change their perspective and to care about the other human being too.

For all suffering from sickness, either due to the corona virus or other disease, we ask you for healing and new life. For all facing economic or financial problems we ask you to strengthen them with your hope, make your light shine even brighter than all the spotlights of “false prophets”, feed the hungry satisfy the thirsty and give us confidence.

Lord, we pray for our church. Lead us in our time of interregnum. Let us faithfully listen to Your voice in finding our vision of ACF and working out the

necessary papers for finding our new minister. Bless our locums in guiding us spiritually with Your love.

We pray for all in need, who are sick, mentally or bodily, all who need a listening ear, calming words or just a compassionate smile. Let them feel, that they are rooted despite of social distancing and established in your love, give them healing and hope. Strengthen them, their family and friends, who are looking after them, with power, understanding and hopeful perseverance through your Spirit in their inner being.

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

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

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

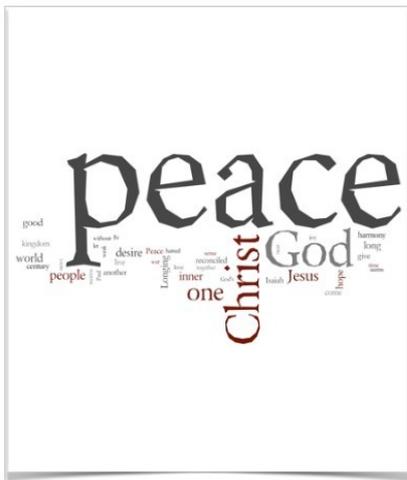
A sign of peace

God is love

And those who live in love live in God

And God lives in them.

We meet in the name of Christ and share his peace.



🎵 ACF 137 You shall cross the barren desert

You shall cross the barren desert

but you shall not die of thirst

you shall wander far in safety

though you do not know the way

You shall speak your words in foreign lands

and all will understand

You shall see the face of God and live

Antiphon:

Be not afraid
I go before you always
Come follow me
And I will give you rest

If you pass through raging waters
in the sea you shall not drown
If you walk amid the burning flames
you shall not be harmed
If you stand before the power of hell
and death is at your side
know that I am with you through it all

Blessed are you poor
for the kingdom shall be yours
Blessed are you that weep and mourn
for one day you shall laugh
And if wicked men insult and hate you
all because of me
blessed, blessed are you!

The Blessing



The Lord bless us and watch over us,
the Lord make his face shine upon us
and be gracious to us,
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace;
and the blessing
of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always.

Amen.

The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude