

Morning Prayer 6th June 2021

The First Sunday after Trinity

Morning Worship 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

Music before the service

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

♪ ACF 24 Come, now is the time to worship ♪

Come, now is the time to worship
Come, now is the time to give your heart
Come, just as you are to worship
Come, just as you are before your God
Come

One day ev'ry tongue will confess You are God
One day ev'ry knee will bow
Still the greatest treasure remains for those
Who gladly choose you now

We pray together with words from Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.

**Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.**

If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

**But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.**

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

**I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.**

Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

**He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.**

Glory be to the father, and to the son and to the Holy
Spirit,

**As it was, now and ever shall be, world without
end.**

Amen

Collect for the first Sunday after Trinity

O God,
the strength of all those who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of our mortal
nature

we can do no good thing without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in the keeping of your commandments
we may please you both in will and deed;
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 forever.

**The reading is taken from the Book of Genesis,
chapter 3.**

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

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

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

The reading is taken from Mark 3:20-35

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

Glory to you, O Lord

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin."

He said this because they were saying, "He has an impure spirit."

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

I suspect that in the last 20 years or so you have thought occasionally about the consequences of your lifestyle for your carbon footprint. You have taken part in exercises to reduce your footprint. You have been shocked what little things in daily life cost so much CO₂. You have felt ashamed about that juicy and delicious steak you ate last Thursday and the methane gas which the steer let into the atmosphere on the way towards your grill (charcoal of course with lots of glowing CO₂). But at the same time, you have realised how difficult it is to behave in a serious and responsible way. You laughed over the vegan relations whose Tofu Steaks were grown from soya grown in Brasil where the Amazon forests should have been. Ah, the inconsequence of it all!

But the shame and the guilt niggle away in your soul and depress your joy. You feel the weight of responsibility. You say to yourself: If only I could behave in a good and loving way, then society, the world, indeed the whole of creation could be saved. Oh we poor human beings – we do so love to put ourselves in the middle of our attention: if only I could do this and not do that,..... I feel so guilty....I am ashamed about my behaviour, I.... I.... I

The oil company BP some thirty years ago was concerned about its image as a company exploiting limited oil resources and making profit out of damaging if not destroying the climate. BP at the time didn't intend to change its business model. Instead, it poured a great deal of money in an advertising campaign into promoting the idea of the carbon footprint. By manipulating the idea of personal shame and guilt, BP deliberately tried to shift responsibility from its corporate shoulder onto the weak backs of individual people.

Which brings us into the garden of Eden. The business model of the serpent was to get Adam and Eve to eat

from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden, from the tree which God had forbidden them to eat. They ate the fruit and discovered their own personal responsibility for what they had done. They realised for the first time that they were naked, and they were ashamed of their nakedness. Nakedness is a metaphor not only for shame but also for guilt. In our first reading there then follows that classical dialog in the blame game of shifting responsibility away from me onto others.

The man starts with a double strategy. He tries to make both God and the woman responsible: you gave me this woman, and she gave me the fruit. How should I know what the consequence would be?

The woman tries to show no personal responsibility for her action – the serpent deceived me, so I ate more or less under false pretences, not knowing what I was doing.

There are various ways of reading this story.

Traditionally it is the story of the fall. Adam and Eve are no longer perfect but have become sinful. Humankind is as such from now on incapable of perfect goodness. These early chapters of the bible tell us of jealousy and the first murder. We can read about God wanting to punish all mankind with the flood. But there are also the first signs of a good, forgiving and loving God, who makes tunics of skins for Adam and Eve before driving them out of the Garden of Eden. It is the beginning of a narrative which leads on to Golgotha and Easter.

I have often worked with confirmation groups on this text. The groups were youngsters deep in the problems and delights of puberty. They were occupied with discovering themselves. Self-conscious and fully clothed yet at the same time feeling their own nakedness they have shown me a different way of reading this story. For them it is the story of children becoming adult, of breaking out of the narrow confines of family life where you are looked after by loving parents and have all you need, and moving on to full adult life where you know full well what is good and evil, and can take responsibility for your own life.

This reading reminds us that being a human, and what distinguishes us from being an animal or other part of the creation are our moral and ethical qualities. God talks with the man and the woman about their responsibility for they have done. He hears what they have to say. But God doesn't ask the serpent to explain him or herself. The serpent has no moral responsibility. The ethical questions about an earthquake or a pandemic are not about the shifting of tectonic structures in the crust of the earth or the existence of a virus but rather about the human reaction.

I started with the carbon footprint, but now together with the earthquake and the pandemic, we see very clearly that there are not only ethical questions about our own personal responsibility, but also ethical issues about the way in which society or industries take responsibility for their actions. It is unfortunately the case that over many hundreds of years the sin of the individual person, my responsibility for my deeds has been enshrined in theological and legal thinking at the cost of being blind to structural sin in society.

My confirmation classes were reading the story of the man and woman in Eden as a growing up and breaking out of the narrow confines of the garden. We can also read today's gospel in a similar way. Jesus here is breaking out of the narrow confines in which two groups want to hold him.

The first group are the teachers of the law, the rabbis, the theological experts who determine orthodoxy and who belongs. The second group are the family, who feel responsible for this young man. Neither his mother nor his brothers, nor even the teachers of the law are named in the text. They all remain somehow as two distant control groups. In a series of three little parables Jesus dismisses their desire to control him, their right to hold him as one of them. He is responsible neither to the teachers of the law nor to his family. He declares himself responsible neither to a system of teaching nor to a biological group which claim rights over him.

But, and this is very important, Jesus doesn't slide into the "I" trap of his complete individual responsibility. He replaces both the community of teaching and biological group with, in the words of Mark: he looked at those

seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

You could say that this is the birth of the Christian community, the church, a group defined not by what it believes, nor by biological relationship but by what the members do, God's will. Also note how Jesus changes the form of speech: where others had said, "here are your mother and brothers", Jesus says quite deliberately "my brother and sister and mother."

So how about our carbon footprint? It is a useful indicator for analysing my lifestyle and for my chance to change it. But I am not alone. The whole of society shares responsibility as a recent decision of the Verfassungsgericht has shown. The boundaries between individual and structural responsibility are moving. At the next deanery synod my dear colleague Christopher Jage-Bowler, priest in Berlin, will talk about the Anglican programme Eco-Church and the chance for the Anglican parishes to show responsibility for our community lifestyle. When in July we begin services in the Petruskirche again, it would be interesting to know whether the Petrusgemeinde is part of the evangelical "Grüne Gockel" programme or not.

What a comfort it is to know that we are sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers, grandchildren and much more in the family of Jesus, sharing with each other and encouraging each other and the whole community to do God's will.

Footnotes

I prepared the homily in the first half of the week. In the last two days I have read texts which have not had anything to do with carbon footprint. However they do continue and deepen my remarks about personal and institutional sin and responsibility.

1:

<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n10/clair-wills/architectures-of-containment>

The first text is from the London Review of Books from May. Claire Wills reviews the official report of a commission of the Irish government on the way in which single mothers were treated in the 20th century

and how many of the babies were either forcibly adopted or died due to poor care. The review is very disturbing not only because many of the institutions which are analysed were church institutions but also because of the questions raised by Claire Wills about guilt and responsibility of the following generations. You need to read the review until the “bitter” end to see her very good discussion of Hannah Arendt on these questions.

2: <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2021-06/brief-papst-franziskus-kardinal-marx-ruecktritt>

The second text is the letter from Cardinal Marx to the Pope asking to be released from his responsibility as Archbishop of Freising and München. He writes in a deeply felt way about structural sin of the Catholic Church and his own personal responsibility as individual in this situation to act in a credible way. I hope that what he writes about the “synodalen weg” will be heard

♪ ACF 29 Father God in heaven ♪

Father God in heaven,
Lord most high:
hear your children's prayer,
Lord most high:
hallowed be your name,
Lord most high
O Lord, hear our prayer.

May your kingdom come
here on earth;
may your will be done
here on earth,
as it is in heaven
so on earth
O Lord, hear our prayer.

Give us daily bread
day by day,
and forgive our sins
day by day,
as we too forgive

day by day
O Lord, hear our prayer.

Lead us in your way,
make us strong;
when temptations come
make us strong;
save us from all sin,
keep us strong
O Lord, hear our prayer.

All things come from you,
all are yours
kingdom, glory, power,
all are yours;
take our lives and gifts,
all are yours
O Lord, hear our prayer

CCLI Song # 642845
David Peacock | James Edward Seddon
© Words: 1982 James Seddon - The Jubilate Group | Music: David Peacock - The Jubilate
Group
CCLI Licence No. 546960

Intercessions (by Tini)

- *Brothers and sisters in need*
- *Church as a whole*

Today we will end each intercession with words from Psalm 130. When I say, “Lord hear my voice,” please answer with, “let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.”

I love the image of Adam and Eve walking with you in the garden of Eden-freely and without a care in the world. Quickly, however, they were filled with shame and led to hide from you. You, in your love and mercy, came into the garden and called for them, asking where they were, even though you knew along where they were hiding. You see each one of us. You see those especially who are isolated, who feel alone, or are truly neglected in some way – physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Lord, we bring you all these

people-those near to us, those in our home countries, in distant lands, or even our own neglect. May they sense you calling them and feel your merciful, welcoming arms around them.

Lord hear my voice,

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

The blame-shifting we see between Adam and Eve could easily mirror our everyday lives- a scene that occurs in politics, in schools, in the workplace, or even in our home. How often do we try to shift the blame for something from our own shoulders onto those of someone else instead of confessing it to you and asking for mercy. Lord, we bring you all the hurt, bitterness, disappointment, brokenness, and destruction that blame-shifting has caused in our community, in our church, in our workplace, our schools and even in our homes. Restore your peace. Help us to forgive those who have wronged us and ask for forgiveness from those whom we have wronged.

Lord hear my voice,

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

Today's Gospel mentions division and the effects of it on your people. Again, this is a topic that is so relevant for us today. The news is full of it – in Israel, in American and other national politics and in reference to Corona restrictions. Perhaps even our own lives are marred by it – division within families, in our jobs or amongst or friends, even within the church. Lord, we bring you every type of division and ask you to bind us together with your love and mercy. Help us all to see you in each other and bring us to unity in you.

Lord hear my voice,

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

Mark's Gospel also mentions how we are brothers and sisters in you when we do your will. We bring you our brothers and sisters who are in need. We especially pray for those who are sick, for Margaret, Brian, Bev, and those we mention now in our heart.



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, Father, Son and Holy
Spirit
come upon you and remain with you always.
Amen

Notices and other announcements

♪ ACF 96 O God you search me and you know me ♪

O', God, you search me, and you know me
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze
When I walk or lie down, you are before me
'Ever the maker and keeper of my days

You know my resting and my rising
You discern my purpose from afar
And with love everlasting, you besiege me
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord
You have known its meaning through and through
You are with me beyond my understanding
God of my present, my past and future, too

Although your Spirit is upon me
Still I search for shelter from your light
There is nowhere on Earth I can escape you
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

For you created me and shaped me
Gave me life within my mother's womb
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new