

Communion Service 22th August 2021

with Revd. Peter Widdess

The 13th Sunday of Pentecost



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

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

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

Song: ACF 23

Come, sing praises to the Lord above

1. Come, sing praises to the Lord above,
rock of our salvation, God of love;
with delight into God's presence move,
for the Lord our God is King!

*God is king above the mountains high,
the ocean deep, the land and sky;
mighty continents and islands lie
within the hollow of God's hand.*

3. Hear the story of God's people now,
 you with stubborn hearts who will not bow;
 learn what happened long ago and how
 God can show you who is king.

*God is king above the mountains high,
 the ocean deep, the land and sky;
 mighty continents and islands lie
 within the hollow of God's hand.*

CCLI Song # 647895
 © Words and Music: 1973 Michael Perry - The Jubilate Group
 CCLI Licence No. 546960

**Almighty God,
 to whom all hearts are open,
 all desires known,
 and from whom no secrets are hidden:
 cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
 by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
 that we may perfectly love you,
 and worthily magnify your holy name;
 through Christ our Lord.
 Amen.**

Hear the words of comfort our Saviour Christ says to all
 who truly turn to him:
 Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden,
 And I will give you rest.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Almighty God, our heavenly father,
 we have sinned against you,
 through our own fault,
 in thought, and word, and deed,
 and in what we have left undone.
 We are heartily sorry,
 and repent of all our sins.
 For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
 forgive us all that is past;

and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.

Amen

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is
afraid
and giving us those good things which we are not
worthy to ask
but through the merits and mediation
of 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.

Amen

The reading is taken from the 1. Book of Kings, chapter 8.

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God

Our hearts and our minds are open.

Then King Solomon summoned into his presence at
Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the
tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up
the ark of the Lord's covenant from Zion, the City of
David.

The priests then brought the ark of the Lord's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim.

When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven and said:

“Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

“Now Lord, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done.’ And now, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father come true.

“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, ‘My Name shall be there,’ so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear

from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

“As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name - for they will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm - when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.

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

Song: SoF 89 Faithful One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqK-UnsRTFI>

Faithful One, so unchanging,
 Ageless One, You're my rock of peace,
 Lord of all, I depend on You,
 I call out to You _____ again and again.
 I call out to You _____ again and again.

You are my rock in times of trouble.
 You lift me up when I fall down.
 All through the storm
 Your love is the anchor,
 my hope is in You alone.

CCLI Song # 465840
 Words and Music: Brian Doerksen © 1989 Mercy / Vineyard Publishing
 CCLI Licence No. 546960

**Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
 according to John.
 Glory to you, O Lord.**

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them Just as the living Father sent me and

I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

[John 6:56-69]

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Homily

One of the joys of being an Anglican is to have the lectionary, which leads us to read, hear and think about bible passages which perhaps we wouldn't otherwise

regard as our favourite texts. They can be comforting and strengthening, or strange and challenging. The reading from the 1. Book of Kings is such a passage. I invite you to come with me on a voyage of discovery through this text. It tells in abbreviated form the story of the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem through King Solomon. In following the events, prayers and thoughts of Solomon, we may be able to think about our relationship as Christians to the Jewish faith. There are at the moment bitter arguments about anti-Semitism not only in German society but also elsewhere: bitter because there are more denunciations than discussions. Accusations survive in internet regardless of clear argumentation for or against. So let us take time now to think clearly and clear the undergrowth.

We start in the desert before Mt Sinai. The people of Israel under the leadership of Moses have just gained their freedom from slavery in Egypt. Moses has been up the mountain which was covered in a great cloud, and has returned with two stone tablets on which the 10 Commandments are engraved. He gives orders for the construction of a wooden box for the stone tablets. Wherever the Israelites went afterwards, the wooden box went with them. Wherever Moses entered into the presence of God, he was enveloped in cloud and his face was lit up with light as a reflection of the glory of God. In time the wooden box became known as the ark of the covenant and was the central cult object of the Israelites.

When David became king and established Jerusalem as his capital, the ark of the covenant was still kept in a tent, ready as it were to move on to the next place. He wanted to build a temple where it could be housed in a more worthy way. On one occasion he danced a little too freely and scantily clothed before the ark. This was unworthy of God and so it was left to his son Solomon to build the temple.

This is where we take up the story today. Solomon has the ark brought into the inner sanctuary of the newly

built temple. The priests who do this have to leave the sanctuary as it becomes full of cloud.

Let us step back and think about this. We associate temples often with sacrifices, but they took place in front of the building in Jerusalem. In the temple, in the inner sanctuary, in the holiest of holies, was nothing other than a wooden box with two stone tablets. At the heart of our faith, whether as Jews or Christians, is the saving grace of God symbolised in the 10 commandments which begin with the reminder that God gives freedom: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other God to set against me." But God cannot be represented in a picture or statue. In the presence of God is thick fog or cloud, nothing which we can turn into representation. The ten commandments are guides for our relationship to God and each other, reminding us that whether as Jews or Christians our faith has less to do with facts as with relationships, sharing and community.

Solomon was not in the inner sanctuary. He was before the altar in the square in front of the temple building. He stands there and raises his arms in prayer. Kings don't stand, they sit on thrones. When Solomon stands here, he is showing himself and everybody else that God is far greater and more important than the great and wise King Solomon.

Solomon prays: "Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants". Note how the wooden box with the two stone tablets has moved on from becoming the ark of the covenant to being the covenant of love. A central form of language in both parts of the bible is that of the covenant, the promise of God to his people. As Solomon says in the following part of his prayer, God keeps his promises, he remains faithful to the covenant which he enters. Paul in his letter to the Romans thinks a lot about this. He makes it quite clear that the new covenant in Jesus does not replace or make invalid the first covenant with Abraham, the second with Moses or

whatever covenant came later. God keeps his promises to the Israelites just as much and no less than he keeps his promise to Christians in Jesus.

Solomon continues: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! Solomon has built the temple because of a political calculation, not only because of faith or piety. In a land where not only Israelites but also other peoples live, he is demonstrating power and authority, showing which is the leading, the ruling people in Israel. But in this part of his prayer, he realises his own weakness, how unimportant he is. Neither Solomon nor we have God in our pocket, to act at Solomon's or our own bidding. It saddens me to hear that a small group wishes to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Perhaps they should read more carefully what Solomon says here. Buildings are ephemeral. It does me good to remember how in the last thirty years I have worshipped in this community on and off in four different church buildings and who knows what the future may bring.

Our reading, the extract from the dedication of the temple, ends with a very important opening up of the idea of faith. Solomon in his prayer to God imagines the foreigner who comes to Jerusalem. The foreigner sees the temple and wants to enter into community with God and his people. Solomon asks God to do or allow what the foreigner wants and not to exclude him or her. At the time this was a revolutionary idea. A faith community was always restricted to one people in one place, in this case represented by the ark of the covenant in the sanctuary of the temple.

We could think about this as a model for our relationship to the Jewish faith. But we could also think about our own exclusivity. Are we able to say the same as Solomon in welcoming people of other faiths to share with us?

It was not included in the reading, but the dedication of the temple, we are told, ended in a festive meal, in

sharing, in community. In this sense we will celebrate the eucharist.

.....

For those of you who are not in the service in the church building but are reading the homily in written form, here are two little bits of evidence how the idea of the ark of the covenant has survived in two of the eldest churches worldwide:

The Coptic Church of Egypt. I was once celebrating an ecumenical service in the Luther's former monastery in Erfurt together with the Coptic bishop Damian of Germany. When it came to the gospel which he was to read, he told me press a gospel book on the top of his head while he was singing the gospel. For the Coptic Church it was a reminder how the ark was carried on the heads of the priests of the temple. In the same way the priests of the church stand under the gospel.

The Ethiopian orthodox Church: the priests carry the Tabor (the symbolic ark of the covenant) on their heads after the eucharist to show to the congregation outside the church building that the service has ended. See next story.

A final question is what happened to the Ark at the latest after the destruction of the temple at the time of the Babylonian captivity. There are various stories but one which has continued until the present day has to do with Solomon's love affair with the Queen of Sheba (possibly Yemen). Their child eventually became Emperor of Ethiopia. Until the death of the last emperor, Haile Selassie 1976, the emperor's official title was King of Kings (Negus negasti) and lion of Judah. So in this sense Haile Selassie was regarded as the last of the Davidic Dynasty. The story is this: The queen of Sheba took the Ark with her back to Yemen/Ethiopia. It has been kept there for the last 1500 years in a secret archive of the Ethiopian Orthodox church in Axum (also Aksum, the ancient

capital of the Ethiopia in northern Tigray). Where it was previous to this is unknown. This featured recently in the news as troops from Eritrea had taken control of Axum in the course of the fighting between Tigray and the rest of Ethiopia. The Eritrean troops destroyed large parts of historical Axum. David Phillipson, the professor of African Archaeology (rtr.) in Cambridge University (a fellow of Gonville and Caius College) has made detailed research into the church buildings in Axum and didn't find the Archive – which doesn't hinder Ethiopian orthodox from continuing to believe the story and being horrified that the Eritrean troops (probably Muslims) may have destroyed the Ark.

A further interesting connection which has been said to be connected to this collection of myths is the story of the lost tribe of Israel. Until about 1985 there was the group of ethiopian Jews known as the Falasha, mainly to be found between Debre Damos and the lake of Tana, said to be this lost tribe. I visited one of their villages in 1975 and was invited into the hut which was clearly meant to be the synagogue. I was given the Hebrew bible which I duly read out loud, until I noticed that apart from their excitement at my reading, they couldn't understand the Hebrew. I think it was about 1985 that the military dictator of Ethiopia, Mengistu Haile Mariam was desperate for new weapons. He offered the Israeli government the Falasha in return for weapons. The Israeli government flew the Falasha to Israel as "Jews" where they now form a lowest class group in Israeli society. I do not know what Mengistu Haile Mariam got as weapons from Israel.

The Creed

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from
heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin
Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and
the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and
glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic
Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness
of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession (by Klaus)

**Father, we do this in remembrance of him:
his body is the bread of life.**

At the end of supper, taking the cup of wine,
he gave you thanks, and said:
Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new
covenant,
which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins;
do this in remembrance of me.

**Father, we do this in remembrance of him:
his blood is shed for all.**

As we proclaim his death and celebrate his rising in
glory,
send your Holy Spirit that this bread and this wine
may be to us the body and blood of your dear Son.

**As we eat and drink these holy gifts
make us one in Christ, our risen Lord.**

With your whole Church throughout the world
we offer you this sacrifice of praise

and lift our voice to join the eternal song of heaven:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray
Our Father in heaven

We break this bread
to share in the body of Christ.
**Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your
table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his
body
and our souls washed through his most precious
blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in
us.
Amen.**

Song during the reception of communion

Feed us now

https://youtu.be/58U_jEkuyTY

1. Feed us now, Bread of life,
in this holy meal;
let us know your love anew:
we hunger for you.
Feed us now, Bread of life,
come and live within;
let your peace be ours today,
Lord Jesus, we pray.

2. Piece of bread, cup of wine:
Lord, this food is good:
love and mercy come to us
your promise we trust.
Piece of bread, cup of wine:
who can understand
how his mercy works in these?
Yet, Lord, we believe.

3. God is here, O so near,
 nearer than our thoughts.
 Stay with us where'er we go;
 Lord, help us to grow.
 God is here, O so near,
 in this heaven's meal.
 May we always feed on you ____
 on the bread that is true.

CCLI Song # 55360
 Music and Words: Robin Mann © 1976 Mann, Robin
 CCLI Licence No. 546960

**Almighty God,
 we thank you for feeding us
 with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
 Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
 to be a living sacrifice.
 Send us out
 in the power of your Spirit
 to live and work
 to your praise and glory.
 Amen.**

Song: ACF 45 God is love, let heav'n adore him
<https://youtu.be/m-tZq0zR8IE>

1. God is love, let heav'n adore Him;
 God is love, let earth rejoice;
 let creation sing before him,
 and exalt Him with one voice.
 God, who laid the earth's foundation,
 he who spread the heavens above,
 he who breathes through all creation
 God is love, eternal Love.

2. God is love, and gently enfolding
 all the world in one embrace,
 with unfailing grasp is holding
 every child of every race.
 And when human hearts are breaking
 under sorrow's iron rod,

then they find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.

3. God is love, and, though with blindness
sin afflicts our human hearts,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holding, guiding, grace imparts.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever
o'er the universe shall reign.

CCLI Song # 770092
Cyril Vincent Taylor | Timothy Rees
© Words: Public Domain | Music: 1942, Renewed 1970 Oxford University Press
CCLI Licence No. 546960



Christ, who has nourished us with himself the living
bread,
Make you one in praise and love,
And raise you up at the last day:
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Announcements

(see below)

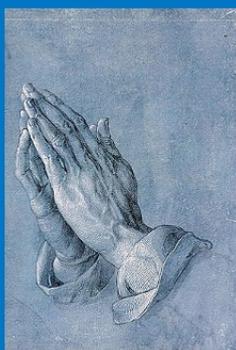
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Postlude

Look forward to our next service

with Daphne Norwood

29th August 2021
Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity
11:30 hrs, Zoom link see website
and in person in the church 😊



Evening Prayer on Wednesdays

Wednesday,
25th August 2021
9pm (for 20-30min)

(Please use the usual
Sunday service link.)

