

Service of the Word – 19th Sunday after Trinity



Gathering to worship God

Let us worship God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.
The Lord be with us all.

This is the day that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Lord God, we all belong to your kingdom and we bring our different lives and experiences to worship you online today, the true and living God. Amen.

Words of welcome by Rev Mark

Good morning from Rev Mark. As we gather today, the day of our annual meeting, I invite us all to think and reflect on our past year, and our hopes and dreams for the future. Where has God led us so far? What has been especially hard this year? Where might God lead us next? In our Bible reading later we will be thinking more about what it means to “give back to God the things that belong to God.” So let us come before God now in humility, recognising our faults, but also the amazing gifts and talents we have to offer, and lay them before God in his service.

Collect, the prayer of the week is said.

Faithful Lord,
whose steadfast love never ceases
and whose mercies never come to an end:
grant us the grace to trust you
and to receive the gifts of your love,
new every morning,
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Saying sorry to God

Confession

God our Father,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins.
For turning away from you,
and ignoring your will for our lives;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For behaving just as we wish,
without thinking of you;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us

For failing you by what we do
and think and say;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For living as if we were ashamed to belong to your Son;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

We say these words

Blessed is the Lord for he has heard the voice of our
prayer; therefore shall our hearts dance for joy
and in our song we will praise our God.

Hearing and responding to the Word of God

Alleluia, alleluia.

Open our hearts Lord to accept the words of your son.

Alleluia.

Acts 16:14

Gospel Matthew 22.15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality.

Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Talk – Rev Mark

Sermon

It is said that there are two things in life which are unavoidable – death and taxes. Although some people have tried to avoid paying taxes. Did you know that even the queen from 1992 voluntarily chose to pay income tax, and now her personal income is taxable?

I have with me a coin with the Queen's head on it. It is a reminder that as a UK citizen, I am subject to Her Majesty's government. My passport too reminds me that I am permitted to travel abroad by the permission of Her Majesty's government. I'm not entirely free to do as I choose. If I was a criminal, the government could stop my ability to travel, for instance. As a citizen I also pay my taxes – it is an obligation.

Perhaps we don't always think about our obligations and responsibilities as UK citizens. But recently, in the wake of Covid, we have been reminded of them. When the government sets down laws about who we can meet, where we can go, even who we are able to hug and have close contact with, we know that we aren't free just to do what we want.

Jesus' followers were Jews living under Roman rule. They wanted to test Jesus, to see if he would give them permission to not pay taxes to their unpopular overlords. The pharisees wanted to catch Jesus out. He had been preaching about an otherworldly kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. He claimed to be subject only to the will of "his father in heaven." Perhaps then they could trick him into saying he didn't need to listen to earthly rulers. Especially not rulers who were worshipping false Gods and didn't recognise that Israel was God's chosen nation.

But Jesus takes out a coin with Caesar's head on, and asks who is on the coin. Then he says, "Give to Caesar that which is Caesar's – and give to God that which is God's". So what did that mean for them, and what does it mean for us?

Well, "give to Caesar that which is Caesar's" is the easy part. It meant, to Jesus' hearers as well as to us, that we are not free to be anarchists. We are subject to our rulers, and that means paying taxes, and obeying laws, at least where they don't directly contravene God's laws and standards for us. So when our government says, pay tax, we pay. When our government says, only meet people in the same household to keep others safe, we think – does that contradict God's law to love our neighbour? And of course it doesn't, so we follow the law – and avoid the fine – even if we think ourselves we would make a different decision if we were prime minister.

But what does it mean to "give to God that which is God's"?

Today is our Annual General Meeting, which was postponed from April, and which all churches are expected to carry out by the end of October. A lot of the meeting is procedural – appointing churchwardens, appointing PCC members, and approving the annual report and accounts. But it is also a chance for us as a church to take stock of what has gone on in the last year (or last 18 months) and think about our roles and responsibilities to God for the future. It is our chance to decide what as individuals, and as a wider church, we owe to God.

Let's think about the coin again which Jesus showed the Pharisees. It had the head of Caesar on it. The message was this – coins and taxes belong to Caesar, the emperor. The coins are made in Caesar's image. But what about us? Well we are made in God's image. The Bible says all humans, male and female, are made in God's image and belong to him. We are, in this illustration, God's coins. The question then is what will we let God spend us on? If our purpose is to further the work of God, are we value for money?

There is of course a financial side to God's work. The church PCC are trustees of the money the congregation gives. It is up to use to use the money we are given, in whatever form, to further the work of the church. But equally as Christians, we are called to give of every part of our lives, to the work of God. Our money, our time, our abilities – all these belong to God. So rather than thinking, what part of our life are we able to give to God, and the rest is mine – we should be thinking, how does God want to use all of me? In my relationships, God wants me to be loving to others, thinking of their needs, enjoying happiness in the company of friends and family – so how can I make that happen? In my workplace, God wants me to work ethically, responsibly and honestly – so how can I do that better?

Ultimately, we shouldn't drive a wedge between our religious lives (the churchy bit) and the rest of our lives (home, the workplace, and our private life).

They are, as it were, two sides of the same coin. We don't parcel off time for me, and time for God, as separate things. We are all made in God's image. We belong to him, are loved and adopted as his children. He wants to be a part of all the parts of our lives, as every good, loving parent would.

So as we reflect today on God, our church, our future and our hopes and dreams, let us keep at the centre of it what God wants us to do with all of it. Let us pray fervently for his will to be known. Let us consider our responsibilities, both to the state, and to the church of God. And let us not try to avoid paying our taxes. **Amen.**

Affirmation of Faith

We believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

We believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

We believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

This is the faith of the Church.
We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession – Lisa Wakeman

Dear Lord, as you have given grace to your Church through the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray that you will grant that her members may show that grace by word and deed in their lives, we especially think of all Christians throughout the world, for the Church as your body on Earth and for your people in their lives of service,

therefore we give thanks to all those in the world who are generous to a fault giving their wisdom ,knowledge and love unconditionally in your name & we pray that those whom have lost their way will be filled with the Holy Spirit and will return to whichever path you have chosen for them, even if it's the path that they didn't expect to follow .

Lord, in your mercy - Hear our prayer

Let all who are concerned in the affairs of this world remember the honour due to you, we especially think of our Prime Minister, his cabinet and Members of Parliament both in government and on the opposition benches, we pray that they will get the balance right for the best health and economic outcome as the infection rate continues to rise. We also think of those in America that are preparing to vote for the next President of the United States of America.

Lord, in your mercy- Hear our prayer

Hear us so to live that we may be good examples to our neighbours and colleagues, especially thinking of those who live and work in our local area.

We give thanks to all those who work and give so much so freely, to enrich our lives unconditionally, including those who are never far away with words of kindness and acts of love, be with those who seek honest and fair dealings with those who do business in our community. We pray today for all those living in Blackthorn Road protect them in their daily lives.

Lord, in your mercy- Hear our prayer

Lord heal the minds and bodies that are sick mentally and physically, we especially think of all those who worry about their future and the future of their loved ones, bring them healing and wholeness especially those known to us and those whom have needed our prayers for some time, we also think of those who miss and mourn their loved ones bring them comfort with their memories of those whom have gone before us.

Lord, in your mercy - Hear our prayer

Lord we now give thanks for those whom have come to rest with you in paradise especially thinking of those who have died alone and vulnerable, we also think of those whom we miss and those whose anniversary of passing falls at this time may they rest in peace and rise in glory

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

We say the Lord's prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

An act of Spiritual Communion

You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place.

Reflect on the day and on your relationships.

- What good things have come from God today?

- Where have I fallen short?

- What might I do tomorrow?

Give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with you now.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'. Be with me today, as I offer myself to you. Hear my prayers for others and for myself, and keep me in your care. Amen.

O God, help me to trust you, help me to know that you are with me, help me to believe that nothing can separate me from your love revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord, in these days of mercy, make us quiet and prayerful; in these days of challenge, make us stronger in you; in these days of emptiness, take possession of us; in these days of waiting, open our hearts to the mystery of your cross.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn Rock of Ages

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy riven side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure;
cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.

Not the labours of my hands
can fulfil thy law's demands;
could my zeal no respite know,

could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone;
thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hands I bring,
simply to the cross I cling;
naked, come to thee for dress;
helpless, look to thee for grace;
tinted, to the fountain fly;
wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
when mine eyelids close in death,
when I soar through tracts unknown,
see thee on thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee.

Augustus M. Toplady, 1740-1778

Continue to serve God during this difficult time

Let us pray:
Holy and blessed God,
you have fed us with the body and blood of your Son
and filled us with your Holy Spirit:
may we honour you,
not only with our lips
but in lives dedicated to the service of Jesus Christ our
Lord. Amen

Let us bless the Lord:
Blessing, honour and glory be yours,
here and everywhere, now and for ever. Amen

Filled with the Spirit's power,
We go in the light and peace of Christ. Amen.

Exit Music by Martin Bates for Trinity 19

This is played in church on our wonderful refurbished organ. There are several pieces called "trumpet voluntary". The best-known trumpet voluntary is the Prince of Denmark's March by Jeremiah Clarke 1674-1707 written around 1700, just about the time when the church members must have been thinking of rebuilding St Mary & St Margaret. For years it was incorrectly attributed for years to the composer Henry Purcell. Martin

<https://www.facebook.com/100008868945288/posts/2457330357905905/>