

Twentieth Sunday after TRINITY 18th October 2026



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

The Greeting

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

HYMN

1 Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,
sing and praise your God and mine!
Great the Lord in love and wisdom,
might and majesty divine!
He who framed the starry heavens
knows and names them as they shine.

2 Praise the Lord, his people, praise him!
wounded souls his comfort know;
those who fear him find his mercies,
peace for pain and joy for woe;
humble hearts are high exalted,
human pride and power laid low.

3 Praise the Lord for times and seasons,
cloud and sunshine, wind and rain;
spring to melt the snows of winter
till the waters flow again;
grass upon the mountain pastures,
golden valleys thick with grain.

4 Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,
peace and plenty crown your days;
love his laws, declare his judgments,
walk in all his words and ways;
he the Lord and we his children —
praise the Lord, all people, praise!

Invitation to Confession

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

Lord God,
we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us
and restore us to the joy of your salvation,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God, the giver of life,
whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church:
by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ
and make us eager to do your will,
that we may share with the whole creation
the joys of eternal life;
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 for ever.

First reading from scripture Isaiah 45. 1-7

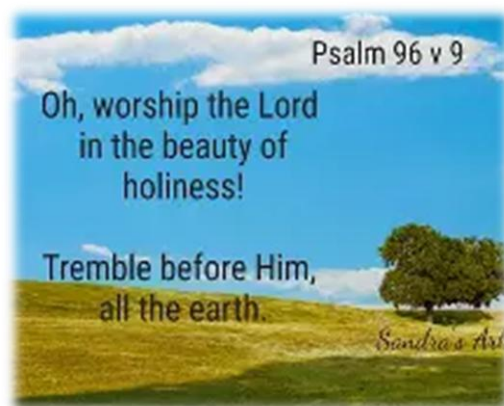
This is what the LORD says to his anointed,
to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of
to subdue nations before him
and to strip kings of their armour,
to open doors before him
so that gates will not be shut:
² I will go before you
and will level the mountains;
I will break down gates of bronze
and cut through bars of iron.
³ I will give you hidden treasures,
riches stored in secret places,
so that you may know that I am the LORD,
the God of Israel, who summons you by name.
⁴ For the sake of Jacob my servant,
of Israel my chosen,
I summon you by name
and bestow on you a title of honour,
though you do not acknowledge me.
⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other;
apart from me there is no God.
I will strengthen you,
though you have not acknowledged me,
⁶ so that from the rising of the sun
to the place of its setting
people may know there is none besides me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
⁷ I form the light and create darkness,
I bring prosperity and create disaster;
I, the LORD, do all these things.

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

Psalm 96

Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
² Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.

- 3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous deeds among all peoples.
- 4 For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
- 6 Splendour and majesty are before him;
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- 8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.
- 9 Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.
- 10 Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.
- 11 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound, and all that is in it.
- 12 Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.
- 13 Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes,
he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples in his faithfulness.



Second reading from scripture 1 Thessalonians 1. 1-10

Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace and peace to you.

2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

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

HYMN

1. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

2. We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load

3. I will hold the Christ light for you
in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

4. I will! weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.

5. When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

6. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

The Gospel
Matthew 22. 15-22

Alleluia, alleluia.
Welcome with meekness the implanted word
That has the power to save your souls Alleluia

The Holy Gospel is from the 22nd chapter of the Gospel of Matthew beginning at the 15th verse.
Glory to you O Lord

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. 16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"

18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? 19 Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, 20 and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

21 "Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

22 When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

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

Reflection

The last couple of weeks the gospel reading has been Jesus' parables against the religious leaders. They are the wicked tenants of the vineyard (Israel), and the obstinate refusers of the wedding invitation. In response they now present a barrage of hostile questioning. This attack brings together associates; they are divided amongst themselves in both doctrine and political strategy but united in their antipathy toward Jesus.

Their aim is to entrap him publicly in his words, expose his motives, discredit him before the crowd and put him into conflict with the occupying power of Rome. There is irony in that within days Jesus will have lost the support of the crowd and be crucified by the Romans. Without their realising it, they were creating the very fate Jesus chose when he set his face towards Jerusalem and death.

Without realising this they speak the very words that are true; “We know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are.” What they intend as insincere flattery, is the truth that they cannot recognise.

It is Jesus’ sincerity and knowledge of the way of God and his disregard for the opinion of others that enables his clear-sighted awareness of their ‘malice’.

The tax referred was the tax on harvests and personal property paid in Roman coinage bearing the image of Caesar and the inscription ‘Tiberius Caesar, Augustus Son of Divine Augustus, High Priest’. Such an idea would be unthinkable to a faithful Jew; for the ‘the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it’. Whichever way Jesus answered, they reasoned, they had him. Either he would be guilty of sedition denying the authority of the Emperor or denial of God’s authority.

What Jesus does is to permit the paying of taxes while at the same time assert the sovereignty of God. Whatever earthly or even divine power the Emperor may claim, ultimately any power is encompassed in God’s power. “Show me the money.” he says and then puts the question to them. “Whose image and inscription are on it?” They answer their own question. “Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and God what is God’s. Jesus’ reply shows that there is a both a response to the immediate situation and an overriding acknowledgement of God’s Sovereignty. They are amazed and silenced.

The same attitude to power is seen in the reading from Isaiah. One hundred fifty years before Cyrus lived and reigned over Persia (539—530 BC) his actions were prophesied. He is raised to power by God’s will. He did not know or acknowledge the God of the Jews, yet he is a chosen and anointed instrument of God’s purposes. Under his rule Jews were allowed to return to Israel after seventy years of captivity to rebuild the city and Temple in Jerusalem. This may have been part of a general policy on Cyrus’s part, to allow exiles of many faiths and places to return to their homelands. Cyrus most surely may not even have known that God had anointed him for this task. The ultimate focus in our reading is not on who Cyrus is, but who God is.

The story of Cyrus raises questions about the relationship between God and government. But the truth here is broader than that, a fact we should remember particularly in this moment as modern events in the Holy Land demand our attention and our prayers. We are focussed on the immediate and inevitably so. We may ask how and where this fits within the purposes of God.

The outworking of God’s purpose will, at times, be imperceptible, the true significance of things not visible. What we can take from this, with the perspective of history, is the power shifts that happen in human history, rulers and powers rise and fall. Amid this we must set events within the eternal purposes of God. Every generation will wrestle with their own experience. We should remember that whatever happens to the people of God, now and forever, here and there and everywhere, God is in control.

What should be our response to this? It is summed up in Paul’s prayer for the believers in Thessalonica. *“We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The huge affairs of the world can baffle and overwhelm us. St Augustine advised the Christians to ‘tend their own garden’, meaning just do what you can where you are. The believers in Thessalonica worked

inspired by their faith, their labour was prompted by love, and their endurance inspired by their hope in Christ. Where might that express itself in 'your garden' and mine, your space, your life at this time? Rather than being overwhelmed we are to endure, work and love in the sphere of life that is ours at this present. Not looking back or anxiously forward.

Like Cyrus, we may not even be aware that we are fulfilling the purposes of God in the small things or the great, but we will be, if that is our desire and intent.

Intercessions

Let us pray for the church and for the world and let us thank God for his goodness.

High and holy God,
robed in majesty,
Lord of heaven and earth,
bring justice, faith and salvation to all peoples.
Inspire those in leadership with wisdom
And those who hold great power that they may seek the common good.
Lord, hear us.

You chose us in Christ to be your people
and to be the temple of your Holy Spirit;
fill your Church with vision and hope.
By your Spirit, give us a new and fresh vision
of what it means to be followers of Jesus
To be salt and light in our world
that our lives may make a difference for good.
Lord, hear us.

Your Spirit enables us to cry, 'Abba! Father!',
affirms that we are fellow heirs with Christ
and pleads for us in our weakness;
we pray for all who are in need or distress.
Especially we pray for those countries where there is war,
fear and scarce healthcare
For whom these days are fraught with fear and mourning.
Lord, hear us.

In the baptism and birth of Jesus,
you have opened heaven to us
and enabled us to share in your glory:
the joy of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
from before the world was made.
We remember those we love but see no more
and give you thanks for their lives.
May your whole Church, living and departed,
come to a joyful resurrection in your city of light.
Lord, hear us.

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.
may all creation be held within His
merciful care and protection. Amen

Being made one by the power of the Spirit,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray.

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

Blessings and Ending

God, our light and our salvation:
illuminate our lives,
that we may see your goodness in the land of the living,
and looking on your beauty
may be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

HYMN

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of His Word;
In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name!
Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;
His holy Name, the Lord, the mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight;
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His Word!
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.
Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and forevermore!