

Trinity 19 Sunday 18th October

Opening Antiphon

As the deer pants for the water
So my soul longs after you

You alone are my heart's desire

And I long to worship you

I want you more than gold or silver
Only you can satisfy

You alone are the real joy giver

And the apple of my eye

You're my friend and you are my Father
Even though you are my King

I love you more than any other

So much more than anything

You alone are my strength, my shield
To you alone will my spirit yield

You alone are my hearts desire

And I long to worship you

Call to worship:

Let us worship God:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

The Lord be with you
And also with you.

Prayer of Preparation:

Lord, speak to us
that we may hear your word.
Move among us

that we may see your glory.

Receive our prayers

that we may learn to trust you. Amen.

Penitential Rite

God shows his love for us

in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Let us then show our love for him

by confessing our sins in penitence and faith *cf Romans 5.8*

Most merciful God,

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

we confess that we have sinned

in thought, word and deed.

We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

In your mercy

forgive what we have been,

help us to amend what we are,

and direct what we shall be;

that we may do justly,

love mercy,

and walk humbly with you, our God.

Amen.

May the God of love and power

forgive *you* and free *you* from *your* sins,

heal and strengthen *you* by his Spirit,

and raise *you* to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Gloria for today

Let us give glory to the Father, Through the Son
In the Holy Spirit,

**For God has made us his people,
And calls us to sing his praises.**

**Blessed are you, Lord God:
Blessed are you for ever.
Holy is your name:
Blessed are you for ever.
Great is your mercy for your people:
Blessed are you for ever. Amen!**

Collect

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**

1st Reading: 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.
Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' Faith

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.**

Response:

**Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.
Your bondage is freedom, your service is song,
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.**

**Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
rich truth that surpasses our knowledge to find.**

**What eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word.**

**Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart:
your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
your presence to cheer me, whatever betide.**

**Lord of all being, I give you my all.
If e'er I disown you, I stumble and fall,
but, sworn in glad service your word to obey,
I walk in your freedom to the end of the way.**

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, Alleluia.

Your words are Spirit Lord and they are life

You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia *Jn 6:63:68*

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

Matthew 22.15-22. New International Version (NIV)

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

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.**

Sermon - Prepared and preached for us by Keith Callard, Reader at St Mary's Meppershall

A friend reminded me that 40 years ago we met as fresher's starting university – a lifetime ago. Frankie was in the charts singing, "when two tribes go to war" – The song reflected the futility of the cold war or indeed any conflict which saw groups polarised onto opposing sides.

The song was in my mind as I pondered today's Gospel reading from Matthew. We find Jesus, now in Jerusalem, coming into opposition with groups of opponents – different tribes, if you like!

The Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Herodians all attempt to sow conflict and disunity. Goading Jesus to say something that would set him against the Jewish authorities – hoping his response would bring retribution from the Roman authorities.

The Herodian's join forces with the Pharisees – two groups that hardly saw eye to eye with each other but were prepared to act together against Jesus. Their question is specific "is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor?"

If Jesus responds "Yes", he will incur the displeasure of Jews. Saying "no" to paying taxes sets Jesus on a collision course

with the authorities – seen as a political agitator stirring unrest in Palestine.

Yes or no? Either answer by Jesus would anger one group/tribe in occupied Palestine. Jesus recognises the malice that lies behind their question and recognises the trap set for him.

Jesus' answer fails to provide the ammunition his enemies expect. At the same time, Jesus lays down clear expectations about God's Kingdom.

Jesus asks his inquisitors "show me the coin used for the tax." They brought him a denarius. The coin's value roughly the amount required for each year's tax. In my mind's eye Jesus holds the coin, runs it through his fingers, turning it over. Finally, he answers their question with another "whose head is this? (it was of course the emperors) Give therefore to the Emperor the things that are the emperors, and to God the things that are God's"

Jesus was refusing to add fuel to the fires of tribalism, which were making Palestine a hotbed of unrest. Jesus's answer lifts the whole scenario above the hatred, fear and tribalism, which was tearing the Palestine apart.

Jesus was not fermenting opposition against the authorities, not raising a banner of rebellion against Caesar. However, he was firmly, quietly reframing their question. God is placed front and centre in his response – "Give to God the things which are God's" What matters most, Jesus explains is our relationship with God; how much we are prepared to open ourselves to Him; how freely our hands work for him in caring for the sick, oppressed, and lonely.

'How open is your heart to God?' – That is the question which Jesus directs at his accusers. As we read in verse 22 "When

they heard this, they were amazed, left him and went away.” Jesus had not answered as they wanted nor expected.

Jesus was not ducking the argument; not opting for an easy answer. His answer based on non-violence but deeply challenging. It requires us to reflect: how much do we open our hearts to God?

The theologian – Walter Wink gives other examples of Jesus responding this way to those who question him. With each answer, Jesus seeks to avoid tribal division His responses stand firmly on the bedrock of God’s word and love.

Earlier in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus tells his followers “if someone forces you to go one mile – go two with him” Wink has framed this in the context of Roman soldiers, who in occupied Palestine could order someone to carry their equipment a whole mile. Like the rule about taxation, this rule was also from Caesar. Similarly Jesus does not advising breaking the law, but instead suggests going a second mile, carrying the soldiers pack. This was not a response which demonstrated weakness. It was illegal for a soldier to allow a second mile of assistance. Suddenly the oppressed person carrying the pack holds the upper hand. The oppressor has to back down and refuse to allow the person to walk the second mile with him. As Wink suggests... “The rules are Caesar’s, but how one responds to the rules – that is God’s and Caesar has no power over that”

Responding to Caesar’s tax demand is one thing but how you respond to God is something altogether more significant and important.

I wonder how this resonates today? Tribalism is still part of our society. You have to be for something. Brexit, Vaccination/anti vaccination, Trump or Biden. Our society is

increasingly polarised and tribal. – Pick sides, stick to them- anyone who disagrees is wrong!

Our reading today makes clear: Jesus understands and laments the tribalism which exists across the world. Perhaps, more than ever before as Church, as Christians we are being called to put God at the centre of these issues, to see them through His prism of love and then respond to that world by being purveyors of His hope and love.

Reference: Walter Wink. Jesus and nonviolence: A third way (Fortress Press)

Response.

**Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my light, Jesus
Jesus, be the centre
Be my hope, be my song, Jesus
Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live, Jesus
Jesus, be my vision
Be my path, be my guide
Jesus.**

*Written by: Michael Frye
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Our Declaration of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God - using the words of the Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

Intercessions: Prepared for us by Gillian Marshall Davies

We are currently living in a time of uncertainty and worry, but we must hold our Lord close, trusting in Him and His love.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, we pray for the Church locally and in the wider world. Help us to give generously of our time and talents so that we may contribute to our Church Communities. We pray for those who minister in your holy name.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Loving God, we thank you for the endless love and faith you have in us. We pray that we too can be so completely and faithfully committed to you Lord and graciously receive the gifts of your love. In turn sharing and spreading your wonderful gift.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Creator God, we pray especially at this time for the world leaders and advisers who are tasked with managing the current situations, but most of all the coronavirus pandemic. We pray that the people of the world unite and work together to help bring the situation under control.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

God of Mercy, we bring before you all those who are sick and suffering, physically or mentally. We pray for them to feel your presence so that they can lean on your strength. We pray for Doctors, nurses, care assistants and all those who care for the sick, that they may continue to help healing and caring.

We pause to pray for those who have requested prayer or are known to us personally in need of prayer

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

God of Compassion, we bring before you those whose earthly life has ended. We pray for the families and friends who grieve the loss of a loved one. We hold them in our hearts, knowing that you, Lord, hold them in yours.

We pause to pray and remember anyone known to us personally who has passed

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Faithful God, you have shown us so many times in so many ways your love for us. Sometimes it takes a while for the message to sink in, yet you never leave us. We give thanks for your steadfast love and may we live by your example and go into the world this week knowing that you are with us every step of the way.

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

Let's pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**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 forever. Amen.**

Notices and Birthdays

The BLESSING and SENDING

**God of power,
may the boldness of your Spirit
transform us,
may the gentleness of your Spirit
lead us,
may the gifts of your Spirit equip us
to serve and worship you
now and always. Amen.**

And the blessing.....

Go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory. **Amen**

Final acclamation:

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,

Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal

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"Give to God what is God's."



Paying Taxes to Caesar

Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Matthew 22:21

Based on Matthew 22:15-22 (NIV)



U Q J P F L K C Z Q T A X E S
Y N W N L O V Q P J H N J Z D
Z A H R H A P C K B W K S E K
D P K E F T N I L Q E O Z H G
A H R P A R T S N P S A R A C
D A Y L Q A E K I I M A F D N
D R Y I A P A C N A O N A Y S
W I P E B O C A T S U N A L Z
F S S D L N H E E U U W V D V
Z E I C S G E S G O L E N B E
F E W W I L R A R S Z B T G L
U S T N B P T R I U Y G B I O
V F L Y H G L I T Z U O F V G
K T R U T H O E Y P U T K E H
V M V K Q X K D S O Z A D K G

GOD

CAESAR

WAY

PHARISEES

WORDS

TAXES

PLANS

TEACHER

DISCIPLES

AMAZED

GIVE

INTEGRITY

OPINION

REPLIED

TRAP

TRUTH