

Sunday 14 July 2024
Morning Worship for
The Seventh Sunday of Trinity
Led by Michaela McNeill, ALM
<https://zoom.us/j/82311473640>



Welcome

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you
and also with you.

Introductory Sentences

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.
Let us recognise his presence with us.
God in Christ has revealed his glory.

Come, let us worship.

From the rising of the sun to its setting
the Lord's name is greatly to be praised.

Give him praise, you servants of the Lord.

O praise the name of the Lord!

Hymn – God is Love?

- 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.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
he who spread the heav'ns above,
he who breathes through all creation,
he is Love, eternal Love.

- 2 God is Love: and he enfoldeth
all the world in one embrace;
with unfailing grasp he holdeth

every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that self-same aching
deep within the heart of God.

3 God is Love, and though with blindness
sin afflicts the souls of all,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holds and guides them even then.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love, so Love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

Timothy Rees (1874-1939) (CCLI 770092, One License 113749)

Prayer of Penitence

Our Lord Jesus Christ said
'The first commandment is this:
"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

'The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself."
There is no other commandment greater than these.
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

Amen. Lord have mercy.

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'
So let us turn away from sin and turn to the Lord, confessing our sins in
penitence and faith.

In a dark and disfigured world we have not held out the light of life:
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

In a hungry and despairing world we have failed to share our bread:
Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

In a cold and loveless world we have kept the love of God to ourselves:
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May God, who loved the world so much
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour,
forgive us our sins, and make us holy to serve him in the world, through
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings by Ann Griffiths

Amos 7:7-15

This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand . And the LORD said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb-line.' Then the Lord said,

'See, I am setting a plumb-line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass them by;
the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.'

Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, 'Amos has conspired against you in the very centre of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said,

"Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land."

And Amaziah said to Amos, 'O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.'

Then Amos answered Amaziah, 'I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

Mark 6:14-29

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, 'John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him.' But others said, 'It is Elijah.' And others said, 'It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.' But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.' And he solemnly swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.' She went out and said to her mother, 'What should I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the baptizer.' Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, 'I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.' The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Reflection by Rev Priscilla Slusar

A couple of years' ago my husband and I attended a family funeral in Bolton, Lancashire. We travelled to Bolton on the evening before the funeral and stayed at a Travelodge. As we were having breakfast the next morning in the local Starbucks café two women approached me. They decided to chat to me because I was wearing my "dog collar". One of them said "We thought you were a minister when you walked in because you are carrying a Bible". I had to put them right. "I'm afraid it's not the Bible; it's a thriller about a rather gruesome murder!"

Looking at today's gospel reading there's not much difference between the thriller I was reading and the Bible. The story of the beheading of John the Baptist has got all the elements of a thriller or a sensational news story. There's sex, drunkenness, power struggle and violence.

Consider the key characters:

- Herod – full of his own importance, wanting to impress people with his authority. The truth was that he had little authority and no kingdom. He was the puppet ruler under the power of the occupying force, the Romans.
- Herodias – his wife. A spiteful and manipulative woman who nursed a grudge against John the Baptist. Herod had left his legal wife and had married Herodias, his brother's wife, which was against the Jewish law. She resented the criticism from John and was seeking revenge.
- Herod's step-daughter, who performed an erotic dance in front of a group of drunken men at Herod's birthday party. She was under the influence of her mother.
- John the Baptist – respected by the Jewish people as a great prophet. Even Herod recognised him as a "righteous and holy" man.

Herod has put John in prison, but we are not told why. Mark's gospel says that Herod wanted to protect him and that he liked to listen to him, even though he was perplexed by what he was saying. It seems as if John's preaching is getting through to Herod – albeit slowly.

It is easy to imagine that Herod makes his promise of a gift to his stepdaughter in a wave of drunken arrogance, showing off in front of his guests. But then he feels that he cannot lose face in front of his guests and so his rash promise results in John's execution.

There is a stark contrast between John and Herod in this story:

- They are both seeking a kingdom – but John is hoping to build God's kingdom here on earth for others while Herod is attempting to build a kingdom for himself based on power and wealth.
- John speaks openly and honestly, he “tells it how it is”, whether it is preaching about God, calling people to repent, or criticising Herod's private life. John retains his integrity throughout this story whereas Herod fails to stick to his principle of protecting John because of a drunken boast.
- John shows courage in his life and death, Herod displays weakness and lack of judgement.

This story is not a text that I would select for a sermon given a choice. The word “gospel” means good news, but it is hard to see any good news in this brutal killing. In fact, it's a sad reminder of some of the horrors in the world today – events that cannot in any way be billed as good news.

So – why does Mark recount this story in his gospel?

He is drawing a parallel between John and Jesus. John is the forerunner of Jesus in many ways. Here his martyrdom anticipates the death that Jesus will face. Herod's role in John's death is repeated in Pilate's role in Jesus' death. Herod recognises John as a righteous and holy man; Pilate seems confident of Jesus' innocence. Both Herod and Pilate yield to pressure. John's disciples collect his body for burial just as Jesus' disciples will do. Herod is afraid that John has risen from the dead, just as Jesus did.

The message for the followers of John, the early Christians and for us as modern-day disciples is that God's mission will go on in spite of opposition to it. God's plan of salvation is stronger than the earthly powers that work against it. Amen

Affirmation of Faith

**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 again 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 by Michaela McNeill

The response to the words Lord, in your mercy is **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray to God, who gives us everlasting treasures of his love. We pray for the church worldwide, and for our Archbishops, Justin and Stephen. In our diocese we pray for Dagmar, our Bishop and for the process to appoint a new Bishop of Ely. We pray for the parishes of Comberton and Toft, the community they serve and for all in the Lordsbridge Team as we aim to find a new Team Rector. Keep your church free from all that would harm her witness. Grant that all Christian people, being risen with Christ, may grow in holiness. Lord in your Mercy, **Hear our Prayer**

Break through the greed and complacency that are damaging the lives of many. Where there is strife for material possession, bring generosity and concern for the needs of others. We continue to pray for the peace of the world, bringing before you the people of Ukraine and the Middle East, and all places of conflict and political unrest. Give the spirit of humility to a world where many are seeking the chief positions and for power over others. Bring peace among nations, and harmony between races and faiths.

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

Lord we pray for those for whom life is not easy: for those weighed down by ill health, asking you to bring them wholeness of body, mind and spirit; for those weighed down by worry, asking you to give them wisdom, peace and reassurance; for those weighed down by fear, asking you for their freedom, release and liberation; for those weighed down by sadness, asking you to give them comfort, strength and joy.

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

For ourselves Lord, be the life we live and the love we give for Jesus' sake.

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

The Collect for The Seventh Sunday of Trinity

Lord of all power and might,
the author of all good things:
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
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. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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.**

Hymn – Be Thou My Vision

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee Lord;
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.
- 3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.
- 4 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart;
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, c 8th century
translated by Mary Byrne (1880-1931)
versified by, Eleanor Hull (1860-1935)

Notices

Closing Words

Christ the Son of God perfect in us the image of his glory
and gladden our hearts with the good news of his kingdom;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.

Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen