

**Sunday 25th October –
Morning Worship for
The Last Sunday After Trinity**

Led by Sue Nelms, LLM

<https://zoom.us/j/82311473640>

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM
OF CHURCHES



Gathering Prayer

We stand before the throne of God
with countless crowds
from every nation and race, tribe and language.

**Blessing and glory and wisdom,
thanksgiving and honour, power and might
be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.**

cf Revelation 7.9,12

Opening Words

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.

Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:
let us sing to God with thankful hearts.

Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

cf Colossians 3.16,17

Hymn - Thy hand, O God, has guided

1 Thy hand, O God, has guided
thy flock, from age to age;
the wondrous tale is written,
full clear, on every page;
our fathers owned thy goodness,
and we their deeds record;
and both of this bear witness;
one church, one faith, one Lord.

2 Thy heralds brought glad tidings
to greatest as to least;

they bade them rise, and hasten
to share the great King's feast;
and this was all their teaching,
in every deed and word,
to all alike proclaiming
one church, one faith, one Lord.

3 Through many a day of darkness,
through many a scene of strife,
the faithful few fought bravely,
to guard the nation's life.
Their gospel of redemption,
sin pardoned, man restored,
was all in this enfolded:
one church, one faith, one Lord.

4 Thy mercy will not fail us,
nor leave thy work undone;
with thy right hand to help us,
the victory shall be won;
And then, by men and angels,
thy name shall be adored,
and this shall be their anthem:
one church, one faith, one Lord.

Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821-1891) (Public Domain)

Saying Sorry

St Paul says

‘Be imitators of God;
love as Christ loved;
do not grieve the Holy Spirit;
put away all anger and bitterness,
all slander and malice.’
So let us confess our sins to God,
who forgives us in Christ.

cf Ephesians 4.30 – 5.1

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 us and free us from your sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Readings read by Dona McCullagh

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

34 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, ² all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³ the Negeb, and the Plain - that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees - as far as Zoar. ⁴ The Lord said to him, 'This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, "I will give it to your descendants"; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.' ⁵ Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command. ⁶ He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. ⁷ Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigour had not abated. ⁸ The Israelites wept

for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

⁹ Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses.

¹⁰ Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. ¹¹ He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, ¹² and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

For the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Matthew 22:34-end

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord.

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’

³⁷ He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: “‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’ ⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴² ‘What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?’ They said to him, ‘The son of David.’ ⁴³ He said to them, ‘How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴ “The Lord said to my Lord,

‘Sit at my right hand,

‘Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet’”)?

⁴⁵ If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?’ ⁴⁶ No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection by Rev Clare Coates

Prayer: Lord God, help us to be deeply rooted in you so that we may continue to grow in faith throughout our lives. Guide us and strengthen us through your Holy Spirit and help us to keep encouraging and supporting one another. Amen.

I love trees! So, when I heard about a book from a friend, called *Our Oaken Bones*, I had to get my own copy. It is written by a former soldier who has been suffering from severe PTSD after several tours in Afghanistan. The book charts the story of Merlin and his wife Lizzie as they leave London and return to his childhood home, a Cornish Hill Farm (called Cabilla) in the heart of an ancient woodland. Their story is both heartbreaking and inspiring. They discover their woods are in fact one of the UK's last remaining pockets of British rainforest. The book chronicles how through fighting to preserve and conserve and develop their ancient rainforest and their farm, they too find healing and peace. In a particularly poignant passage, Merlin talks of a “votive tree” in the middle of the forest. It is an ancient Beech which stands out in the forest comprising mainly oaks and other older, straighter Celtic oaks. He says: “this giant is like an old friend. This is a place Lizzie and I have often come to when we needed clarity of thought or to offer up a prayer of thanks or sadness. It was a natural place for us to come with our little box of ash.” (p55) It's a very sad moment for them as they said a final farewell - at this special place - to a baby they had lost. He adds: “our rainforests are places of healing... We hid amongst its depths and slowly began to heal.” (p56).

There is something deeply spiritual about trees. They are a reminder to us of the awesome nature of God's creation. I personally feel a deep spiritual connection to God whilst outdoors, especially when walking in woods. My favourite tree is an oak at Ickworth, at the top end of the estate. It has been there for decades and will be there for centuries to come. There is something timeless and peaceful and inspiring about trees. It is incredible to think that something so beautiful and so big could come from something so small and seemingly insignificant. In our Gospel reading today, we hear about a different kind of seed and tree: the

mustard seed, which grows into something much bigger. The story Jesus tells illustrates the growth of the Kingdom of God. It starts from small beginnings and grows into something vast and inclusive where everyone can find welcome. The fact that the birds can find shelter in the tree suggests God's Kingdom is open to all. Just like trees, faith takes time to grow and mature and to bear fruit. Just like the mustard seed, we all have great potential to grow and to be our best selves. Jesus's message today is really encouraging because it offers us hope that even the smallest amount of faith, when nurtured, can lead to significant spiritual and personal growth. Our faith can help us on our life's journey, which we all know can often be challenging and demanding. The parable of the mustard seed helps us to understand how important and how powerful our faith in Jesus is. And reminds us Jesus's power is at work in us, giving us strength and courage to live our lives to the best of our abilities. This parable also reminds us of the feeling of wonder that comes from witnessing something grow from small beginnings into something amazing. How incredible that God can take a tiny seed of faith and grow it into a mighty tree.

Back in May, I shared with you my vision of us working together in God's field. Each of us has an equally important part to play in our Lordsbridge Team family. We are all different but co-dependent. Working together, the overall effect is harmonious and with a common purpose. As you may remember, I said that Stephen and I love walking our dogs at the Everdens and up into Wimpole. At the very start of this walk there is a beautiful field and as you look to your right you will see what appears to be a tree. But as you continue walking, you realise it is not one single tree, but many together. Whilst reading *Our Oaken Bones* I learnt Merlin himself had been inspired by Guy Shrubsole's *The Lost Rainforests of Britain* and wanting to find out more about British rainforests for myself, I read it too! I was particularly struck by Guy's description of the incredible ecosystems found within our rainforests. As he started his journey around the UK in Devon, he said: "I was astonished to spot a tree growing in another tree, a holly sapling sprouted from a moss encrusted Beech tree." (p7) How on earth did it get up there, he wondered? Presumably a bird had dropped a seed onto the moss, where

it took root and grew. The phenomenon is known as “air trees” and he gives another example which I found especially striking: “a hawthorne, a rowan and an oak sapling, all growing together in the arms of a mighty ash tree. [An] aerial ecosystem, a kind of miniature kingdom in the clouds, sustained by the extreme dampness of the local climate.” (p7)

As I read that – it immediately reminded me of our parable today and how this image is exactly what God’s kingdom is like. The tree is like God's mighty hands, the mother tree: holding us, strengthening, nurturing, protecting, sheltering and sustaining us, helping us to grow together in our own unique ways. My hope and prayer for us as a Team is this: that we will be like a mighty tree. With deep roots in God, strengthened and empowered by prayer, worship and reflection, both individually and together as a Team and our parishes. With a strong trunk and branches empowered by working together and being together, encouraging and supporting each other. The branches symbolise the incredible diversity of things going on across the Team as we serve our villages. And with flourishing and vibrant leaves, sustained by our faith, hope and joy in Jesus. The leaves symbolise the myriad ways we individually express our faith in Jesus and how we serve him in our communities.

Our parable today - though very short! - is very memorable and gives us lots to reflect on, not least because I think we have all marvelled at something which started out small and grew surprisingly big. But it's also memorable because Jesus’s message gives us hope that small beginnings can be transformed into something beautiful by the power of God at work in us. The Welsh poet RS Thomas once reflected:

that every tree was a cross
from which love came down,
to work with us in the soil
until the tree blossomed. (from ‘Wisdom’)

This perfectly encapsulates that it is Jesus who is at work in us. From the moment a tiny seed of faith is planted in our hearts, which grows and matures and accompanies us over our whole life's journey. Like air trees,

sometimes faith grows in the most unexpected and unpredictable places, and in the most surprising ways. But it's that very unpredictability and diversity that makes God's Kingdom so vibrant.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession prepared by John Crang

All our needs are God's concern. Let us pray to him now.

Father, make us a listening Church, welcoming to the hesitant, encouraging to all, attentive to their needs and understanding of our differences.

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

Father, we pray for the world in need: for those suffering in the destruction caused by war, for those facing poverty and famine, for those caught up in natural disasters, for those finding themselves in dark places where no light seems to shine; in the power of your spirit bring the light of your love.

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

Father, we pray for our community, our family, neighbours and friends, sharing one another's sorrows and joys, giving and receiving one another's help.

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

Father, we remember those who have asked for our prayers and those whose concerns come to our mind this morning. In the mystery of your spirit take their needs and provide for them, take their pain and heal them, take their suffering and comfort them.

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

Father, as we call to mind those we love who have died, grant them the welcome of your love at their homecoming to your eternal kingdom.

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

Thank you, God our Father, for knowing our needs even before we know of them ourselves.

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

Amen.

Collect

Blessed Lord,

who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:

help us so to hear them,

to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them

that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,

we may embrace and for ever hold fast

the hope of everlasting life,

which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,

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 forever.
Amen.**

Hymn – We have a gospel to proclaim

- 1 We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.
- 2 Tell of his birth at Bethlehem
not in a royal house or hall
but in a stable dark and dim,
the word made flesh, a light for all.
- 3 Tell of his death at Calvary,
hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross;
for all he loved his life he gave.
- 4 Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.

- 5 Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified.
He sends his spirit on his church
to live for him, the lamb who died.
- 6 Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

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Notices

Conclusion

Heavenly Father,
we share together the blessing of your presence.
Give us in this life knowledge of your truth,
and in the world to come life everlasting;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And may 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