

Sunday 23rd August – Morning Worship for Trinity 12

Led by Sue Nelms, LLM

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

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM
OF CHURCHES



Opening Words

Welcome in the name of Christ.

God's grace, mercy and peace be with you
and also with you.

Gathering Prayer

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 – Firmly I believe and truly

- 1 Firmly I believe and truly
God is Three, and God is One;
and I next acknowledge duly
manhood taken by the Son.
- 2 And I trust and hope most fully
in that manhood crucified;
and each thought and deed unruly
do to death, as he has died.
- 3 Simply to his grace and wholly
light and life and strength belong,
and I love supremely, solely,
him the holy, him the strong.

4 And I hold in veneration,
for the love of him alone,
Holy Church as his creation,
and her teachings as his own.

5 Adoration ay be given,
with and through the angelic host,
to the God of earth and heaven,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) (Public Domain)

Saying Sorry

What God has prepared for those who love him,
he has revealed to us through the Spirit;
for the Spirit searches everything.

Therefore, let us in penitence open our hearts to the Lord,
who has prepared good things for those who love him.

cf I Corinthians 2.9

We have not always worshipped God, our creator.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have not always followed Christ, our Saviour.
Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We have not always trusted in the Spirit, our guide.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The Lord enrich us with his grace,
and nourish us with his blessing;
the Lord defend us in trouble and keep us from all evil;
the Lord accept our prayers,
and absolve us from our offences,
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Amen.

Readings by Ann Griffiths

Isaiah 51:1-6

51 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness
and who seek the Lord:
Look to the rock from which you were cut
and to the quarry from which you were hewn;
2 look to Abraham, your father,
and to Sarah, who gave you birth.
When I called him he was only one man,
and I blessed him and made him many.
3 The Lord will surely comfort Zion
and will look with compassion on all her ruins;
he will make her deserts like Eden,
her wastelands like the garden of the Lord.
Joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the sound of singing.
4 “Listen to me, my people;
hear me, my nation:
Instruction will go out from me;
my justice will become a light to the nations.
5 My righteousness draws near speedily,
my salvation is on the way,
and my arm will bring justice to the nations.
The islands will look to me
and wait in hope for my arm.
6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
look at the earth beneath;
the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment
and its inhabitants die like flies.
But my salvation will last forever,
my righteousness will never fail.

For the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Matthew 16:13-20

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' ¹⁴ And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' ¹⁵ He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection by Rev Chris Westgarth

There are questions that sound ordinary but reach deep into who we are, such as 'Where do you live?' 'What do you do?' 'Where are you from?' And then there is the deeper question: 'Where do you belong?' - We all need somewhere to belong. We need people who know us, notice when we are absent, remember our stories, and sit with us when life is difficult.. Because belonging is about more than having an address. It is about knowing that our presence matters.

And that is what connects these two readings today.

Isaiah speaks to people who have lost sight of who they are. Jesus asks his disciples a question about his identity. And underneath both readings is a question for us: Who are you - and whose are you? Remember where you came from...

Isaiah says: 'Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.' It is a wonderful image. A piece of stone cut from a quarry still carries the mark of where it came from. And Isaiah says to God's people: Remember your foundations. Remember where you came from. 'Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you.' In

other words: Your story did not begin with you. You belong to something bigger than yourself. You belong to a people. You belong to a covenant. You belong to the God who called Abraham, made promises to Sarah, and remained faithful through generations.

And perhaps that is something we need to hear too. Because it is very easy to reduce faith to 'me and God.' My prayers. My beliefs. My relationship with God. But the Bible gives us a bigger vision. Christian faith is personal, but it is never private. God does not simply call isolated individuals. God calls a people.

We are brought into a story that began long before us and, God willing, will continue long after us. We receive something we did not create. We inherit faith from those who prayed before us, taught us, encouraged us, and sometimes simply kept going when life was hard. We stand on ground that others prepared for us. So Isaiah says: 'Remember the rock from which you were hewn'. Remember where you came from. Remember whose story you are part of. Then Jesus asks his question...And then we come to Matthew. Jesus asks his disciples: 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' The disciples give him the answers they have heard. John the Baptist. Elijah. Jeremiah. One of the prophets. But then Jesus makes the question personal: 'But who do you say that I am?'

And Peter answers: 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' He sees something others have not yet fully seen. Jesus is not simply another prophet. He is the Messiah. The Son of the living God. And then Jesus says something remarkable. He gives Peter a place in what he is doing: 'I will build my church.' Notice those words. 'I will build my church.' Jesus does not say, 'Peter, you have understood me, so now go off on your own and have a private relationship with God.' Peter's confession leads him into a community. Jesus is building a people, a church, a family, a community of people who may be very different from one another but who share one thing above all: They belong to Christ. And that changes what belonging means. Belonging is wonderful - and demanding...We sometimes think belonging simply means feeling comfortable. 'I feel at home here.' 'I know everyone.' 'I know how things work.' And there is something deeply good about that. A church should be a place where people can feel at home.

But Christian belonging is also demanding...Because if I belong, I have responsibilities. If I belong to a family, I cannot simply ignore the rest of the family. If I belong to a community, I have to care about what happens to other people. And if I belong to Christ, I am called to love people I might not naturally choose. That is where belonging becomes uncomfortable. Because churches can easily become places where people who already belong gather together. We know the hymns. We know the prayers. We know the routines. We know how things are done. And there is comfort in that. And Zoom church is no different. Even online, we can become a comfortable circle of familiar faces, while someone quietly joins, watches, and leaves without ever feeling known or heard.

But there is also a danger. We can become so comfortable belonging that we forget to help anyone else belong. We can become very good at maintaining a community and forget that Jesus is still building one. So perhaps the question for us today is not simply: 'Do I belong here?' There is another question: 'Who is longing to belong here?' Who is missing? Who comes through our doors and isn't noticed? Who sits alone? Who is new? Who doesn't know the words? Who doesn't understand our traditions? Who doesn't quite fit the pattern we are used to? Who has been hurt by church before? Who carries doubts but is afraid to speak? Who is younger than us? Who is older than us? Who is simply waiting for somebody to say: 'It's good to see you. I'm glad you're here.' Because belonging often begins with something very small. A smile. Learning someone's name. Sitting beside them. Introducing them to someone else. Making room. Asking, 'How are you?' - and actually waiting for the answer. Sometimes we imagine that ministry has to be something impressive. But sometimes the most important ministry we offer is simply helping another person discover: 'My presence matters here.' The church is not ours...And perhaps that is why Jesus' words are so important: 'I will build my church.' My church. Jesus does not say: 'You will build your church.' He says: 'I will build my church.' That should humble us — and it should encourage us. The church belongs to Christ. Not to the people who have been here longest. Not to the people who give the most. Not to the people who know the most. Not to the people who have the loudest voices. Not even to the people who think they know exactly how everything ought to be

done. It belongs to Jesus. And if it belongs to Jesus, then we need to keep asking: Who does Jesus want to find a place here?

That question can change the way we see people. Instead of asking, 'Why are they different from us?' We might ask, 'What might God be doing by bringing them among us?' Instead of asking, 'Why don't they know how we do things?' We might ask, 'How can we help them feel at home?' Instead of asking, 'Do they fit in?' We might ask: 'How can we make room?'

Remember the rock - and make room... Isaiah tells God's people to remember the rock from which they were hewn. There is something reassuring about that. We have roots. We have a history. We have received something precious. But what we have received is not something to lock away. We receive faith so that we can pass it on. We receive welcome so that we can welcome others. We receive grace so that we can offer grace. We discover that we belong so that we can help someone else discover that they belong too. And perhaps this is where the two readings meet. Isaiah says: Remember where you came from. Jesus says: Remember whose you are. And then our lives ask: Who can we help belong? So here is the challenge This week, notice somebody... Not the person you always talk to. Notice someone on the edge. Someone who is new. Someone who is quiet. Someone who seems to be carrying something. Someone who perhaps feels that nobody would notice if they weren't here. And take the first step. Say hello. Learn their name. Sit with them. Invite them for coffee. Make an introduction. It may seem like a very small thing. But never underestimate what a small act of welcome can mean to someone who has been wondering whether there is a place for them. Because the church Jesus is building is not simply a place where we feel that we belong. It is a people through whom others can discover that they belong to Christ. And perhaps that is the deepest challenge of all. The question is not simply:

'Is there a place for me here?' But: 'Have I made room for someone else?' Peter says: 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus does not leave Peter standing alone. He gives him a people. And that is good news for us.

We belong to Christ. And therefore, we belong to one another. Belonging isn't just about having a place at the table. It is also about helping set the table for others.

Let us trust the Christ who builds his church. And let us keep making room. Because somewhere this week, someone may be wondering: 'Is there a place for me?' And perhaps God is calling us to be the people who answer: 'Yes. Come in. There is room for you here.'

Amen

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 Rick Nelms

My Lord and my God, thank you for the beauty of creation and making us a part of it, able to appreciate the lavish abundance of the universe. Thank you that you are one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thank you that through Jesus Christ, the light of the world, and his death and resurrection, all people of all nations can be reconciled with you, and for the love, compassion, justice and peace which your Holy Spirit brings. Thank you for your infinite patience, that even when we turn away from you, prodigal

people, you are always there, faithfully waiting, arms outstretched in love and forgiveness.

Loving God, in faith we give thanks to you, **in your mercy hear us.**

My Lord and my God we pray for our divided and often confused and confusing Church. We pray for recognition that what holds us together as Christians, belief in Jesus as the Son of God, fully God and fully human, and our personal saviour; is so much greater than those trivial misunderstandings and traditions which divide us into cliques and denominations. We pray for the leaders of the Churches, for our Archbishops, Bishops, Team Rector Clare, all ministers within the Lordsbridge team, Churchwardens, Church Councils and congregations. We pray for those who contribute to the running of churches yet do not attend them, and for those who have faith but cannot find a church within which to worship. We pray for protection for all those persecuted for their faith.

Loving God, in faith we pray to you, **in your mercy hear us.**

My Lord and my God we pray for our troubled world and its leaders. Please grant leaders of the nations wisdom in making decisions which actually improve the lives of everyone. We pray for all those caught up in wars in the Middle East and Eastern Europe as well as all those conflicts ignored by the world's media. We pray for all seafarers and mariners trying to deliver much needed food and resources across the world who are frightened, killed and injured by people they do not even know; oil and toxins leaking from smashed ships killing innocent organisms and destroying fragile ecosystems. We pray for people and other living things impacted by disasters whether of natural or human origin. Please protect all those people for whom life is so terrible that they walk across continents in search of a better future – may they be greeted with open arms of love and compassion.

Loving God, in faith we pray to you, **in your mercy hear us.**

My Lord and my God we pray for our communities wherever they may be, for our family, friends and neighbours including those we find it hard to like. We pray for all those who provide everything we need, through informal or organised volunteering and employment. Please keep safe everyone

involved in health and social care, education, food production and distribution, manufacture, repair, reuse and recycling of resources, provision of clean water and disposal of waste and everything else needed for our communities to function. We pray for all those who live in communities where guns are part of normal life, criminality is widespread and democracy and freedom from slavery a distant dream, and help us never to take our relatively safe and comfortable lives for granted. Loving God, in faith we pray to you, **in your mercy hear us.**

My Lord and my God we pray for all people who suffer and struggle. Please bring comfort and peace to those who are sick, in body, mind or spirit. Please bring help for people who are lonely, grieving, frail, dying, trapped in poverty, slavery, apartheid, or loveless and abusive relationships, held captive justifiably or unjustly and all those subjected to racism, misogyny or other bigotry and discrimination. In silence we bring those on our hearts to you...

Loving God, in faith we pray to you, **in your mercy hear us.**

My Lord and my God we pray for all those who have died in the faith, thinking at this time of our dear friend Anne and all of her family and friends. In your Holy Spirit, we are made one people, as we work, love and pray together in the hardships and toil of our lives here on Earth so we give thanks and praise for your all embracing love and compassion and the faith and prayers of all other Christians, the saints who live and have lived, witnessing to your power and mercy, in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen**

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

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid
and giving us those good things
which we are not worthy to ask

but through the merits and mediation
of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **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 – Lord, thy church on earth is seeking

- 1 Lord, thy church on earth is seeking
thy renewal from above;
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accent of thy love.
We would heed thy great commission:
'Go now into every place-
preach, baptise, fulfil my mission,
serve with love and share my grace.
- 2 Freedom give to those in bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin.
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within:
light for darkness; joy for sorrow;
love for hatred; peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow
as the Spirit gives new life.

3 In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely dwell,
let us show the Saviour's pity,
let us of his mercy tell.
To all lands and peoples bringing
all the richness of thy word,
till the world, thy praises singing,
hails thee Christ, Redeemer, Lord.

Hugh Sherlock (1905-1998) © Successor to Hugh Sherlock/
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Notices

Conclusion

Blessing and honour and thanksgiving and praise,
more than we can utter, more than we can conceive,
be to you, most holy and glorious Trinity,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
by all angels, all people, all creatures,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

The blessing of the one true God,
to whom be all love and all glory for time and for eternity,
come down upon us and remain with us always.

Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen

In the name of Christ. Amen