

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 4th September 2022

12th Sunday after Trinity

The service has been prepared by the Reverend Sue Linford and is available on 01308 293062

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

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 Christlight for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

Hymn: Brother, sister, let me serve you

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.

Richard Gillard (born 1953) © 1977 Scripture in Song/Maranatha! Music/Adm. by Song Solutions CopyCare, CCLI Licence 2370586

We measure people's commitment to a cause by the sacrifices they are prepared to make for it. To be true disciples of Christ we, too, are called to make sacrifices. Let us ask God's forgiveness for the way we allow fear and selfishness to weaken our commitment to him.

You asked for our hands that you might use them for your purpose.

We gave them for a moment then withdrew them for the work was hard.

You asked for our mouths to speak out against injustice.

We gave you a whisper that we might not be accused.

You asked for our eyes to see the pain of poverty.

We closed them for we did not want to see.

You asked for our lives that you might work through us.

We gave a small part that we might not get too involved.

Lord, forgive our efforts to serve you only when it is convenient for us to do so, only in those places where it is safe to do so, and only with those who make it easy to do so.

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect (special prayer for today)

God of constant mercy, who sent your Son to save us: remind us of your goodness, increase your grace within us, that our thankfulness may grow, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Cost of Discipleship

Now large crowds were travelling with him; and he turned and said to them, 'Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.'

REFLECTION

In ancient societies, as in many today, one's family was central to one's identity and livelihood; and those with no family were among the weakest and most vulnerable in society, as they had no-one to support them. So Jesus' statement must have come as a total shock to his listeners. And to us, too, these words sound incredibly harsh.

Jesus was on his way to his death; he had turned his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and all that that meant. He was accompanied by large crowds, full of enthusiasm; 'going with the flow'; the pack instinct; joining in with others without giving any serious thought to what they were doing. Jesus realised that they did not understand what lay ahead for him; that the grace that he had to give was going to cost him his life. Caught up in the excitement of the moment, these fair-weather friends had no real idea of Jesus' impending suffering, the agony of the cross, his sense of being forsaken by God. They gave no thought to what it meant to be a true disciple of Christ. Their hearts were not providing the good soil of the parable of the sower. Their lives were too cluttered with other things to bear the fruits of the Kingdom. "Lord, we will follow you, just so long as we can carry on as we are now, and so long as things stay as they are."

And then, wham! Jesus makes his shocking statement. It must have stopped everyone in their tracks. What a way to get their attention. And ours. What can it mean, when Jesus is about love - neighbours even enemies, and his words from the cross to his mother show love for family? Should we be taking the word 'hate' any more *literally* than Jesus' claim in John's Gospel to be 'the gate'? 'Hate' needs to be taken seriously, but not literally; it is hyperbole. What he is saying is that compared with love for Christ, all other loves are lesser loves; loyalty to him supercedes all other loyalties, and commitment to him is paramount. In this context, 'hate' becomes 'love less'. And we can see examples of this sort of commitment in the world around us, let alone among those whom we think of as 'saints'. For example, the successful hospital consultant who loved her job working with children, and gave that up, taking a massive cut in salary to go and work with children who have cancer, because that is really where her heart is. She has found her home, and she has faced the financial, physical and emotional implications of the cost of grace.

Christ comes first. As a child, Jesus learned the text from Deuteronomy in the Hebrew Scriptures, 'You shall love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and

with **all** your might.’ Later, citing this as the first commandment, he added ‘with **all** your mind.’

And here we see the importance of ‘**all**’. How much easier it would be if following Jesus meant doing so part-time, being mostly loyal, being half-hearted in our commitment, switching it on and off as we feel.

Jesus knew what he was asking, and how hard it can be. Sometimes, we talk about ‘tough love’, and how hard it can be for both parties – like the parents who stopped baling out their alcoholic daughter both financially, and by looking after her children when she was drunk because they realised that all they were doing was supporting and encouraging her in her addiction, rather than helping her. Or the prisoner who ‘turned his son in’ to save him from continuing down the same path that he himself had taken. Love for Christ and his teachings can apparently set family members against one another.

But a higher love prevails, and we realise that when we truly love our family, we love them through and in our love for Christ. Through Christ we seek truth, and justice and he demands compassion, integrity, and whole-hearted commitment. Lying and cheating, cutting corners and making dubious compromises so as to protect our loved ones does them no favours, however hard we may find it to do otherwise. Whole-hearted commitment to Christ is a costly and serious business, and we need to continually pray for the courage, the strength and the faith to be true disciples of Jesus. Amen

INTERCESSIONS

In the knowledge that God is here present with us, let us pray.

As the body constantly breathes, may the Church, the body of Christ, constantly pray, breathing God’s life into all its members and activities

The Lord is our helper; **we shall not be afraid.**

As a new week begins in our world, may wrong priorities be challenged and adjusted, may our societies reflect God’s concern for righteousness, true justice and responsive love, and may all leaders grow in humility, attentive to the needs of those they serve.

The Lord is our helper; **we shall not be afraid.**

As we call to mind our loved ones, all who depend on us, and those on whom we depend, all with whom we laugh and cry, work, play and worship, cleanse and refresh our relationships and give us greater love, understanding and forgiveness.

The Lord is our helper; **we shall not be afraid.**

We think of those who are imprisoned, whether locked in cells, trapped in depression or confined by illness or disability; we remember those in hospital and those in care homes, those unable to reach or afford medical help, and those awaiting treatment; and we pray for them all. The Lord is our helper; **we shall not be afraid.**

We remember the dying, and those who love them; we remember those whose earthly life has come to an end, and we commend them all to God’s unfailing love.

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

Amen.

Prayers by Susan Sayers

Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen**

Hymn O Jesus I have promised

1 O Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end;
be thou for ever near me,
my Master and my Friend:
I shall not fear the battle
if thou art by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if thou wilt be my guide.

3 O Jesus, thou hast promised
to all who follow thee,
that where thou art in glory
there shall thy servant be;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end:
O give me grace to follow,
my Master and my Friend.

2 O let me hear thee speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control;
O speak, and make me listen,
thou guardian of my soul.

4 O let me see thy foot-marks,
and in them plant mine own;
my hope to follow duly
is in thy strength alone:
O guide me, call me, draw me,
uphold me to the end;
and then in heaven receive me,
my Saviour and my Friend.

John Ernest Bode (1816-1874) Public Domain

We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

We pray God's blessing on each other

May the Lord bless you with a strong faith, a joyful spirit, and a loving heart.
May you experience the Lord's unfailing help in all your adversities.
And may God, who has called us to eternal glory through Christ, strengthen and support you
with his grace. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be
with you and those whom you love and pray for, this day and for evermore. **Amen**