

For personal meditation before the service begins



Almighty God,
we praise you for the many blessings
you have given to those who worship
you in this house of prayer: and we pray
that all who seek you in this place may
find you, and, being filled with the Holy
Spirit, may become a living temple
acceptable to you; 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.

Prelude

Preparation

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.

Amen.

Song

Praise, my soul, the king of heaven;
To his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like thee his praise should sing?
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour
To our fathers in distress;
Praise him, still the same for ever,
Slow to chide and swift to bless.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Glorious in His faithfulness.

Father-like, he tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame he knows;
In his hands he gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.

Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Widely as his mercy flows.

CCLI Song # 2430766
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We pray with words from **Psalm 86**:

Teach me your way, Lord,
that I may rely on your faithfulness;
give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear your name.
I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify your name for ever.
For great is your love towards me;
you have delivered me from the depths,
from the realm of the dead.
You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.
Turn to me and have mercy on me;
show your strength on behalf of your servant;
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.

First Reading

The first reading is from the Letter of Paul to the Romans 8, 18-25

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading

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

Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared.

The owner's servants came to him and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?"

"An enemy did this," he replied.

The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?"

"No," he answered, "because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.'

He answered, 'The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily – Revd. Peter Widdess



Today is hard.

A much loved minister and priest, Christopher, has left to take up a new post.

A vacancy has begun.

Today is a time for bereavement, this strange mixture of sorrow and anger, helplessness and the desire to be positively active, for some frustration and for others joy, for some recriminations but for others satisfaction.

It is always the others who are made to carry responsibility or blame. We know exactly why the servants in the parable we have just heard want to pull out the weeds. We didn't sow this seed, they say. But the owner refuses to let them destroy the weeds. Just wait for the harvest, he says. In the meantime the field is not the ideal picture of good farming.

There is still something to come.

Paul in his letter to the Romans gives us a similar picture of something still to come, of the creation which is still to be completed. We, indeed the whole of creation, are in the process of being born. There is also here the idea of something still to come. We are not yet what we shall be, what we should be, what we can be.

As I read these readings for the service today, I thought of a person whom I met many years ago, Ki Kangsen. He was the Moderator, the bishop, of the Presbyterian Church of Camerun. On the way back from an Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, he stopped over in Basel and spoke with some of his friends. We asked how he had experienced the assembly. His answer: "I have seen the future, the future is wonderful, the future is Jesus Christ."

Paul says much the same when he writes of our becoming the children of God. "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

Bereavement is about the hard work to find a way out of sorrow towards a future for which we hope, and this needs patience.

Ki Kangsen was well aware of this. His vision of a wonderful future in Jesus is not naïve or simplistic, rather it is the hard work of faith to make a way through present sorrow and uncertainty to the maturity of belief.

Ki Kangsen became the Fon, the king or chief of his people in Northwest Camerun. He had to resign as Moderator of the church because he had inherited, according to tradition of his people, the many wives of his predecessor and had become as such polygamist. Asked how he would cope with this problem, he answered: I am responsible for the women but I have changed their status by putting them in retirement.

Many of his people died a few years later when gas came out of a lake. Ki Kangsen died in a road accident.

This story of Ki Kangsen is like the field in the parable full of grain and weeds at the same time.

And in many ways we are also in this field, still growing, not yet ready for the harvest. Are we the good seed or are we the weeds?

Or are we both at the same time?

There is no perfect community or parish. Our becoming the children of God is an ongoing process which is far from complete. It means coming to understand and see our own weakness, the weeds in our own deeds. It means letting the good seed in us grow so strongly that the weeds in us wither.

We live in hope grounded in the love of God in Jesus Christ, or, in the words of Ki Kangsen: the future is wonderful, the future is Jesus Christ.

Song:

I, the Lord of sea and sky,

I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

The Collect – the prayer for today
Merciful God,
You have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding:
pour into our hearts such love toward you
that we, loving you in all things and above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
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.

Intercessions

Lord God we come before you in prayer in times of uncertainty and transition.

Lord, we pray for all of us and the many people who are currently affected by the immediate or indirect consequences of COVID19. So many people have died, lost loved ones, are worrying, are isolated, depressed, empty of hope, Lord let us hope for what we don't have patiently because we have you

Live our lives courageously.

Not for ever in green pastures
Do we ask our way to be;
But the steep and rugged pathway
May we tread rejoicingly.

Not for ever by still waters
Would we idly rest and stay:
But would smite the living fountains
From the rocks along our way.

Be our strength in hours of weakness,
In our wanderings be our guide;
Through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.

CCLI Song # 1596000
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The Blessing



The peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen

Go in the peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

Postlude