

Berrow with Pendock, Eldersfield, Birtsmorton and Hollybush



A Service for the 13th. Sunday after Trinity

Welcome-do have a candle, glass of juice/wine and cracker/piece of bread ready

The Lord be with you
and also with you

OPENING PRAYER

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE AND ABSOLUTION

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins, in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
 we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
 in thought and word and deed,
 through negligence, through weakness,
 through our own deliberate fault.
 We are truly sorry, and repent of all our sins.
 For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us
 all that is past;
 and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of
 your name. Amen.**

Almighty God,
 who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,
 forgive you your sins,
 open your eyes to God's truth,
 strengthen you to do God's will
 and give you the joy of his kingdom,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE COLLECT

Almighty God,
 you search us and know us:
 may we rely on you in strength
 and rest on you in weakness, now and in all our days;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

READING: Romans 13.8 to end

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

(At home, please read Matthew 18:15 - 20)

REFLECTION

This week, Paul talks once more about the power of love, but frames it in a different way. He tells us that we have an obligation to love one another, an ongoing debt which we should constantly be trying to repay by showing love to our neighbours. That love is the fulfilment of the law. Which is a strange way of putting it isn't it?

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We don't generally think of love and law in the same sentence, let alone think of love as the fulfilment of the law. Laws are about making sure everyone behaves themselves, surely? Separating the sheep from the goats, protecting people and property, ensuring that the majority of law abiding folk can go about their business safe in the knowledge that the bad guys, the law breakers, will be caught and punished. Where does love come into that?

Let's take a step back. Laws are broken when love fails. Adultery, murder, theft, covetousness – all those commandments quoted by Paul – all occur when we put our own needs and desires above those of others, when we fail to care that we are causing hurt and pain to others, when we hate and hurt our neighbours rather than loving them. Love is the fulfilment of the law because if we are able to love our neighbours anywhere near as much as we love ourselves, we won't want to do them harm, and so we won't be tempted to break the law. It's when we dehumanise other people, treat them as second-class citizens, somehow less worthy of the love and respect we want for ourselves that the problems in society can really begin. So how do we avoid falling into that very prevalent way of thinking and being?

Paul's solution is to "clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ" because Jesus showed love and respect to **all** people, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, young or old, sick or healthy, male or female. He didn't discriminate or exclude, he just loved. If we really are followers of Jesus, we have to try to do the same, however hard that may be. The love which Paul talks about isn't romantic love, it's not love for those we care about, our friends and families, it's agape love, a love that doesn't depend on feelings or emotions, a love that you really have to work at and make a positive decision to show, whether you feel like it or not, whether your neighbour appreciates it or not. It's a sacrificial love, a love which puts the needs of others ahead of our own needs, a love which gives but doesn't count the cost, doesn't expect thanks or reward, a love which keeps on giving even when that's the very last thing we feel like doing. Because that's the kind of love Jesus showed for all of us, even on the cross. He carried on loving, he carried on giving, sacrificing himself so that we could live life in all its fullness.

It's a choice we all have to make and go on making. Night or day, darkness or light, selfish, self-centred love or sacrificial, self-giving love.

Paul urges the Church at Rome to wake up and smell the coffee because he believed that the end of the world was imminent, that Jesus would return very soon to make all things whole again. We know that didn't happen, but the phrase "And do this, understanding the present time." has huge resonance for us today. The world needs people to love their neighbours, help their neighbours, support their neighbours now more than ever to enable us all to get through the days, weeks and months which lie ahead. This global pandemic isn't going anywhere, and if it's taught us anything it's that we are sociable animals, we need other people in our lives, we can't exist in selfish isolation – well, we can exist, but we can't thrive and we certainly can't enjoy life in all its fullness.

Let's work on how we can encourage and inspire each other to reach out as a Church and as individuals to show love and care to our neighbours wherever we find them. Too often the Church gives the impression of being interested only in the enforcement of the law, of telling people what they can't do, of being judgemental and excluding. In the coming months, let's focus on how we can fulfil the law by making the positive choice to show love to our neighbours, to be an inclusive part of our communities, in whatever ways we can. Let's put aside the deeds of darkness, put on the armour of light, and go forward to do battle with whatever this winter has in store, safe in the knowledge that we follow a God who **is** love. Let us clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, the living embodiment of sacrificial love and let him inspire and support us as we strive to be more like him, loving our neighbours as ourselves and living as people of light, even when we're going through the darkest of times. For we know that the light of Christ will shine through the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it. **Amen**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

As followers of Jesus Christ, let us pray to our loving Father.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

Please ask for any additional prayers

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

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour taught us.

**Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done ;
in 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.**

THE PEACE

We are all one in Christ Jesus.
We belong to him through faith,
heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
and also with you.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

**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 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.

THE THANKSGIVING PRAYER

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
With saints and angels praising you, and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna, in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
And as we obey his command,
Send your Holy Spirit that broken bread and wine outpoured may be to
us the body and blood of your dear Son.

Here is the table set for a special meal.

On the night before he died, he had supper with his friends and taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
Do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended, he took a cup of wine.
Again, he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this all of you; This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did, in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once upon the cross.
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation, we proclaim his death and resurrection
Until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith
Christ has died:
Christ is risen:
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life, help us work together for that day
When your kingdom comes and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.
Look with favour on your people, gather into your loving arms with St Faith, St John the Baptist, St Thomas of Canterbury with St Peter and St Paul and all the Saints to feast at your table in heaven.
Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Jesus, Lamb of God
have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins,
have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
grant us peace.

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Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.
Therefore let us keep the feast

(consume)

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

God our creator,
 you feed your children with the true manna,
 the living bread from heaven:
 let this holy food sustain us through our earthly pilgrimage
 until we come to that place where hunger and thirst are no more;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

**We thank you, Lord,
 that you have fed us in this physical and spiritual sacrament,
 united us with Christ,
 and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
 prepared for all peoples. Amen.**

THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
 Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
 we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
 Lord God, Lamb of God,
 you take away the sin of the world:
 have mercy on us;
 you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
 receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
 you alone are the Lord,
 you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
 with the Holy Spirit,
 in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

THE BLESSING

Teach us, good Lord,
 to serve you as you deserve,
 to give and not to count the cost,
 to fight and not to heed the wounds,
 to toil and not to seek for rest,
 to labour and not to ask for any reward,
 save that of knowing that we do your will.
 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 peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen