

Common Worship Holy Communion (Eucharistic Prayer B) 13th June 2021 – “How does God’s Kingdom Grow?”

[Revd. Robert Latham:]

So good evening everybody and good evening to those watching us at home. We've got a couple of notices to begin with.
Felicity, would you like to come with yours?

[Felicity Hawke:]

Good evening. I just wanted to remind you that next Sunday, the service of evening prayer we shall have a visit from John and Gillian Robinson, who are our link missionaries in Thailand, and they will be speaking, telling us a bit about the situation there that they're working in, and because of the slightly sensitive nature of what they might want to say we felt it was probably not a good idea to broadcast it over YouTube, so there won't be a streamed six o'clock next week.

But along with that, we thought it would be nice for people to have a chance to talk to them afterwards so we have been given permission to do some tea and coffee afterwards, and we'll probably put the big round tables out for the service, so you'll sit round the tables for the service and then we'll serve just some tea and coffee and maybe a biscuit or something afterwards. So if you wanted to stay on for a little bit afterwards and talk to them some more about what they're doing and various situations they're coming across in Thailand, then we hope you'll be able to stay for that.

[Rob:]

Thank you Felicity.

And just to help me when it comes to uh communion itself could I see whether we have anybody here who wants to have a gluten-free wafer? If you'd like to put your hand up if you do? Oh that's nobody. That's wonderful. Okay that's fine.

Okay I should say I'm Rob Latham: I'm a retired priest and I enjoy helping out here and licensed to St John's - that is for anybody coming online who perhaps doesn't recognize me.

But we're gathered here, I believe it's the second communion since we've been allowed to have some freedom under the progression towards final lockdown - away with lockdown and so we're going to begin now by singing - or we can't sing - we're going to hum behind our masks - but those at home can sing: our first hymn which is *Before the throne of God Above*

First Hymn: Before the Throne of God Above

Mission Praise 975

The Greeting

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Prayer Of Preparation

**All 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 Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayer of Penitence

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

So with those two great commandments in our mind, let us recall before our God as we come to worship him how we have failed to live within them, displeased our Father God, we have damaged each other, and let us in our hearts seek to offer to our God and lay all the things that are wrong in our lives on our consciences before our God and seek his forgiveness. Let us also open our lives to God's merciful promise, that as we are forgiven, we will be filled again with God's Holy Spirit. Let us seek for that gift to be renewed in us.

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.

**All 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.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Gloria In Excelsis

**All 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 Collect for the Second Sunday after Trinity

Lord, you have taught us
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
send your Holy Spirit
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen

The Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5:6-17

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due to us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

¹¹ Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are 'out of our mind,' as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Second Hymn: Facing a Task Unfinished

Mission Praise 126 & extra words

The Gospel Reading: Mark 4:26-34

When the Gospel is announced the reader says:

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

All Glory to you, O Lord

²⁶ He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces corn – first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ As soon as the corn is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.'

³⁰ Again he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.'

³³ With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. ³⁴ He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon

I speak in the name of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Would you like to sit please. I assume that at home you're still sitting or have remained sitting but if you're not please do sit as well.

I'd like to start talking about the collect, if you don't mind, just for a moment. And please pardon the fact that I had to search for it a bit: that's because I buried my taper here in my main book and had to search for it in the lectionary. I have to say there are some collects that just rub me up the wrong way, not for the sentiment to what it actually says, but I do find the sentence here that "all our doings without love are nothing worth" is a bit clumsy and a bit awkward. I would much prefer actually the way it's spoken out in the marriage service which is "but all our doings without love are worth nothing." So love is a key ingredient, is it not, of the key of the Christian faith. So I want to know and I have no idea of how you're going to respond to this at home but I want to know those present, do you love yourself?

All right, well, that's a very interesting thing because we've got pretty much a 50:50 split and the reason why it's right to love yourself is very evident from our epistle reading from two Corinthians: first of all that we are a new creation, the old has gone: we are remade in Christ; that's the work of God in our salvation. So we are not the fallen humanity, human person that we once were, if we have received

Christ and taken him into ourselves. On the day of Pentecost the question was asked "what shall we do?" and the reply from Peter was "Repent and be baptized and you will be forgiven and given the Holy Spirit, God's presence in us." Can I ask another question: how many of you have repented and be baptized?

Okay, well you see, you are a new creation. When you get home, (it's a bit awkward to ask your neighbours at the moment). When you get home, look in the mirror and say your name and then say "I am a new creation. I am a new creation." I understand why some people might be hesitant to say "Do you love yourself?" or "I love myself" simply because it sometimes sounds a bit conceited, does it not? We're only too aware of our frailty, our falling short, and let's face it we've already tonight again made our confession to God and come before Him to say sorry because no, no, it doesn't matter how many times we seem to be forgiven, we still carry on during the week or whenever and actually look things up again, so we come back here to say, or we come before the Lord in our personal prayers, "Lord, forgive me" but God always honours His promise and we are always forgiven.

When I used to do baptism preparation, I talked about the fact that the way in which baptism works is an act of forgiveness by God, as much as all the other images around baptism, and that's because in baptism we set a pattern, we set a trajectory in which we walk in the ways, so no matter what happens to us, as long as we come back to Father God in the name of the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit then we will be forgiven and we can have confidence in that. Besides which, brothers and sisters, how we going to get on with loving our neighbours if we don't love ourselves?" Because we've just promised our Lord God in the liturgy to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Is anybody here kind of feeling now "oh!" because you see when we love our neighbours we have to love them because we also have a sense of being loved and we love ourselves. It's vital, it's important, it's absolutely essential that we have a confidence in Jesus Christ that the work of salvation has been done in us.

I remember in my sponsoring church, when I was first getting involved, there was a bit of a controversy around some of our young people who were going around church and saying "I've been saved!" and upsetting some of the older folk, the implication being that they perhaps weren't, or if they weren't they weren't actually telling everybody about it. It's the same thing.

Actually we were saved on the day of the first Good Friday when Jesus died upon the cross and paid the price of our sins. That's what accomplished our salvation. The salvation that we have in the present tense is when we accept the Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit into our lives by laying our lives into His hands for His grace and glory to work in us. And the future aspect of salvation when the Lord returns and He'll collect us all back all together and bring us, we pray, into the heavenly realms and we'll be with Father God forever in a day and we look forward for the whole lot to be brought under the one presence of the living God forever: the consummation of all the work of Christ: we are saved, past, present and future; and if we do not say we are saved then we've got problems, because we're actually almost throwing back in God's face the salvation that He's won for us.

This morning we were coming before the Lord as a church gathered at 10 o'clock, and I was moved, as a number of people were, to actually share some thoughts; and the thoughts that I felt were important for me to share this morning was a statement, a little kind of short pithy statement, that comes from St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who says this: that the Christian life that we live is a move from loving God for *my* sake to loving *myself* for God's sake. Okay? A move from loving God for my sake to loving myself for God's sake. And the reason why I think that is an important thing for us to learn and to understand what it means is simply this: because there is a sense of maturity when we accept that God draws us into it into Himself by His love as - what is it we often say? - God loves us exactly as we are: but that's only a half the issue; God loves us too much to leave us as we are. And I think that's not just me, that's what came out of the mouth of Billy Graham and other people like that.

And therefore we kind of love God, seek his love, because it's about our salvation, about getting into the Kingdom. But for heaven's sake, once we're in the Kingdom, we don't keep having to start at square one again, do we? We actually say we believe and trust in God's love and we allow that love to transform us into the people that God

originally intended us to be, which are lovable people. And why? Because I say so? Because you say so? No, because God says so.

And what we're talking about is a life of faith that is lived out in maturity; and sometimes we often feel like I've just said, we kind of accept this sense of love, we accept that God loves us, but then we often feel that he's far away, that we might be unlovable again. But the reality is while we accept that that's a danger, we should live in the truth that God declares over us as our Father, God says in the Psalm "You are the apple of my eye;" "You are a people of my making;" "You are my beloved;" and we seek to believe that, because it's not what we think and what we see in our hearts and minds, "We do not live by sight," says Paul in our reading, but by faith, and faith is a trust in God, that what God says is true, because let's face it, Adam and Eve got in a lot of trouble because they believed that God told fibs, and God doesn't. We believe what God tells says about us, so that we in that love can be moulded into a person that becomes lovable, even by ourselves! And we live that life out in the world, in the community. We live it out.

I had the privilege and joy of spending some time in South Africa, well several times actually, but I'm particularly thinking of some sabbatical time I had in 2004; and we were told of one particular lady who needed a lot of grace in her life. She was actually part of a leadership team in the church where I was attending at the time, and yet she was not a person who felt herself to be a lovable sort of person - and there's a whole history which I don't have to tell you about, don't have time to tell you about now, as to why she felt unlovable - but as she was prayed for, she began to find healing, and there was one time when she actually had a picture herself of this wall, this brick wall around her, which was all sort of built sort of in a higgledy-piggledy type way because basically what she felt was like she was sort of exposed to all sorts of issues and problems and she built this wall around her as a kind of cover to try and hide herself away. And then in a dream she saw this wall being pushed away and God's grace coming to heal her and change her. Although Satan was lurking around and he was trying to build the wall back up again, so we can see perhaps some of the lies that she had been listening to already about her. But then finally God himself comes and builds a glass wall around her - why? Because God wants everybody to see His handiwork in us. And that is what Christian maturity is about, is for us, out in the world, to display the work and the grace of God in us as we go about our business, and even more as we go about the business that God gives us to do each and every day of our lives. It's about a Christian maturity that enables us to be the people God intended us to be and wants us to be every day of our lives.

Now I am conscious that the topic that we've actually been thinking about this evening actually comes out as "How does God's Kingdom Grow?" And I've not really talked about that - or have I? Or maybe I have. Actually God's kingdom grows very clearly. If we look at the two parables from the Gospel reading that Emma read for us just now, then we see that God's kingdom grows very naturally: one parable tells us it's simply like a farmer who plants his seed; he goes and waters it, he tends it and looks after it, but basically the seed grows all by itself, well by God's power and grace, so you get firstly the kind of first shoots, then that plant matures, it blossoms and flowers, and then it produces the seed; and the whole process is not done by us human beings, it's done, as it were, by the hand of God: it simply happens naturally. And then the other parable is that very simple one, the mustard seed. I'm not at all sure whether the mustard seed here is a mustard seed that we might have, because my recollection of mustard seeds is they're not as tiny as some other seeds that we might sow in the garden. But this year I put some carrots and radish in a tray, in compost, and made seedlings, well let them grow into seedlings, before planting them out in the garden. I'm quite pleased to see they're actually doing very well at the moment. But in the parable of the mustard seed, what we see is this tiny seed, whether it's the smallest or not it doesn't really matter; this tiny seed planted in the ground and becoming something rather substantial, a kind of shrub or bush, that even the birds of the air can nest in it, and that's how our faith should grow, that's how the Kingdom grows, the Kingdom of God grows, one person after another. And I believe it is best done with a natural growth, that enables the work of God to be seen in us human beings, us, His children, His people, the people who are called to serve Him, to worship Him, living out a life, not not just any old life. [It's] no good living out in the world and living a worldly life: we have to be ready and willing as God has given Himself to us to be able to give ourselves to God,

but He wants us to live out our lives in a way that His work is visible to us, that is visible to others, and if we are able in a way to kind of live in God's Kingdom in a way that demonstrates God's love for others, then we actually are doing something that's very easy and natural, it's empowered by God's Spirit. And what follows from this is that we don't have to go seeking for conversations from other people (though we you can do that and try that if you would like to). What we find is that people come and ask us. They'll come and say, "Why are you so different? What is it in your life that actually makes it stand out to be so different?" And we can simply then begin to tell and share our testimony so that the power of God flows through us naturally and it enables his Kingdom to grow.

Amen

The Creed

We stand together here in church; if you wish to at home you may do, but we stand together in church and we declare the Creed, our faith and trust in God.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers Of Intercession

Do be seated please and we're going to turn to our prayers of intercession

We begin with a general evening prayer.

Father we come together in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, to offer you our worship, praise and thanksgiving. To you belong all power and glory. You are the source of all goodness. Our worship bears witness to your peace and saving power. Through your Spirit may we ever rejoice in the abiding presence of our risen and ascended Lord

Amen

With all our hearts and all our minds let us pray to the Lord saying "hear our prayer" after the refrain "Father in heaven."

We pray for the church of God in every place and that all members of the clergy will be blessed and inspired as they fulfil their high calling in the faith we also pray that we and all who confess the name of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour may be united in truth live together in your love and reveal your glory to the world

Father in heaven

All Hear our prayer.

We pray that you will give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation. May the measures that are to be implemented from the G7 summit bring even greater awareness as to how we must use the earth's resources rightly to serve others as well as to honour and glory.

Father in heaven

All Hear our prayer.

We pray for our country and for all the nations of the world especially with the impact the COVID-19 pandemic is making. Give wisdom to all in positions of public trust and authority, and as they make decisions on our behalf may they be guided by the Spirit to direct our affairs with justice righteousness and in peace

Father in heaven

All Hear our prayer.

We pray for our community and we lift up to you our schools and all other places of learning the health services the poor the unemployed and all those who are victims of persecution and discrimination of any kind give us an openness and the grace to do your will in all that we undertake in our community and that our works may find favour in your sight

Father in heaven

All Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who are suffering from pain and diseases.

Please feel free to name them quietly in your hearts at this time.

Give healing and strength to all who suffer in body mind or spirit and sustain all those who remember and care for them

Father in heaven

All Hear our prayer.

We pray that you will give to the departed eternal rest and let light perpetual shine upon them.

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy and that we may also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Father in heaven

All Hear our prayer.

Finally let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

We conclude our prayers with the prayer at the bottom of the page saying together

Merciful Father,

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

Prayer Of Humble Access

As we continue in prayer briefly we pray together the prayer of humble access.

We do not presume

All to come to this your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies.

We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.

But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy.

Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ and to drink his blood,

that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.

Amen.

The Peace

Would you please stand as we share in the words of the Peace.

Jesus came among his disciples and said, "Peace be with you."

They were glad when they saw the Lord.

The peace of the Lord be always with you

All and also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

And please in whatever way you can share peace to those at home

Third Hymn: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Mission Praise 1164 (slightly altered words)

The Eucharistic Prayer

Just a brief explanation just to make sure that once I've we prayed the Eucharistic Prayer that I shall come to each of you in turn and just drop into your hands the wafer. If anybody doesn't wish to receive maybe just keep your hands across and I'll kind of pray a blessing over you.

The Lord is here.

All His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, we give you thanks and praise through your beloved Son Jesus Christ, your living Word, through whom you have created all things; who was sent by you in your great goodness to be our Saviour.

By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh; as your Son, born of the blessed Virgin,

he lived on earth and went about among us;
he opened wide his arms for us on the cross;
he put an end to death by dying for us;
and revealed the resurrection by rising to new life;
so he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people.

Therefore with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your great and glorious name,
for ever praising you and saying:

**All 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.**

Lord, you are holy indeed,
the source of all holiness;
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit,
and according to your holy will,
these gifts of bread and wine
may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ;

who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying:
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.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died;
Christ is risen;
Christ will come again.**

And so, Father, calling to mind his death on the cross,
his perfect sacrifice made once for the sins of the whole world;
rejoicing in his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming in glory,
we celebrate this memorial of our redemption.
As we offer you this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,
we bring before you this bread and this cup

and we thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you.

Send the Holy Spirit on your people
and gather into one in your kingdom
all who share this one bread and one cup,
so that we, in the company of all the saints,
may praise and glorify you for ever,
through Jesus Christ our Lord;

by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be yours, Father, for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us so we pray

All 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 for ever. Amen.

The Breaking Of The Bread

God's holy gifts for God's holy people.

**All Jesus Christ is holy,
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

The Giving Of Communion

The president and people receive communion.

*Words of distribution are used and the communicant replies **Amen***

Prayer After Communion

Let us pray.

Loving Father, we thank you for feeding us at the supper of your Son.
Sustain us with your spirit, that we may serve you here on earth
until our joy is complete in heaven
and we share in the eternal banquet with Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

Almighty God,

All we thank you for feeding us with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.

Through him we offer you our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice.

**Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory.
Amen.**

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.

The Dismissal

Go in peace
to love and serve the Lord
All In the name of Christ. Amen.

If I could say a fond farewell to all who've been watching to us online because here the online service will end.

As for us here in church, we're going to just process outside, because we're going to sing a final hymn outside, which obviously we cannot record.

And we do have a guitarist volunteer who's cheerfully come along and willing to lead us in that. So if you grab a hymnbook and follow us, we're going to sing number 506 which is O Lord my God When I in Awesome Wonder - How Great Thou Art.

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