



Twelfth Sunday of Trinity

Morning Prayer

Dispersed community prayer at 10:30am

(But God will hear our prayers anytime!)

*You are invited to guard time for us to be together, united in prayer in one faith,
to our one Lord*

You may wish to prepare by lighting a candle

◆ denotes an optional pause to keep silence and meditate on the words

🔊 Denotes optional audio / video version from the church website:

<https://widcombe.church/our-churches/church-life/church-online/>

Preparation

O Lord, open our lips
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Give thanks and praise God

Blessed are you, Sovereign God, creator of all,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
You founded the earth in the beginning
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
In the fullness of time you made us in your image,
and in these last days you have spoken to us
in your Son Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.
As we rejoice in the gift of your presence among us
let the light of your love always shine in our hearts,
your Spirit ever renew our lives
and your praises ever be on our lips.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

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

◆

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.

Psalm 115: The Impotence of Idols and the Greatness of God

¹ Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory,
for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness.

² Why should the nations say,
'Where is their God?'

³ Our God is in the heavens;
he does whatever he pleases.

⁴ Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.

⁵ They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.

⁶ They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.

⁷ They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
they make no sound in their throats.

⁸ Those who make them are like them;
so are all who trust in them.

⁹ O Israel, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and their shield.

¹⁰ O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and their shield.

¹¹ You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and their shield.

¹² The Lord has been mindful of us; he will bless us;
he will bless the house of Israel;
he will bless the house of Aaron;

¹³ he will bless those who fear the Lord,
both small and great.

¹⁴ May the Lord give you increase,
both you and your children.

¹⁵ May you be blessed by the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

¹⁶ The heavens are the Lord's heavens,
but the earth he has given to human beings.

¹⁷ The dead do not praise the Lord,
nor do any that go down into silence.

¹⁸ But we will bless the Lord
from this time on and for evermore.
Praise the Lord!



*Glory 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. Amen.*

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.

◆

Hymn

At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of Glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

At his voice creation
sprang at once to sight,
all the angel faces
all the hosts of light,
thrones and dominations,
stars upon their way,
all the heavenly orders
in their great array.

Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners

unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed.

Bore it up triumphant
with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast;
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone him;
there let him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true:
look to Him your Saviour,
In temptation's hour,
Let his will enfold you,
in its light and power.

Christians, this Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with his Father's glory,
o'er the Earth to reign;
for all wreaths of empire
meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him
King of Glory now.

The Word of God

Old Testament reading: Exodus 3: 1-15

Moses at the Burning Bush

3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.

Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.'

⁴ When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!'

And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

⁵ 'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' ⁶ Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I

have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'

¹¹ But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'

¹² And God said, 'I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.'

¹³ Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?'

¹⁴ God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I am has sent me to you."'

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "The Lord, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you."

'This is my name for ever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.

New Testament reading: Matthew 16: 21-end

Jesus predicts His death

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life^[□] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

Reflection

I remember once when Ellie was about 4 or 5 and Sammy would have been 2 or 3... I remember some of those exhausted but glorious evenings, when you're tired to your bones...but when the kids are finally asleep and deeply enfolded in the glorious childhood innocence of slumber – those wonderful moments, when you would sneak into your child's room, the carnage of bath-time and the terrible two's tea-time meltdowns forgotten and you

just creep in like a victorious warrior to a sneak at the glorious silence and beauty of a sleeping child.

I remember one such winter night, vividly burned into my memory – Ellie, cutely having a sleepover in Sam’s room after playing, dress up and building castles all day – a day filled with laughter, fun...mess.

I remember creeping silent into their room, late into the evening, just before turning in, barefooted and in pyjamas – just to gaze at these two wonderful children, to pull the covers back over their little spread-eagled bodies - silent apart from the deep steady breath of the sleep of the innocent...

...And then I remember...treading on a lego brick, a small one - not a big chunky sixer, or a long thin 10'er – no, an evil, unseen three-sided skin shredding monster of a corner piece...I shrieked, step-back... and landed on a set of miniature toy soldiers, toys from my childhood, toys that that day I had proudly presented to my children. Not just your typical English and German affair, but a more rare Napoleonic set, each with a razor like base and yes each with sword, unsheathed and held aloft ready for battle, ready to attack....Ready to make me scream like a banshee!

And I can only imagine the horror faced by my children as they, now bolt upright in bed, watch this dark menacing nightmare before them, hopping from foot to foot like some dancing ogre....Watching it cry and squeal, shouting words through a hand clenched mouth, that no-one in my house had *ever* heard before...

Most of us, on a good day, might spend much of our time feeling warrior like and invincible, but all it takes is one lego brick, one tiny sabre-rattling grenadier, one insignificant McDonalds plastic Sonic the Hedgehog toy, stumbled upon in bare feet - to remind you of just how vulnerable you really can be!

Feet are really amazing things! Having just returned from breath-taking Scotland, hiking for 3 days with my super fit son Sam to mark the end of his GCSE's, I'm only *too* aware of my feet right now. But do you know, they are amazing things, there are more than 200 bones in the body and 25 percent of them are in the feet! With each step we take, our feet, the major shock-absorbing system of the human body, interact with more than 100 other muscles, tendons, ligaments, and bones. And when we run, our feet are able to stabilise and support the heavy loads that are generated, loads of between the 5 and 7 times our actual body weight. Over a lifetime, the average person circumnavigates the Earth's circumference more than five times. Feet are *amazing*, and it's no wonder that they sometimes ache!

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news" says the Prophet Isaiah in chapter 52

Feet are truly incredible – yet also they're vulnerable, which is why we wear shoes. Shoes form a protective shield between those precious fragile feet and the rest of the world. Shoes protect us from injury, they make it so much easier for us to get out and about, to walk, to run, risk free – to launch ourselves out into the world. But you know I think shoes do something else too:

Now I have really ticklish feet, I don't really like people touching them, and I know people can be really funny about their feet. You only have to watch the awkwardness of a feet washing moment in a church service to see that. For those being ordained within the Church of England, it's a celebrated tradition that on the night before ordination, a Bishop kneels before you and washes the feet - or more accurately "the foot" - of those who are coming to be ordained. I remember that special night really well, but it should be added that you've

never seen such a bunch of more deeply scrubbed, manicured and presentable feet presented to a person than on that night. I think the phrase "*putting your best foot forward*" must have originated from this ritual.

I think for most people, removing their shoes in public, especially in a formal or a social setting, might be unthinkable and certainly quite intimidating.

When you remove your shoes, people can see your feet. It's both an intimate and vulnerable act. In a formal setting, it would usually feel unseemly or inappropriate. Kicking off our shoes implies, a relaxed "at home" posture, casual and familiar and so in formal setting, or when "at work" we wear shoes, shoes make us feel less vulnerable but also make us feel more acceptable.

They are for us, beyond the style and design, simply an unthought of, insignificant barrier between us and the dust that Genesis tells us we are created from. But they are too, a sign to us and others, that we're ready for action, ready for work, ready for play, ready for school, ready to step out, ready to go.

So I'm deeply intrigued by what God says to Moses in today's reading – in fact, it's one of the first things that God says to Moses, before he gives him the Law or the Ten Commandments, before he tells him to go down Moses to Egypt and tell old Pharaoh to "*let my people go*". Before the signs and wonders and miracles, God says to Moses "*take your shoes off.*"

"*Take your shoes off, because the ground on which you are standing is holy*". Now I know – there is much to be said in this episode for an honoured, humble position of submission before a holy God – that's how I've always understood this passage – and clearly there is truth in that. But do we really think that God is worried about Moses trampling dirt around His burning bush in the same way that my mother rightly worries about her best Axminster?

I mean, I just wonder if there's something else happening here. Moses is a man of action, a man of strength, a man of conviction and determination. He's known power and authority, perhaps even pride, and has certainly walked in and exerted that power.

And shoes? Well they can give us just enough lift above the earth, above the dirt, to feel superior, maybe not much, but just enough to feel comfortable, significant, safe and secure on solid ground. I'm not an expert it should be underlined, but as I understand it, they're not called power heels for nothing!

And so visiting Sri Lanka as I've had the privilege of now doing several times, I am always fascinated having visited many houses as a guest, of the custom of leaving your shoes at the door, outside, before entering. Of course, this isn't a uniquely Sri Lankan thing, in Japan for example taking off one's shoes is a widespread, ancient 1000 year old custom – yes, partly to help keep houses and floors clean; but perhaps more importantly – and this would be true in most of our houses - to allow people, especially guests, to simply relax, to be themselves.

So what if this account in Moses life is more than a lesson in attitude of humility and etiquette. Could it be rather that God is longing for Moses to drop his guard, his history, his stature and defences? Maybe, just maybe, the Lord is really wanting Moses to take his shoes off because he simply longs for Moses to be himself, to remove all pretence and be nakedly vulnerable and open to what God is about to say?

And if that's true – what might it mean for you and I? God wanted Moses, with all his gifts, qualities, and flaws and weaknesses, simply to be Moses - not to try and pretend to be someone else, to hide behind a mask, to achieve the things God was calling him to. He

simply needed to come, vulnerable and open, ready to be used, despite those flaws, utterly weak so he could depend upon and witness the glorious saving power of this sovereign God.

God's voice, to Moses, God's voice to you is like this: "Moses, take your shoes off! I need you, not Abraham or Isaac or Jacob, not the apostle Paul, not someone with a PhD in theology or George Cross for gallantry. Sit with me, share with me, face to face – honestly and simply, as friends. I've got a great plan and I'd love you to be a part of..."

And Moses, honest and able to be truthful in this place of peace and friendship, being Moses, "Says, Who me? You must be kidding!"

And the rest? Well the rest is history... and for you and me...? What an invitation! Invited to kick our shoes off and be made to feel at home before the King of Kings – friends not servants Jesus says, "sit with me, share with me... Listen to me, I've got a great plan I long for you to be part of".

And when in that place of honesty and safety we respond "Who me, you're kidding right?" The Lord of all creation, who has welcomed us to sit and eat with Him, says, "Don't worry I've got everything covered – I'll give you everything you need and you'll see wonders you could never have imagined...come lets walk together". Amen

Intercessions

Prayers of intercession may be made for issues highlighted in the week's news as well as:

- Thank and praise God in awe and wonder for His holiness and Jesus' example and passion
- Remembering God calling Moses to lead His people, intercede for leaders of people: nations, local Government – our MP, church, schools, universities...
- Through August we pray with the charity 'Open Doors', supporting persecuted Christians around the world. This Sunday we pray for their mission to children. In Sri Lanka at least 176 children lost one or both parents in the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings. Dukashini's mother was one of them, killed in Zion Church, Batticaloa. We pray for Dukashini as she reads the Bible to her father, Prashant (a new believer) each night, as her mother used to do. May this family be strengthened by Your word and through fellowship at Zion Church.
- Remembering Jesus is the way to the Holy Father, intercede for those on your heart who do not yet know Him personally as Lord and Saviour
- Intercede for those suffering in mind, body or spirit; comfort for those grieving and fearful that they may be encouraged by the hope of Christ's resurrection

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



The Collect

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.

Lord's Prayer

Being made one by the power of the Spirit, 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 for ever. Amen.



To Conclude

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

