

Trinity United Reformed Church Wimbledon

Sunday 7 March 2021

Order of Service for Worship at Home including the celebration of Holy Communion



*Led by the Revd Bill Bowman
(retired Minister of the URC)*

Call to Worship

Let us pray
Father God,
In this world where goodness and evil
Continue to clash with each other,
Instill in us, and all your people,
Discernment to see what is right,
Faith to believe what is right;
And courage to do what is right.

Help us avoid the subtlety of sin, and
Guard us, body, mind and soul,
Through the power of your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Hymn 67 – “Immortal, invisible”

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains, high soaring above
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish, but nought changeth thee.

Great Father of glory: O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.
And so let thy glory, Almighty, impart,
through Christ in the story, thy Christ to the heart.

W Chalmers Smith (1824-1908)

Prayer of approach, and confession

God of all seasons,
In your pattern of things,
There is a time for keeping
And a time for losing,
A time for building up and a time for pulling down.

In this Holy season of Lent,
As we journey with Jesus to the cross,
Help us to discern in our lives,
What we must lay down
And what we must take up.
Give us grace to lead faith filled lives
In glad obedience
And with the joy
Which comes with a closer walk with Christ.

Lord Jesus Christ, accept our worship today
And hear us now as we say "sorry" for our unworthiness
In the silence of our hearts.

Silence

To all who turn to him,
Jesus says, "You are forgiven."
He also says, "Follow me."
Thanks be to God
Amen

Reading – Exodus 20: 1-17

- ¹ Then God spoke all these words:
- ² I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;
- ³ you shall have no other gods before me.
- ⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

- ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me,
- ⁶ but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- ⁷ You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.
- ⁸ Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.
- ⁹ Six days you shall labour and do all your work.
- ¹⁰ But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.
- ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.
- ¹² Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
- ¹³ You shall not murder.
- ¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.
- ¹⁵ You shall not steal.
- ¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- ¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Reading – John 2: 13-22

- ¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
- ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.
- ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.
- ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"
- ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."
- ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"
- ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
- ²⁰ The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"
- ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body.
- ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Sermon

It was Douglas Bader, the legless RAF fighter ace of World War 2 who observed,
"Rules are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men."

However we view the truth of Bader's words there is no doubt that the Ten Commandments recorded in Exodus chapter 20 were set out as the fundamental rules which would guide Israel, God's covenant people, as they were settling into their Promised Land and they still form the basis of all civilised society to this day.

It is apparent that these ten basic rules, first handed down to the Children of Israel as they sojourned in the desert prior to their eventual settlement in the land of Canaan, look forward to the time when Israel was a settled rather than a nomadic community.

Phrases such as, "All those within your gates" or warnings not to "covet your neighbour's house" have little significance to an unsettled people living in tents. So we see these Ten Commandments, the summary of God's law, looks ahead to a time when the freed slaves have taken possession of the new land and these rules are a template of how they are to relate to God and each other in their adopted homeland.

Let us look briefly at these commandments.

God firstly spells out who he, God, is – I am the Lord (YHWH) your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. God from the outset is seen as a liberator – a God who sets his people free, a God who loves his people and a God who loathes to see them suffer.

The first commandment is

"You shall have no other gods before me." The people of Canaan, among whom the Israelites dwelt, worshipped a plethora of deities, chief among them, the fertility god, Baal. Baal worship involved indulging in various immoral and degrading practises and in extreme cases even child sacrifice. This was not the way of life or mode of worship for YHWH's covenant people. God's children are called to walk the paths of dignity, self-respect and reverent worship.

"You shall not make or worship idols." Again this was a common Canaanite practise. The ludicrous futility of worshipping a lifeless piece of carved wood is brought out with humorous irony in Isaiah chapter 44.

"A man cuts down a tree – half the wood he burns in the fire and over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm, I can see the fire".

From the rest of the wood he makes a god – his idol to which he bows down and worships. He prays to it and says, “Save me, you are my god!”

Put the way Isaiah describes it the worship of idols is patently absurd.

Yet, idols of sorts are still worshipped today, many a secular knee is metaphorically bent before the idols of money, prestige, ambition, power, celebrity status and the like.

As Jesus reminded us as he rebuked the Tempter in the wilderness, “you shall worship the Lord your God and him only will you serve”.

The commandments prohibit taking the Lord’s name in vain. As it happens in its original context this was not an instruction to abstain from the irreverent practise of using the name of God or Jesus as swear words. Distasteful as this is, the original commandment forbade the use of God’s name in the swearing of oaths of the legal kind and then not carrying out your obligations. That was what was meant in the commandment, “Thou shall not take the Lord’s name in vain.”

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy.” To keep holy means to keep the Sabbath differently to the other six days. Keeping the Sabbath special has, at least in this country, long gone by the board. The Sabbath, Sunday for Christians and Saturday in Judaism, was in God’s great scheme of things a day to be set aside for worship and rest. In our society today worship has been marginalised except by the faithful few and recreation, sport, shopping, DIY and catching up on the household chores we don’t find any other time for has taken over.

Sabbath observance is one of God’s greatest gifts and blessings to us his children. Sadly, it’s a gift ungraciously ignored or rejected by most these days, which is a pity. God incorporated a sacred day of rest into the fabric of creation out of love for our human health and well-being.

It is true, of course that on several occasions, Jesus broke the strict Jewish Sabbath laws. But never for his own benefit always for the good of others. As Jesus asked his “holier than thou” critics, “is it better to heal or to harm on the Sabbath?”

The remainder of the Commandments about not murdering, committing adultery, stealing or lying about your fellow men and women are so self-explanatory they need no further unpacking from me.

Suffice to say if they were more universally observed divorce lawyers and maybe even the police force would find themselves underemployed and the tabloid press would have screeds of empty pages!!

The final commandment, “You shall not covet,” is about our own attitude, our own peace of mind. If we allow ourselves to get all bitter and twisted about our neighbours having something we haven’t got and we would like, it can be detrimental to our entire well-being, peace of mind and even our

personality. This is not a commandment against people genuinely desiring to better themselves, it is a commandment against an attitude of envy that is dangerous to our mental and spiritual health.

Those then are the Ten Commandments – the building blocks of a civilised, respectful, decent community. A community as the prophet, Micah, put it that, “does justly, loves kindness and walks humbly with God.”

Before we come to look at Jesus’ cleansing the Jerusalem Temple of the objects of sacrifice, the sheep and cattle and those who bought and sold them let us remember some other words of the prophet, Micah. In the Old Testament book that bears his name Micah asks this rhetorical question,

“With what shall I come before the Lord? Shall I come before him with burnt offering, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams?

Jesus, I am sure, would have had Micah’s words very much in mind as he drove out the avaricious money changers and rip off merchants who swindled the poor people coming to offer their genuine sacrifices to God.

Forefront in Jesus mind would have been the words of God spoken through another prophet – Hosea. Words often quoted by Jesus to the Pharisees – “I demand mercy, not sacrifice.”

Jesus actions in the Temple brings an outcry from the merchants and money changers and the temple authorities – the Chief Priests whom the Gospel writer, John, describes simply as “the Jews”.

We must bear in mind that when John uses the term, “the Jews” in this context he is referring to the religious leaders – the enemies of Jesus, not the entire Jewish race.

The religious leaders ask Jesus for a sign to prove his authority.

Jesus answers their call for a sign thus – “Destroy this Temple and I will raise it again in three days.”

How must Jesus’ listeners including his own disciples been puzzled by his words.

King Herod started to refurbish the second Temple in around 20 BC, it was now around 30 AD and the work had just recently finished. How could Jesus seriously say that a destroyed Temple could be rebuilt in three days? Whatever did he mean?

The answer only came to the disciples in hindsight after the resurrection. A great deal of what Jesus said and did only fell into place in the minds of his followers after that first Easter Sunday, and the significance of all Jesus said and did for us today can only be seen in all its glorious truth and wonder when we believe that by his cross and resurrection he has

overcome sin and death. When we realise that evil, pain and suffering and even death itself does not have the final word.

Jesus taught his disciples and Paul affirmed it several times in his letters to the young churches that Jesus death and resurrection was in accordance with the Scriptures. We are not told the actual Scripture passages but Hosea 6:2 fits the bill where he talks of God rescuing his beloved children:-

“After two days he will revive us and on the third day he will raise us up.”

Or perhaps Hosea 13:14:

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. Where o’ death are your plagues, where o’ grave is your destruction.”

Where indeed? Jesus came not just to cleanse the corruption from the Temple in Jerusalem but he comes to us today to drive out all that is destructive in the Temple of his people’s hearts and minds and to open for us a share in his resurrection life. A life that is open to us now as we accept his invitation and challenge to walk faithfully in his footsteps. He calls us to love others as he loves us, this is Jesus own special commandment which embraces, fulfils and stands above all of the others.

As Paul wrote to the church in Rome, “The one who loves their neighbour has kept all of the law”.
Amen.

Hymn 96 – “Great is thy faithfulness”

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

*Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness,
morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided,
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Great is thy faithfulness.....

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Great is thy faithfulness.....

T O Chisholm (1866-1960)

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray,
Father God, in this third Sunday in the season of Lent,
We pray for your church that it may be filled with truth and love,
That it may lead all people
To a knowledge of your salvation,
And be found without fault
On the day of Christ's coming.

Give your light to all nations and peoples
That respect and forbearance
May grow among them
And peace enfold the world.

We pray for all who day and night work for the good of others
Especially those who fight against Covid 19 and all its woes.
Refresh and strengthen them and all those for whom the night brings
neither
Rest nor sleep.
Those who are frightened and anxious and worried
For themselves and loved ones.
We pray too for
Those who guard our shores,
Defend our homes,
And keep the peace;
Who carry on the unrelenting business of the world;
Who through night and day
At home, in hospice or in hospital
Watch over others
Make darkness light around them
And grant them peace.

Protect those who are in danger
Care for those who suffer;
And when the shadow of death is falling,
Make bright with your presence the path of those
Who walk in the valley of darkness.

Set free our family and friends
From anxiety and fear
That they may live in joy, peace and health.

Finally, open our eyes to see the radiance of your glory
And bring us to rejoice with that great Communion of Saints
In your eternal kingdom.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Offertory

*This is an opportunity to set aside your regular financial contribution to Trinity's ongoing work and witness. Call to mind your gift now as you share in the prayer below. At home, you should also **uncover the bread and wine now.***

Communion Hymn 453 – "Let us talents and tongues employ"

Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy:
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.

*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

Christ is able to make us one,
at the table he set the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.

Jesus lives again.....

Jesus calls us in, sends us out
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share:
God (Immanuel) everywhere!

Jesus lives again.....

Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

Sacrament of Holy Communion & the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Use either of these forms, or a different version/language if you prefer:

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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

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 663 – "Love Divine"

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver;
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

Blessing