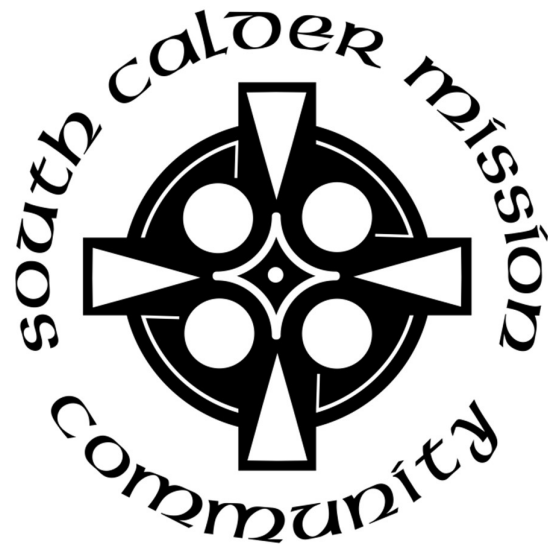


Into his Courts with Praise...



A Service of the Word
For
Sunday 12 September 2021
Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

This service is taken from A Service of the Word,
Morning and Evening Prayer, Night Prayer,
which is copyright (c) The Archbishops' Council, 2000,
with permitted variations.

INTRODUCTION

Greeting

Creator God, we give you thanks for your gifts to us, for the life and love you bestow upon us. Help us to be mindful of your gifts all our days.

Amen.

Take a moment to acknowledge God's presence with you today.
You might like to light a candle and be quiet for a short time.



THE CONFESSION

God the Father forgives us in Christ and heals us by the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice, and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

**Almighty God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word and deed;
I have not loved you with all my heart;
I have not loved my neighbours as myself.
Have mercy upon me,
cleansing me from my sins,
and help me to overcome my faults,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Receive God's forgiveness

May the Father forgive us
By the death of His Son
And strengthen us
To live in the power of the Spirit
All our days. **Amen.**

PRAISE

O Lord, open my lips...
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Give me the joy of your saving help...
and sustain me with your life-giving Spirit.

THE COLLECT

Lord God,
defend your Church from all false teaching
and give to your people knowledge of your truth,
that we may enjoy eternal life,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **Be still, for the presence of the Lord.***

THE WORD OF GOD

Psalm 19.

The heavens are telling the glory of God ♦
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
One day pours out its song to another ♦
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
They have neither speech nor language ♦
and their voices are not heard,
Yet their sound has gone out into all lands ♦
and their words to the ends of the world.
In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun, ♦
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber
and rejoices as a champion to run his course.
It goes forth from the end of the heavens
and runs to the very end again, ♦
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; ♦
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the simple.
The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart; ♦
the commandment of the Lord is pure
and gives light to the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; ♦
the judgements of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, ♦
more than much fine gold, ♦
sweeter also than honey,
dripping from the honeycomb.
By them also is your servant taught ♦
and in keeping them there is great reward.
Who can tell how often they offend? ♦
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins
lest they get dominion over me; ♦
so shall I be undefiled,
and innocent of great offence.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight, ♦
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

Proverbs 1:20-33.

Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.
At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
'How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?
Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known to you.
Because I have called and you refused,
have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,
and because you have ignored all my counsel
and would have none of my reproof,
I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes you,
when panic strikes you like a storm,
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.
Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.
Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the Lord,
would have none of my counsel,
and despised all my reproof,
therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way
and be satiated with their own devices.
For waywardness kills the simple,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
but those who listen to me will be secure
and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.'

James 3:1-12.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **Lord, make me a mountain.***

GOSPEL

Mark 8:27-end.

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

REFLECTION – The word is mighty.

For our New Testament reading this week we continue with the Letter of James, and a vivid passage about the tongue. The tongue is not large, compared with a hand or a leg, and you would not use it to lift a heavy weight. But James warns us: for its size, the tongue can do a lot of damage. Things like boasting, spreading lies, making cutting or hurtful remarks. The tongue, he says, is 'full of deadly poison.'

We are then given three examples to illustrate his point:

1. A horse is steered by a bit in its mouth. The rider may be much smaller than the horse, but bit and bridle allow the rider to control the horse. (I have to say, I am rather doubtful about this one – I have too often seen a horse of which the rider does not seem to be in control – but we can probably accept James' point.)
2. A ship's rudder. Have you ever seen the hull of a yacht out of the water? A marine architect could probably explain the hydrodynamics, but the point is, the rudder is very small in comparison with the size of the hull, and yet it is enough to steer the yacht.
3. A tiny flame is enough to set fire to a whole forest. A timely example, this one, when we have seen such areas this summer devastated by wildfires, around the Mediterranean and in the United States. No-one ever seems to know how they started, but within minutes they are out of control. Just a few careless or inaccurate words, and before long rumours are spreading, reputations are ruined and misery caused.

The tongue is indeed a powerful instrument! I wonder if you remember the Riding Lights Christian Theatre Group, who were based at St Michael le Belfry Church in York, but acquired an international reputation for their work. Their sketches, often humorous, illustrated parables and told bible stories in fresh and imaginative ways. One of these was entitled 'If words could kill.' It portrayed a family in which one member was very short-tempered, and often critical of the others. Having established this scenario, we go through a series of encounters in which this person attacks, verbally, all the other members of her family, who each in turn fall down dead at the onslaught of her words.

Having established the power of the tongue, despite its small size, James goes on to think about the implications of all this for Christians. Are we

aware of the power of our words; is our speech consistent with what we say we believe? He says, 'Words of thanksgiving and of cursing pour out from the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, this should not happen.' James has a couple more pictures for us to emphasise his point:

Can bitter water and sweet water flow from the same spring? How can a salty spring produce sweet water?

A fig tree cannot bear olives; a grapevine cannot bear figs. It is not in their nature. How, then, can a Christian produce both thanksgiving and cursing?

I heard a story just a week or so ago which I think makes this clear:

We have in the back window of our car one of those 'fish' signs which let other people know you are Christian. I was parked at Ravenglass when a man pointed to it and asked, 'Are you a churchgoer?'

'Yes,' I replied, so he told me this story:

'A man in a car came up behind a learner driver, and became very impatient, muttering and cursing when he couldn't get past her. They stopped at traffic lights, and he shouted and swore when she stalled her engine. She had just got it started when the lights turned red again, so he shouted and swore some more. At this, a policeman got out of the car behind, tapped on the man's window and said, 'I have been watching your appalling behaviour. Now, you have a cross hanging from your mirror, and a fish sign in the back window. I therefore conclude that this car is stolen.'

Alright, funny (in my opinion) but making a telling point. Do we use our tongue for thanksgiving and for cursing? In moments of stress, do we slip back into old habits, using language that sits ill with praising God? James is clear that this should not be, and in this somewhat picturesque passage challenges us to check: are our words, our actions, our attitudes, consistent with people who say they are followers of the Lord Jesus?

Jonathan Falkner

Suggested hymn to sing or read – *Let us build a house.*

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

M Haughen (c) 1994 GIA Publications

THE CREED

All **I believe in God the Father,
whose loving care is the pattern for family life.**

**I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,
who lives in my heart through faith,
and fills me with his love.**

**I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens me with power from on high.**

**I believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

THE PRAYERS

A time of quiet prayer for

- *The universal Church - Bishops, synods and all leaders church*
- *The leaders of the nations*
- *The natural world and the resources of the earth*
- *All who are in any kind of need*

Finishing with the South Calder Mission Community prayer...

**Heavenly Father we thank you for the life of your Church
in this place, and in all the villages of the South Calder
Mission Community;
for all who have served and worshipped you in years gone by,
for all who make up your family in our churches today,
for the faith we have in common, and for the people and
traditions which make each church unique.
By your Spirit, guide and equip us,
that together we might find new ways
to reach out to our local community,
to show your love to our neighbours,
and to encourage them
to follow the Lord Jesus in their lives.
Father, we offer ourselves to your service,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
And in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

and the Lord's prayer...

**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.**

THE CONCLUSION

Suggested hymn to sing or read – Lord of creation.

The following prayer is said

**Be with me, Lord, as I finish my prayer today.
May my lips always speak the truth;
may my eyes which have read your word
see only what is good;
and may my life as well as my worship
be always pleasing in your sight,
for the glory of your name. Amen.**

And now may the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for the Christian life.
May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.
May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care,
send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.

So now may I go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Links for the hymns

Be still for the presence of the Lord.

<https://youtu.be/XOCfPiLOvC4>

Lord, make me a mountain.

https://youtu.be/NN_OYOHbafs

Let us build a house.

<https://youtu.be/N9bOiAxwi4U>

Lord of creation.

<https://youtu.be/Z3jh7sEFHvo>