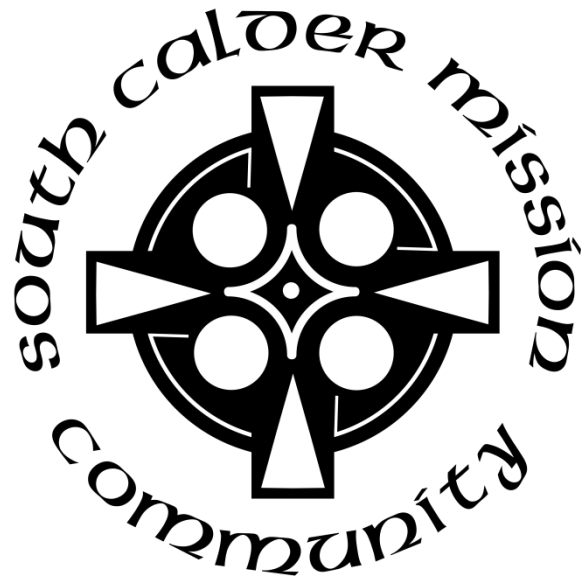


*into his courts
with praise...*



A Service of the Word

Sunday 20 July 2025
Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

"It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

Colossians 1:28



THE CONFESSION

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all. Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our sins in penitence and faith.

**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,
cleanse 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

Almighty God, send down upon your Church the riches of your Spirit, and kindle in all who minister the gospel your countless gifts of grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **Fill thou my life, O Lord my God.**

THE WORD OF GOD.

Psalm 15.

- 1 Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle? ♦
Who may rest upon your holy hill?
- 2 Whoever leads an uncorrupt life ♦
and does the thing that is right;
- 3 Who speaks the truth from the heart ♦
and bears no deceit on the tongue;
- 4 Who does no evil to a friend ♦
and pours no scorn on a neighbour;
- 5 In whose sight the wicked are not esteemed, ♦
but who honours those who fear the Lord.
- 6 Whoever has sworn to a neighbour ♦
and never goes back on that word;
- 7 Who does not lend money in hope of gain, ♦
nor takes a bribe against the innocent;

- 8 Whoever does these things ♦
shall never fall.

Genesis 18:1–10a.

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him.

When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, 'My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.'

So they said, 'Do as you have said.' And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.'

Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.'

Colossians 1:15–28.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.

He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him — provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints.

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **God's saints of old through history told.**

GOSPEL

Luke 10:38–end.

Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying.

But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

REFLECTION – Focus on Jesus.

Recently we were on holiday on the Isle of Wight. Mary and I were walking from the Needles over Tennyson Down, our favourite walk on the island. Being chalk cliffs and sea air, there are many plants and other wildlife that are special to that area. We spotted a bird with a red breast – a duller red than a robin, but spread wider. Could it be a Dartford warbler? Did it have a red eye ring? Where were the binoculars? With Jonathan, who was on his paddle-board on the River Yar!

We concluded afterwards that it was probably a whinchat, more common but just as lovely to see. If we had been able to focus on it with the binoculars, we would have been able to tell.

Both readings today focus on Jesus. The Colossians reading focusses on **who** Jesus is, to help sort out some false teaching which was going on in the early church in Colossae. In the Luke reading, it's more about distractions and priorities.

Let's start with Colossians, and why Paul was writing to them. Colossae was an old town even then, on a trading route. It was a melting pot of ideas, including Roman, Greek and Jewish religions, as well as mystery cults with 'secret knowledge.' Ideas would often mix and produce fusions.

The commentary I read identified that there had probably been some Jewish teachers influencing the early church there. Paul wanted to be very clear: Jesus is the one to focus on. He is central to Christianity. No other powers or mysteries have any place here – don't let them pull you away from him.

In the first part of this passage we have what looks like an early Christian hymn or creed. Paul may have written it himself – but it's more likely that he's using an existing one, probably of Jewish origin, that would have been familiar to the Colossians, but adapting it to focus in on Christ. There is such a lot in it, in such a short passage. If you read through it slowly, letting it sink in, it really draws you in. I find myself surrounded by awe and wonder in the presence of Jesus while I ponder it. I need moments like this in the midst of all the hustle and bustle of life, even church life, to remind myself why I'm a Christian, and why I want others to come to know Jesus too.

Now we move on to look at Mary and Martha. I don't know about you, but I often feel sympathy for Martha. She's trying to be hospitable, and produce a good spread, which would have been important in that culture, and traditionally a woman's place. Mary should be helping her – yet she's sitting listening to Jesus. Martha gets so frustrated that she appeals to Jesus. But instead of saying, 'Fair point, Martha. Off you go Mary and help your sister,' he answers, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

I'd like to know what happened next, wouldn't you? But the gospel writer has made his point and moves on.

My commentary made some interesting points. One thought was that Mary was defended, but not to the disparagement of Martha. Mary was not to be deprived of the one thing she can do well – listening to Jesus.

Another thought was that it was a gentle reproof for Martha, and that she has allowed self-concern and self-pity to spoil her offering of service. It is said that such an attitude can lead to good works becoming a misery to the person doing them, and a tyranny to others, guilt-tripping them!

Judith Dimond in her book 'Gazing on the Gospels' looks at the passage in its context in Luke, and how it fits in with earlier warnings that Jesus gave. The disciples were warned not to stay in towns where their message was rejected. Not long before that, Jesus says to someone who wanted to go and bury his father before he followed Jesus, 'Let the dead bury their own dead' – leave those who are spiritually dead to bury your father – following me now is more important!

Judith Dimond thinks that Jesus is warning Martha not to miss the present moment and opportunity. She also comments that it is easy to miss important moments, or even avoid them by concentrating on the seemingly urgent.

How about us in our lives? How about you? How about me? I've just had a very busy week. Have I missed something that Jesus wanted me to do? Have I had time to focus on him; have I got the balance right in my life? Probably not. It's difficult, isn't it?

I thought we might end with a short meditation on the Luke passage. If this sort of thing doesn't suit you, don't worry, you can just skip to the end.

Let's start by imagining the scene: Jesus and his disciples have come to visit. There are lots of people around, most of them crowded into one of the rooms, sitting or standing or leaning on the wall listening to Jesus. Mary sits at his feet looking up adoringly. Martha is bustling around in the kitchen, multi-tasking and getting hot and bothered.

Imagine you are there in the middle of all this – are you a follower in the room with Jesus? Are you trying to help Martha? Is she accepting the help or are you getting in the way? Or are you outside, listening and watching, wondering who Jesus is, what's going on, what is all the fuss about?

Take a few moments to be there. Now, see what's happening. There's a disturbance. Martha makes her way through, stepping round people, pushing one or two aside, looking hot and bothered and cross. Someone points her out to Jesus, who looks round at her. There is an ominous hush – what's going to happen.

Martha speaks. 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me.'

There's a pause, then Jesus looks at her, a look full of love and concern. 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

It's later on now. You're sitting outside thinking about what happened. Are there things that worry and distract you? People you're worried about; things you have to do? Jesus is just over there – listen, he's calling your name – go over and talk to him about what's bothering you.

(Pause)

Is he saying anything to you? Listen for a moment.....

Is there anyone you want to bring to him at the moment? Bring them to him now, and leave them with Jesus.

He blesses you, and turns to them, and you move away.

Slowly, in your own time, come back to this place, this time.

I hope that was useful for you, and that you will find many ways of spending time focussing on Jesus, as you go through busy times, quiet times, however your life is working out at the moment.

Sheila Falkner

Suggested hymn to sing or read **Seek ye first the kingdom of God.**

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.

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*

Loving God I see the news and I am afraid. Violence is spiralling out of control. I don't know what to think or feel. The temptation to fall into hatred, or despair feels very close at hand.

Help me to remember that nothing in all creation can separate me from your love that I know in Jesus. May your perfect love for me cast out my fear and free me to discern what is mine to do amidst the chaos of this suffering world.
Amen.

The Methodist Church.

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 **Be thou my vision.**

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

Fill thou my life, O Lord my God.

<https://youtu.be/2CJT-6nsl8c>

God's saints of old through history told.

https://youtu.be/oJEOUke_a8s

Seek ye first the kingdom of God.

<https://youtu.be/FFxZeY2D5tc>

Be thou my vision.

<https://youtu.be/DORM8ttY1ws>