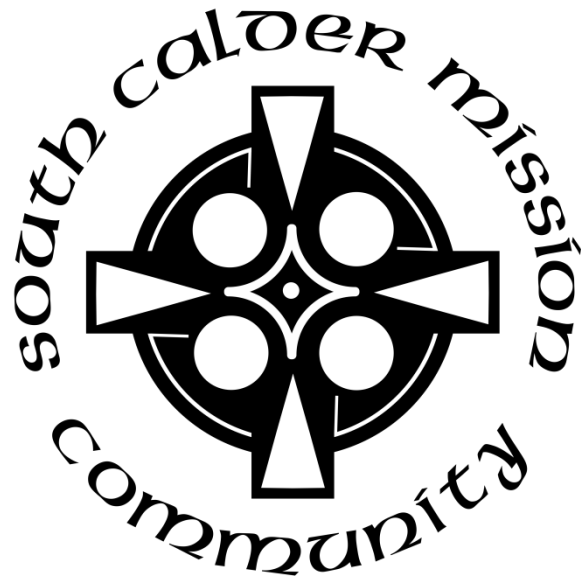


*into his courts
with praise...*



A Service of the Word

Sunday 19 October 2025
Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

“And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Luke 18:8



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

God, our judge and saviour, teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love, that we may live each day with confidence
in the salvation which is given through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **Lord, thy word abideth.**

THE WORD OF GOD.

Psalm 119 : 97-104.

Lord, how I love your law! ♦
All the day long it is my study.
Your commandments have made me wiser than my enemies, ♦
for they are ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers, ♦
for your testimonies are my meditation.
I am wiser than the aged, ♦
because I keep your commandments.
I restrain my feet from every evil way, ♦
that I may keep your word.
I have not turned aside from your judgements, ♦
for you have been my teacher.
How sweet are your words on my tongue! ♦
They are sweeter than honey to my mouth.
Through your commandments I get understanding; ♦
therefore I hate all lying ways.

Jeremiah 31 : 27-34.

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. In those days they shall no longer say: 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

2 Timothy 3 : 14 – 4 : 5.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.

For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **Beauty for brokenness.***

GOSPEL

Luke 18 : 1-8.

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming." ' And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?

REFLECTION – Keep the faith.

I want to talk mostly about today's passage from the Second Letter to Timothy, though I shall also make a link with the final words in the gospel reading: 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?' More on that later.

18 October is St Luke's Day: I shall not specifically focus on that, though we note it, because Luke and Timothy were both very involved in the travels and ministry of St Paul, and must have known each other well. Timothy lived in Lystra, in what is now southern Turkey, and Paul might well have met him, even brought him to faith, during his first missionary journey. Then on Paul's second journey he again passed through Lystra and this time took Timothy with him on his travels. Luke joined them on the same journey, probably in Troas, from where they crossed for the first time into Europe, to Philippi in Macedonia (Greece). From this time on Luke seems mainly to have stayed with Paul, even going with him on his final journey, under arrest to Rome, while Timothy was sent on a number of errands to churches in which Paul was interested, always returning to

wherever Paul was based. It is not known whether Timothy also went to Rome – possibly not, as he seems to have ended up in Ephesus, which was becoming a great Christian centre, and was probably where Paul's letters were first collected together, forming the beginning of the creation of the New Testament.

The passage from 2 Timothy falls naturally into two sections, the first about Timothy's own faith and learning, the second about his ministry to others on the basis of that learning. Timothy is reminded first that from childhood he has been brought up to know the scriptures (which at that time would be a reference to the Hebrew Bible, more or less our Old Testament). We know from chapter 1 of this same letter that his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice were both women of faith. And he is told that scripture is useful 'for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in right living' so that the person who serves God may be qualified and equipped for every good work. Of course, when we refer to the value of scripture, **we** think first of the New Testament, but the principle is the same.

Incidentally, in our recent 'Introduction to the New Testament' course, we had some discussion about the inspiration of scripture, as referred to here. It cannot simply mean the Holy Spirit 'dictating' words to the writer, or we should only need, for example, one gospel rather than four. Some of you might remember a Lent Course of several years ago, which included a session called 'Flashes of Inspiration.' In this we saw that the Holy Spirit is active in the original event, in the way the story is remembered and passed on, in the faith of the one who eventually writes it down, and indeed in the life of the one who reads that passage, even in our own time. And we noted how a passage we have read or heard many times, can on a particular occasion seem to 'speak to us' in a new and striking way. It might help to think of inspiration in relation to a cross, where the vertical line is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the horizontal line the human lives with which he interacts.

Moving on, we have a reminder that a time of judgement is coming, and so whatever the difficulties Timothy faces, he must continue to preach the word, 'to convince, rebuke and encourage.' In the passage we have read, Timothy is told 'always to be sober' – a word we in our time probably associate with not getting drunk, but in the context of this passage means, 'keep your head, do not lose control.' And finally, to discharge the duties of his ministry, doing the work of an evangelist.

Just as Paul fulfilled the role of an apostle, founding and then guiding new churches; or Luke, who used his skills and experience to write his gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. For each of **us** there are particular gifts, particular duties or ministries – we are not all called to be evangelists, but we **are** all called to some role within the Church, and we have a shared responsibility to help one another discern what our own particular role should be.

And so we return to those words from today's gospel which I quoted at the beginning, 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?' I want to link these words with the verse from 2 Timothy about people who will not listen to sound doctrine but will follow their own desires, following teachers 'who will tell them what they are itching to hear.'

I find these words startlingly relevant to our own time, when obeying universal rules or submitting to God's authority are alien to the spirit of this age, and no-one wants to hear about obedience, or purity, or faithfulness.

No, we are told that everyone is free to decide what is right for them. We have seen the spreading of 'fake news,' which to most of us seems unbelievable, yet many people not only accept but act upon. And we have seen the rise of the 'influencer' on social media. When we are watching the celebrity version of a quiz, or a show like Strictly Come Dancing, I will often fail to recognise a particular contestant, and ask my daughter, 'Why is he / she a celebrity?' to be told they are an 'influencer' with millions of followers on Instagram or YouTube, 'who will tell them what they are itching to hear.'

As we have read,
'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

Where is truth to be found? Who has the trustworthy, sound teaching? The words addressed to Timothy in this letter apply very much to us too: 'Continue in the truths you were taught; keep the faith; be ready for every good work.'

Jonathan Falkner

Suggested hymn to sing or read I the Lord of sea and sky.

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.**

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 ***Tell out, my soul.***

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

Lord, thy word abideth.

<https://youtu.be/-yeZUBP7b7M>

Beauty for brokenness.

https://youtu.be/O5_TVy2gHRg

I the Lord of sea and sky.

<https://youtu.be/UA2fMeXEKLA>

Tell out, my soul.

<https://youtu.be/vz-FkqobgXY>