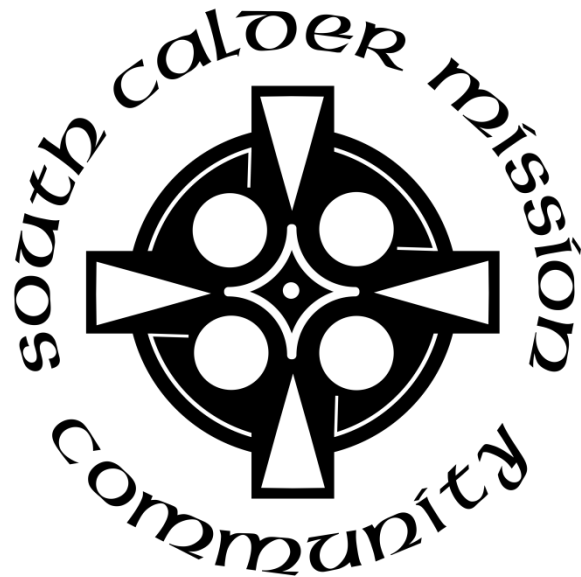


*into his courts
with praise...*



A Service of the Word
for
Sunday 13 September 2026
Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

*“Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the
dead and the living.”*

Romans 14:9.



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

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 **Fill though my life.**

THE WORD OF GOD.

Genesis 50:15–21.

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, 'What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?' So they approached Joseph, saying, 'Your father gave this instruction before he died, "Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you." Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father.' Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, 'We are here as your slaves.' But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.' In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Psalm 103:1-13.

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul, ♦
and all that is within me bless his holy name.
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, ♦
and forget not all his benefits;
- 3 Who forgives all your sins ♦
and heals all your infirmities;
- 4 Who redeems your life from the Pit ♦
and crowns you with faithful love and compassion;
- 5 Who satisfies you with good things, ♦
so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.
- 6 The Lord executes righteousness ♦
and judgement for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made his ways known to Moses ♦
and his works to the children of Israel.
- 8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, ♦
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 He will not always accuse us, ♦
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, ♦
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, ♦
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, ♦
so far has he set our sins from us.
- 13 As a father has compassion on his children, ♦
so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him.

Romans 14:1-22.

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat

in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. For it is written,
'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.'
So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of another. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual edification. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble.

The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

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

GOSPEL

Matthew 18: :21-35.

Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'

'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.

So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt.

When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?"

And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt.

So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

REFLECTION – Eat your veg.

‘Each of us will be accountable to God’ (*Romans 14: 12*)

When this passage from Romans chapter 14 crops up, my daughter, who is both a committed Christian and a fairly strict vegetarian, always insists that when Paul writes that those who are weak in faith only eat vegetables, he is not referring to a vegetarian diet as we understand it today.

Basically, this passage is about accepting one another as brothers and sisters in Christ: acknowledging that there will sometimes be differences in how we view certain matters, but not falling out or being dismissive of others as long as they **do** have faith. They are accepted by God, they are his servants, it is not for us to reject them.

Of the various groups mentioned in this passage, Paul is not questioning their faith in Jesus, or their place within the fellowship of the Church – it is their confidence in living as followers of Jesus which seems weaker or stronger.

So what about these people whose ‘faith is weak because they only eat vegetables?’ We need a bit of background:
In the cities of the Roman Empire (and the Greek Empire before that) it was almost impossible to buy raw meat. Rich people could have meat sent in from their country estates and farms, but for the poor all that was available was cooked meat from the market.

Where did this cooked meat come from? It came via sacrifices offered in pagan temples. Thousands of animals were slaughtered for sacrifice. Some of these would be totally burnt on the altar, but many were simply cooked – food for the priests and fellowship meals for the worshippers, and the rest sold on to traders to sell at market.

So what do you do if you are a Christian and want nothing to do with pagan worship? If you are one of those Paul calls ‘strong in faith’ you say, ‘I don’t care where it came from, where it has been. As far as I’m concerned, I have **not** been to a pagan temple, I have paid for it at market like anything else I buy, and I’m grateful to God that I have food.’
If you are one of the ‘weak’ you say,
‘As a Christian I want no contact with pagan worship. I **know** where this meat comes from and I’ll be letting God down if I buy it and eat it. I’ll play safe and only buy vegetables.’

A similar, though less emotional, question arises about whether to celebrate special days. Some say,
‘We honour God by having special services or prayers to mark certain days: new moons, special Sabbaths,’ and (as time went on) saints’ days and other festivals and celebrations.
Others would say,
‘Every day is a gift from God; every day is cause for prayer and thanksgiving; it is wrong to treat some days as more special than others.’
Paul is saying,
‘Don’t fall out over things like this. You each do what you do because you believe that in this way you are honouring God. Don’t despise your brother or sister Christian because they choose to honour God in a slightly different way. We are each accountable to God for our own behaviour.’

Are these still questions for us today? Well, sacrifices at pagan temples are not much of an issue here and now, but there are moral issues on which Christians sincerely take different views. And while most of us are happy to make festivals out of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, some Christians, and some sections of the Church, tend to attach importance to a lot of other days as well.

Within denominations, and between denominations, there can be differences of practice, without feeling that we have to ‘unchurch’ people with whom we disagree. Sadly, history shows that it is much easier to fall out and divide than to come together, and I have been impressed, and blessed, by the way different churches have been trying to work together across the villages and denominations in this Mission Community. I am particularly struck by a couple of lines in our Mission Community Prayer:

‘We thank you for the faith we have in common,
and for the people and traditions which make each church unique.’

I am not saying (and neither is Paul) that we should be willing to bend our principles, compromise our faith, just to keep things comfortable. But neither should we deny the faith or principles of our fellow-Christians when we find they differ. We are each accountable to God the Father, and it is up to him to judge. If we put our faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and do our best to follow him in our daily life, he will sort out anything that needs sorting. He coped with a very mixed bunch in his first group of disciples, and I expect he will cope with us.

Jonathan Falkner.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **Praise, my soul, the King of heaven.***

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*

**Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace.
Look upon our divided world
to be with those who are victims of violence.**

We pray for all people who have been subjected to the cruelty of others.

**Help us to know the gift of your peace in the power of your Spirit and
we ask you to soften the hearts of those who can stop the fighting.
Creator God, we ask for your aid as your children of light
living in the darkness of our 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 **Brother, sister, let me serve you.**

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 though my life.

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

He is Lord.

<https://youtu.be/wBgESXUwKzY>

Forgive our sins as we forgive.

<https://youtu.be/AEEtSglenKU>

Lord of all hopefulness.

<https://youtu.be/i6ztll8Hlbo>