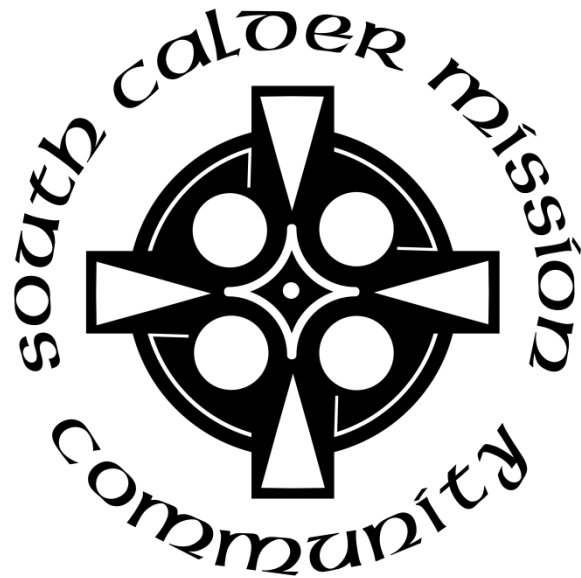


Into his Courts with Praise...



A Service of the Word
for
Sunday 6 September 2026
Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Matthew 18:20.



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

Merciful God, your Son came to save us and bore our sins on the cross:
may we trust in your mercy and know your love, rejoicing in the
righteousness that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **O God, you search me and you know me.**

THE WORD OF GOD.

Ezekiel 33:7-11.

So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, 'O wicked ones, you shall surely die', and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: 'Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?' Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from

their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Psalm 119:33-40.

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes ♦
and I shall keep it to the end.
Give me understanding and I shall keep your law; ♦
I shall keep it with my whole heart.
Lead me in the path of your commandments, ♦
for therein is my delight.
Incline my heart to your testimonies ♦
and not to unjust gain.
Turn away my eyes lest they gaze on vanities; ♦
O give me life in your ways.
Confirm to your servant your promise, ♦
which stands for all who fear you.
Turn away the reproach which I dread, ♦
because your judgements are good.
Behold, I long for your commandments; ♦
in your righteousness give me life.

Romans 13:8-end.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

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

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-20.

'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

REFLECTION – put on the armour of light.

Sometimes I can see the connection between the lectionary readings and today's fall into that category. The theme is pretty clear, it's about how we behave to one another.

Paul's advice in Romans is very typically in Paul's style. Love your neighbour as yourself and be aware that time is running out. Paul points out that we, Christians, are at a turning point between the old and the new.

For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near.

This was addressed to Paul's readers in the church in Rome, and, yes, they were much closer in time to the old ways than we are. The message is still the same for us;

Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy.

In other words Christians, both in the Early Church of Paul's time and also in our world, must conform to the teaching of the Gospel. The starting

point for that conformity is to live in the love on which the Christian faith is founded.

Love your neighbour as yourself

Jesus, on the other hand, accepts that it isn't always the easiest thing to love our neighbour. Sometimes things go wrong, arguments start and differences of opinion spring up, even between those who share so much in common. He knows that we aren't perfect, we can't be perfect. If we were we would not be human. He explains this in Matthew's Gospel, at the end of chapter 18.

If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Yes, even between members of a community of shared faith and Christian belief there will be arguments, differences of opinion or interpretation. Bear in mind that the biblical definition of "sin" is a wide one. It is important to accept that the sins we commit individually have an impact on the community as a whole, not merely on the individuals directly involved. This is clear in the passage. Initially the response is between the people directly involved, the sinner and the sinned against. If it can be settled quietly in private, all well and good. If not then things will escalate. Jesus suggests that witnesses be involved. Not as judges but to confirm the conversation between the two parties.

This is beginning to sound distinctly legalistic. Well, for Jesus' listeners and Matthew's readers it would have a direct reference to the law as set out in the Old Testament writings, Deuteronomy and Leviticus in particular.

Jesus goes even further;

If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.

Interesting that the Church is given some power to be involved as an arbitrator in such disputes. Also, if the perpetrator won't even listen to the Church, he is not one of the faithful. I also find it interesting that Matthew,

the writer of this Gospel, had been a tax collector (Matthew 9:9) so he presumably knew what he was talking about.

Jesus is not concerned with the old law so much as the new order, the order started by his ministry and which will come to fruition with his death and resurrection. And unlike the old law of Deuteronomy and Leviticus, there is someone else involved.

This passage is I think one that sums up the real point of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is present at the heart of the Gospel, at the heart of the Christian community of the early Church. Not only that but he is present then, now and through all the centuries in between.

We know how Jesus treated Gentiles and tax collectors, sinners in the eyes of the Jewish authorities. Matthew tells us that he sat and ate with them, he spent his time with them. That, let's face it, was the cause of the trouble between Jesus and the religious authorities. Jesus introduced a new way of doing things, a new inclusivity.

Being a member of Jesus' Christian church comes with responsibilities.

If your sheep is lost you don't look for an hour and then give up the search. No, you keep on looking until you find it.. If your brother sins against you seventy-seven times (another hypothetical certainty), that's how many times you forgive him.

In the passage preceding this one Matthew tells us about Peter's question;

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times". Matthew 18: 21-22

This passage could not be more appropriate for Christians in every age, place, and situation. One of the things that plagues most Christian communities, and other communities too, is the inability to handle confrontation and disagreement. We only have to look at Prime Minister's Questions to see that polarisation seems to matter more than reason or truth.

We are all of us — not just politicians or our brother or sister in Christ — sinners.

All is not without hope, Jesus offers a simple guide to help us handle our sin and its consequences. Far more important is Jesus' promise that he is present, here, now, and that his presence is real for us, when we are gathered in his name even when we are sinners.

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Just gathered together, not in total agreement, not when we are without sin, just gathered in Jesus' name.

*Help us Lord Jesus to love our neighbours as ourselves and to admit our own failings and forgive others for theirs.
Amen.*

Brian Pateman.

*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 the people of Ukraine
and all 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.

Cumbria Ecumenical Spirituality Group.

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

O God, you search me and you know me.

<https://youtu.be/XST5DCIHh6c>

Beauty for brokenness.

https://youtu.be/O5_TVy2gHRg

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven.

<https://youtu.be/60JgQoJK9J8>

Brother, sister, let me serve you.

<https://youtu.be/EQaOErUUjm8>