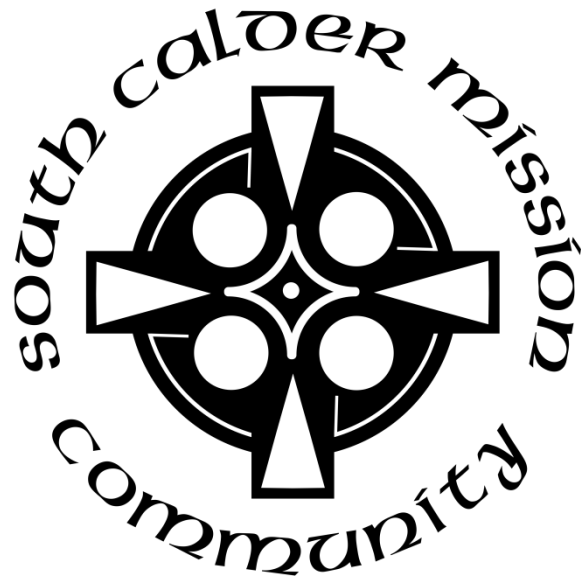


Into his Courts with Praise...



A Service of the Word

Sunday 18 October 2026
Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

"I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god."

Isaiah 45:5.



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 light and our salvation: illuminate our lives,
that we may see your goodness in the land of the living,
and looking on your beauty may be changed into the likeness of Jesus
Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **All creatures of our God and King.**

THE WORD OF GOD.

Isaiah 45:1-7

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue nations before him
and strip kings of their robes,
to open doors before him—
and the gates shall not be closed:
I will go before you
and level the mountains,
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron,
I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the Lord,

the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me.
I am the Lord, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.
I arm you, though you do not know me,
so that they may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;
I am the Lord, and there is no other.
I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe;
I the Lord do all these things.

Psalm 96:1-9

Sing to the Lord a new song; ♦
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord and bless his name; ♦
tell out his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations ♦
and his wonders among all peoples.
For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; ♦
he is more to be feared than all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are but idols; ♦
it is the Lord who made the heavens.
Honour and majesty are before him; ♦
power and splendour are in his sanctuary.
Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; ♦
ascribe to the Lord honour and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; ♦
bring offerings and come into his courts.
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; ♦
let the whole earth tremble before him.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God
the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Suggested hymn to sing or read Angel voices ever singing.

GOSPEL

Matthew 22: 15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap Jesus in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

REFLECTION - Give to Caesar what is Caesar's – Give to God what is God's

Did you ever watch any of the Blackadder series? Even if you didn't, you might be familiar with Baldrick, the character Tony Robinson played, who was always coming up with a 'cunning plan' which usually turned out to be not very realistic and often plain daft.

Well, in our reading from Matthew's gospel they really did have a great cunning plan for trapping Jesus. It comes in a section of the gospel where different groups of people are testing Jesus with difficult questions, and we have some parables that Jesus told which openly challenged them too. It looked as if they had nailed him this time. The Pharisees and the Herodians went along together. (This seems significant as they were opposing groups.) They asked Jesus whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar or not. Whichever way he answers they have him – it's a Catch 22 question. If he says **yes**, it is right, he will upset the Pharisees and all devout Jews, who hate having to give money to the Romans, the occupying forces. However, if he says **no** it is not right to pay taxes to Caesar, he will upset the Herodians, who support Herod, the puppet governor appointed by the Romans, and will be seen to encourage subversion. This in turn will be seen to be disturbing the uneasy truce with the Romans, who at the moment are letting the Jews practise their religion – but only if it doesn't cause the Romans too much trouble.

Jesus, realising that it is a trap rather than a genuine searching after truth and faith, gives them this very clever answer. First of all he asks them to bring him a coin used for paying the tax, and they bring him a denarius, a Roman coin.

'Whose portrait is this? Whose inscription?'

'Caesar's,' they reply.

'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'

When they heard this they were amazed and went away. I'm not surprised – there was no arguing with that, was there? It is such a good answer on so many levels. The Pharisees can't really argue it any further than that, because the Temple Tax that was levied on the Jewish people had to be paid with special temple coins, which was why the money changers had their stall in the outer courts of the temple – at preferential rates to the stall holders, of course, and I should think the temple took their cut too.

We know what Jesus thought of that, when he was so angry that he pushed over the tables of the money changers and called the outer court 'a den of thieves.' Such trading had no place in any part of his Father's house, the temple! So the Pharisees would have been shooting themselves in the foot to bring that up again.

Another reason that it is a good answer is that it deflects any decisions about what amounts or proportions of income might be right to the hearers. Both past hearers, who first heard it from Jesus himself, right up to present hearers, like us. How do we decide what to give to the government (or rather, what the government asks from **us** – easy decision there then!), and what to give to God? Do we include Christian charities as well as what we give to church? Do we include other charities in what we set aside for God? Do we set a regular amount aside, or give as we feel inclined?

I am not going to give you a lecture about giving – just to remind you that it needs serious thought and prayer. I know that not everyone feels they can follow the biblical principal of tithing; that is, giving 10% of your income to God – though I was pulled up short when I discovered that a friend of ours on benefits tithes her income. She reckons the money always comes from somewhere to see her through if she takes off that 10% first. We aim at 10% but never quite seem to manage it. Every few years, when we review the amount we give and put it up, we find it still doesn't quite make 10% after inflation and subsequent increases in income. Do you know that if most Church of England members gave on this principle, or even 5% of their income, there wouldn't be any problems about meeting expenditure? Wouldn't that be great?

Anyway, I think we could take the principle of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and giving to God what is God's even further: is this just about money? We often assume that giving is about money, but it can be about a lot of other things too – giving our time, a listening ear, perhaps giving a hand with some task, just as examples. I'm sure you can think of lots more.

'Whose portrait is this,' asks Jesus when they show him a denarius, 'and whose inscription?'

'Caesar's,' they reply.

'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'

So if the denarius has Caesar's mark on it, where will we find the mark of God, so that we can give him his due? We say at the offertory that,

'All things come from **you**, and of your own do we give you.'

Everything is God's, it all belongs to **him**. All of creation, which he made in the first place. All the animals and plants, fish and birds. Anything we can make is produced from this world, this universe. Houses, cars, books, electricity: you name it, it is God's. And **we** are all God's, even those of us who do not realise it yet, **we** are made in God's image and so we bear his mark.

Will we honour him? Give ourselves to him? Work for him, love him, love others with his love, hope and work for his kingdom, wherever and whenever we can?

Are we showing the faith, love, hope and joy that the gospel brings? Are there things that we put first, before the kingdom? Are we serving God the way he wants? I'll leave you Jesus' words to think about:

Are **you** giving to Caesar what is Caesar's?

More importantly, are **you** giving to God what is God's?

Sheila Falkner.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **Take my life and let it be.***

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 who have been subjected to the cruelty of others,
through war or other causes.**

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 ***We have a gospel to proclaim.***

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

All creatures of our God and King.

<https://youtu.be/kJRqM45Y8Gk>

Angel voices ever singing.

<https://youtu.be/iVYIIQEB2yE>

Take my life and let it be.

<https://youtu.be/Of4l5bTdZ8M>

We have a gospel to proclaim.

<https://youtu.be/l5wWRYq57EM>