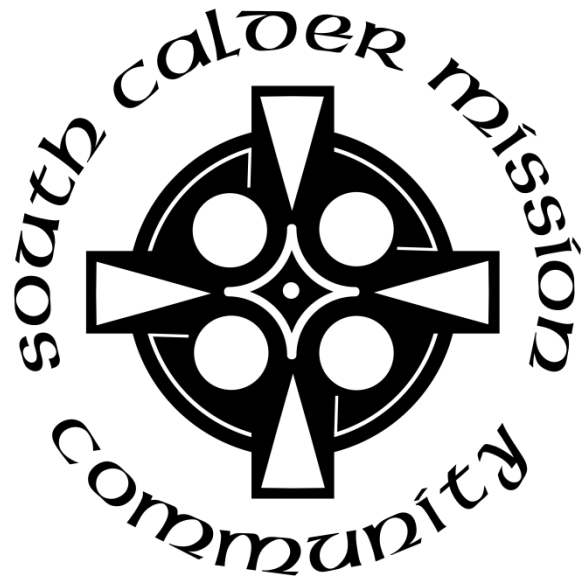


Into his Courts with Praise...



A Service of the Word

Sunday 4 October 2026
Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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Morning and Evening Prayer, Night Prayer,
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INTRODUCTION

*“ The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes. ”*

Matthew 21:42 (Psalm 118:22-23).



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 ***Fight the good fight.***

THE WORD OF GOD.

Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.
He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watch-tower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me

and my vineyard.

What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

Psalms 80:9-17

You brought a vine out of Egypt; ♦
you drove out the nations and planted it.
You made room around it, ♦
and when it had taken root, it filled the land.
The hills were covered with its shadow ♦
and the cedars of God by its boughs.
It stretched out its branches to the Sea ♦
and its tendrils to the River.
Why then have you broken down its wall, ♦
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?
The wild boar out of the wood tears it off, ♦
and all the insects of the field devour it.
Turn again, O God of hosts, ♦

look down from heaven and behold;
Cherish this vine which your right hand has planted, ♦
and the branch that you made so strong for yourself.
Let those who burnt it with fire, who cut it down, ♦
perish at the rebuke of your countenance.

Philippians 3: 4-14

Even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Suggested hymn to sing or read All I once held dear.

GOSPEL

Matthew 21: 33-46

‘Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce.

But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.” So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.’

Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures:

“The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord’s doing,

and it is amazing in our eyes”?

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.’

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

REFLECTION – All for Christ.

Both the new testament readings today are speaking against opposition in the form of the Jewish religion, including the Pharisees and others who reject Christ, in the parable about the tenants and the vineyard, and the Jewish Christians trying to insist on keeping some of their traditions as requirements of all new Christians in Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

Paul proves to us that if anyone could qualify under the law of Moses, and in Jewish traditions, it was him. By birth, as a Pharisee and a zealous Jew of high standing, he had it all. Until he had the vision on the Damascus road. Until he met Jesus Christ. Until he learned about the Christian faith and got to know Jesus. Whereupon he realised that status and earned reputation were worth nothing. He threw it all away and became a Christian. He really did throw it all away – can you imagine how his fellow

Jews would have reacted? Saul, the devout and well regarded Pharisee, who hunted down the enemies of the Jewish faith, these upstart Christians, and persecuted them **even to death**, had done an about turn and become one of them. Had he gone mad? I imagine there was a price on his head for the rest of his life.

As the song goes -
'All I once held dear, built my life upon,
all I once thought gain I have counted loss.'

Now all that mattered to him was faith in Jesus Christ which gave him as a gift that righteousness which he used to strive for under the law. Righteousness won for us by Jesus' death on the cross. All Paul wants is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, to share his death and be raised to new life.

As the chorus of the song goes on –
'Knowing you Jesus, knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness.

Over my life time I've had more than one friend who would like to be able to call themselves a Christian, but can't quite get to that point where you have to let go of the control of your own life, and make that commitment, and start to take the risk of talking and listening to God. They become what I would call 'friends of Christianity', living by the 'code to live by' which can be gained from the 10 commandments and the gospels.

I was given a book to read by one such friend. It was called;

'Conversations on Matthew's Gospel between an Atheist and a Christian.'

The two go through the gospel discussing things Jesus said and did, if it really is a true account of his life, deeds and the things he said, and what could have been added by the author. I found it quite interesting, looking at the gospel from a different perspective and thinking about different aspects of God, and how you could take different aspects of the gospels and make an entirely different picture of God, if you wanted to.

It was an interesting book and discussion, but for me it had a great failing. It was all about head knowledge, all on an intellectual basis.

Christianity works very much on faith - belief and trust. And on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who lives and is around and in us, if we invite him in, through the Holy Spirit living in us.

I remember, as a teenager, having been brought up in a Christian family, wondering if it was all true, or if it was all an elaborate construction, a kind of self delusion. How could I absolutely **know** it was true? Then one day, when I was allowed to sit in on an older teenagers discussion group led by my Mum (it was called MUGS – Mrs Urwin's Group!) on condition that I helped to make the coffee and kept quiet, I heard something that changed my life. Mum had a tape with some celebrities talking about faith. One of them said that they hadn't been sure about Christianity, but they'd decided to give it a chance, and live as it were true for a year to see. I thought that was a good idea. I decided to do that too, then I could review after a year and see if it was worth it.

And I've never looked back! Perhaps that's why the Bible says in the Psalms –
'O taste and see that the Lord is good.'

For Paul, Christ is everything. Yet he's not having an easy life. He's in prison, in chains. A humble tent maker who moves around, he can't have had much money. Yet he can write such a letter as this, full of life, faith, love and hope – and joy too.

Can others see the difference that Jesus makes in our lives? Do we leave behind our worldly status, the security our wealth gives us? Do we leave behind our insecurities and the difficulties we've had, old bitterness, or perhaps the idea that we are life's victims? Can we still trust, love and befriend people, even needy and difficult people?

We're not there yet, we're not perfect – well I'm not, anyway! This side of heaven we're not going to be. There's work to do. And Jesus is always calling us onward, to be in the right place at the right time, to witness to him, or to be his hands to help others and to forward his kingdom.

Paul says this too. As one of the first Christian leaders and missionaries he says –
'I do not claim that I have already succeeded or have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to himself.'

As the hymn says –

‘Run the straight race through God’s good grace.
Lift up thine eyes, and seek his face.
Life with it’s path before thee lies,
Christ is the way, and Christ the prize.’

Sheila Falkner.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **May the mind of Christ my Saviour.**

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, the Middle East
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 **Fill thou my life.**

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

Fight the good fight.

<https://youtu.be/YppcFC8mxKM>

All I once held dear.

<https://youtu.be/Merf00qcQik>

May the mind of Christ my Saviour.

https://youtu.be/dQTkQWV_oY0

Fill thou my life.

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