



Sunday 2nd August

PREPARATION

Welcome

Leader We come from scattered lives to meet with God.
Let us recognise His presence with us wherever we are right now

All As God's people we have gathered
let us worship together

Hymn **152 For the beauty of the earth**

For the beauty of the earth,
For the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon and stars of light,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of ear and eye,
For the heart and mind's delight,
For the mystic harmony,

Linking sense to sound and sight,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For thyself, best gift divine,
To the world so freely given,
For that great, great love of thine,
Peace on earth and joy in heaven,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise

Opening activity ~ Double or drop

Confession

Leader We are often slow to follow the example of Christ.
Lord have mercy.

All **Lord have mercy.**

We often fail to be known as Christ's disciples.

Christ, have mercy.

All Christ have mercy

We often fail to walk the way of the cross.

Lord have mercy.

All Lord have mercy.

Absolution

Leader The Lord enrich us with His grace, and nourish us with His blessing; The Lord defend us in trouble and keep us from all evil; The Lord accept our prayers, and absolve us from our offences, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

Collect (8th Sunday after Trinity)

Leader Lord God, your Son left the riches of heaven and became poor for our sake:
when we prosper save us from pride,
when we are needy save us from despair,
that we may trust in you alone;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Leader Loving God, we have come to worship you.
**All Help us to pray to you in faith,
to sing your praise with gratitude,
and to listen to your word with eagerness;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Psalms 17 to be read together – A prayer of David

¹ Hear me, LORD, my plea is just; listen to my cry.

Hear my prayer – it does not rise from deceitful lips.

² Let my vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right.

³ Though you probe my heart, though you examine me at night and test me, you will find that I have planned no evil; my mouth has not transgressed.

⁴ Though people tried to bribe me, I have kept myself from the ways of the violent through what your lips have commanded.

⁵ My steps have held to your paths; my feet have not stumbled.

⁶ I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.

⁷ Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right

hand those who take refuge in you from their foes.

⁸ Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings
⁹ from the wicked who are out to destroy me, from my mortal enemies who surround me.

¹⁰ They close up their callous hearts, and their mouths speak with arrogance.

¹¹ They have tracked me down, they now surround me, with eyes alert, to throw me to the ground.

¹² They are like a lion hungry for prey, like a fierce lion crouching in cover.

¹³ Rise up, LORD, confront them, bring them down; with your sword rescue me from the wicked.

¹⁴ By your hand save me from such people, LORD, from those of this world whose reward is in this life.

May what you have stored up for the wicked fill their bellies; may their children gorge themselves on it, and may there be leftovers for their little ones.

¹⁵ As for me, I shall be vindicated and shall see your face; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with seeing your likeness.

This time @home Matthew Rickard

Hymn **1139 You chose the cross**

You chose the cross with ev'ry
breath;
the perfect life, the perfect death.

You chose the cross.

A crown of thorns You wore for us,
and crowned us with eternal life;

You chose the cross.

And though Your soul was
overwhelmed with pain,
obedient to death, You overcame.

*I'm lost in wonder, I'm lost in love,
I'm lost in praise forevermore.
Because of Jesus' unfailing love,
I am forgiven, I am restored.*

You loosed the cords of sinfulness,
and broke the chains of my
disgrace;

You chose the cross.

Up from the grave victorious,
You rose again so glorious;

You chose the cross.

The sorrow that surrounded You
was mine.

Yet, "Not My will, but Yours be
done," You said.

I'm lost in wonder . . .

Bible readings

Mark 10:17-27 ~ Paul Stanistreet, All Souls'

¹⁷As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good -- except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.' "

²⁰"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²²At this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

²³Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

²⁴The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁶The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

Acts 16:11-15 ~ Mark Lemprière, St Mark's

¹¹From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. ¹²From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

¹³On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Sermon Lydia's choice – Rachel Johnson

Today we're continuing with our journey through Acts but to start with I want you to cast your minds back to the day a rich young man came to ask Jesus a question – "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

We heard the story earlier in our first reading. It ended with the young man walking away from Jesus, unwilling to let go of his wealth and status and security. Jesus then came out with one of his most well-known sayings: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Now let's imagine the story went like this instead.

A rich woman of unknown age ran up to Jesus and fell on her knees before him. "Good teacher," she asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"You know the commandments", Jesus answered, 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal or lie or cheat, honour your father and mother.'"

"Teacher," she declared, "I try my best every day but these are hard commands to keep."

Jesus looked at her and loved her. "Go", he declared, "gather everything you have and use it to build the kingdom of God on earth. Then come, follow me."

At this the woman went away rejoicing for she had a fine home into which she could welcome God's people, and much wealth that she could use to feed the poor, and she knew many people, from all walks of life, with whom she could share the wonderful news that she had found her Saviour.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, this woman has done what many said was impossible, for she loves me more than she loves money."



This story is imaginary, but the woman isn't. She's called Lydia and she comes from Thyatira, a prosperous Greek city in modern-day Turkey. Thyatira is famous for producing dyes, especially purple dye. Lydia herself is a seller of luxury purple cloth. She's now living in

Philippi, a flourishing Roman colony in Macedonia – modern-day Greece. Presumably she's moved there in search of new markets for her purple cloth. So she's a successful businesswoman – ambitious, prosperous, well connected – think Deborah Meaden from Dragon's Den or Karren Brady from The Apprentice. And she's independent – she owns her own home and controls the household, she doesn't seem to be under the authority of a man. But she's perhaps also something of an outsider – she's a woman in a man's world, she's a foreigner, she worships the God of a minority religion. So I wonder what she's searching for. Eternal life? Security? Or just a place to belong?

Paul has come to Philippi in response to his vision of a man from Macedonia calling for his help. Now typically, when Paul arrives in a new city he goes to the local synagogue to preach to the Jewish community, but it seems that there isn't a synagogue in Philippi. No matter. Paul knows that when there's no synagogue Jews often gather by water so on the Sabbath he goes down to the river to find the Jews of Philippi. And there he meets not a man from Macedonia but a woman – Lydia.

You know, I never really thought about why Lydia was down there at the river – I just took it for granted that she'd go and find a place to pray on the Sabbath with her fellow Jews. But actually, it's not at all certain that Lydia's of Jewish descent so the Sabbath laws might not have such a strong hold on her. It would be easy for her to think to herself, “hmm, Saturday, that's a busy day in the market, lots of trade to be done, important people to schmooze with....maybe I'll fit in some prayers later on”. But no. Lydia sets her business aside to go and pray.



Thinking about Lydia reminded me of Gary Grant, the founder of The Entertainer chain of toy stores. If you've ever walked past one of his shops on a Sunday you might have noticed they're always closed and that's because Gary Grant is a Christian who made the decision to keep his shops closed on Sundays to give his staff a day of rest. I don't know if that was an easy decision for him or something, he wrestled with but, like Lydia, he chose to put God before profits. Take a

moment to consider just how extraordinary that choice is. As extraordinary as a camel fitting through the eye of a needle.

Going back to Lydia, we see that choice bearing fruit as it leads her to a life-changing encounter with Paul. The Holy Spirit opens her heart to

receive Paul's gospel message and she finds everything she wanted not in the purple cloth trade nor in the law of the Old Covenant but in Christ crucified. So, Lydia and her household are baptised, the first converts on European soil.

Now you might be thinking it's not fair to compare Lydia with the rich young man in our first reading – as far as we know Paul never told her to give away all her worldly goods or she might have thought twice. But actually, Lydia doesn't need telling. Her first instinct is to use her wealth to help others. Just look at how she implores Paul and his companions to accept hospitality in her home. And later on we read that the brothers and sisters, the founding members of the Philippian church, are meeting in her home, just as we saw a couple of weeks ago the church meeting in Mary's home. Right from the start Lydia is using her wealth to bless God's people and grow his kingdom. In this sermon series we've looked at other generous people in the early church – as well as Mary there was Barnabas who sold his field and Tabitha who made clothes for the poor. But the Philippian church is particularly known for its generosity and I wonder if this is down to Lydia's influence as a founding member of the church.

We've heard two stories this morning. One is the story of a person who clung onto the luxury and power and status and security of worldly wealth and failed to recognise what was truly precious. The other is the story of an extraordinary person who held their wealth lightly enough to be able to grasp hold of Jesus, who used that wealth to be a blessing and who found an eternal home in the kingdom of God. Which story do you want to be yours to be?

Hymn **590 Seek ye first**

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, And His righteousness,
And all these things, shall be added onto you,
Allelu, alleluia

Man shall not live by bread alone, But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God
Allelu, Alleuia

Ask and it shall be given unto you, Seek and ye shall find.
Knock and the door shall be opened onto you.
Allelu, Alleuia

The Creed

Leader We say together in faith

**All Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.**

Leader We believe in God the Father,
who created all things:

**All for by his will they were created
and have their being.**

Leader We believe in God the Son,
who was slain:

**All for with his blood,
he purchased us for God,
from every tribe and language,
from every people and nation.**

Leader We believe in God the Holy Spirit:

**All the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'
Even so come, Lord Jesus! Amen.**

Prayers Jacqui Still, St Peter's

Heavenly Father we thank you for bringing us safely to the beginning of this new day and for all your goodness to us. You have journeyed with us throughout this season of uncertainty and fear and as we emerge into a changed world, you continue in your steadfast love and presence to comfort and guide us. Be with us this day as we lift our prayer and praises to you today. In Jesus Name, we pray – AMEN



Lord as we learn to live with the everydayness of the pandemic, we remember that your world still turns. We pray for the governments of this world as they seek to lead their peoples, some with pure motives, others not. We pray that at the very heart of power, your Kingdom may come, and your will be done. We pray for the tensions between governments over the treatment of peoples whose liberties are taken from them; for first nation people conveniently set aside from the world's gaze. We pray for those whose lives are poverty and where no state aid reaches them. So often we focus on distant lands, but in rich countries of the west, there are still the poor. We pray for peoples whose lives are war torn and fearful – with poverty and sickness their every present shadows.

Lord none of these surprises you in the broken world we live in. You shine your light into all the failings of your creation. Hear our cry for justice and peace we pray – In Jesus Name, AMEN.

Heavenly Father we lift before you the lands of the United Kingdom as it seeks to redefine its place in the world. We pray for the European negotiations and ask for your way to be clear to all in the discussions and for agreement to be reached. We pray for our relationships with other countries, for warmth and wisdom in their formation.

For the recovery or reshaping of our businesses to aid the economic recovery. Perhaps not all will return to what was before, but our lands need successful business people, like Lydia, to enable us to function as a society. We pray at this time of change you would inspire and lead us in these new ways. In Jesus Name, we pray – AMEN.

We pray too for all for whom this year has shaped their lives in ways they could not imagine, nor want. For griefs borne in isolation, for health burdens yet to unfold, for lives at a crossroad where choices are still to be made.

We ask for your presence for all who are struggling to cope with this new landscape. May you reach out to them and may they find your everlasting arms holding them as they fall, may you, who know, their hopes, their fear their needs, meet them in the place they find themselves.

We remember in a few moments quiet our fellow journeymen for whom the path is steeper at this time, to ask for your staff to comfort them – For Bob Baker, Eileen and Peter Bliss, Trevor Lloyd, Mary McAvoy, Joy Storkey and John Hunter.

We thank you for your church which has risen to this time of challenge. In creativity of communication, in practicality of service, in the hospitality of hope. For daily faithful prayer, for reaching out through many means. We pray for leadership team as they seek to navigate this changing path, for wisdom and imagination that we might continue in the unity we have enjoyed as three churches in one parish. AMEN

We pray for ourselves, for the part we play in Living Stones of this parish. Help us to see where you would like us to be, the skills and gifts you have uncovered during this time of change, the potential to stretch and be stretched to become the best we can be in the power of your Holy Spirit on the path you have for us. AMEN

As we lift our prayers to you, we remember we are your children, your family and you our Father in Heaven, so we draw all our prayers together in the familiar prayer Jesus taught us, praying:

The Lord's Prayer

All **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen**

Notices *(See Notes & News)*

Hymn **631 Tell out my soul**

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of His word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name!
Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;
His holy name, the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His word!
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

Closing Prayer

Leader Jesus, Lord of time,

All **hold us in your eternity.**

Leader Jesus, image of God,

All **travel with us the life of faith.**

Leader Jesus, friend of sinners,

All **heal the brokenness of our world.**

Leader Jesus, Lord of tomorrow,

All **draw us into your future. Amen.**

Blessing

Leader May the Father keep us in all our days.
May Christ shield us in all our ways.
May the Spirit bring us healing and peace.
May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from us
and pour upon us blessing and light.

All Amen.

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

