

Note

This act of worship is presented as it would normally be used by a congregation, with congregational responses in bold. Even though you are reading the whole service to yourself; there is a similar dynamic of receiving the word then responding in your heart and the usual format has therefore been maintained.

The use of 'us' is also maintained as worship is never a private and singular matter. Wherever and whenever we are, we are the whole people of God.

An advantage of using this worship in your own home is to take it at your own pace and allow more space for prayerful reflection before moving forward.

Preparation

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Hymn

To be read (or sung) as a prayer

My God, accept my heart this day,
and make it always thine,
that I from thee no more may stray,
no more from thee decline.

Before the cross of him who died,
behold, I prostrate fall;
let every sin be crucified,
and Christ be all in all.

Anoint me with thy heavenly grace,
and seal me for thine own;
that I may see thy glorious face,
and worship near thy throne.

Let every thought and work and word
to thee be ever given:
then life shall be thy service, Lord,
and death the gate of heaven.

All glory to the Father be,
all glory to the Son,
all glory, Holy Ghost, to thee,
while endless ages run.

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'

So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Out of the depths I cry to you:

Lord, hear my voice.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

If you should mark what is done amiss:
who may abide it?

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Trust in the Lord, for with him there is mercy:
for with him is ample redemption.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

Lord, you have taught us
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
send your Holy Spirit
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of
love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whoever lives is counted dead
before you.

Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and for ever.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 10.24-39

Jesus summoned the twelve and sent them out with the following instruction: ²⁴'A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the

master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

Sermon

Today's reading from the Gospel of Matthew does not appear to offer too many words of comfort. It is challenging and demanding not only to us who hear it today, but to the disciples whom Jesus addressed and to the first hearers of this gospel in the community for which it was written. These words are said to those who, unlike us in the western world, suffered persecution and sometimes death because of their faith. It reflects a time when the new Christian faith split families

apart. Jesus was asking the disciples to give him ultimate allegiance, placing loyalty to God over and above any calls of this world including family relationships.

Neither are they words for those new to faith, but for those who have grown into a mature discipleship and are ready to go out and be representatives of Jesus in the wider world. This not only refers to those first disciples but to all since then who become apostles of Jesus – sent out, potentially into a hostile world unreceptive to the message they bring.

Jesus says that the disciples are to be like him. They are being sent out to represent Jesus to all those they meet, to say what he would say, do what he would do and to uphold and live out the values that he lives by. There is a bracelet some people wear inscribed or woven with the letters, WWJD, meaning What Would Jesus Do. The phrase was first around in the United States in the late 1800s but has enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in more recent times. The underlying sentiment is fine and gives us pause to think, reflect, and pray, but it is not much help as a practical guide. When we reflect on all the different things Jesus said and the different way or tone in which he addressed and treated various groups and individuals, it soon becomes clear that we need more than a slogan to help us. Jesus challenged the self-righteous. He was compassionate to those in need offering love, healing and forgiveness. He encouraged the fearful, urging them to greater trust and commitment. He supported the outcast and the poor. Not only that, but Jesus lived in a different world from our own and there are situations and issues today with which he never engaged. It needs much wisdom to discern the needs and attitudes of those with whom we come into contact, to understand the ethical issues of our own day and work out how best to reflect God's love in our own words, judgements and actions. Many of us are hesitant to speak at all of what we believe for fear of getting it wrong and maybe doing more harm than good.

All that we can do is our best, but our best undergirded by a life of prayer and intention. Jesus encourages his disciples not to be fearful but to trust that they are important to God, even down

to the hairs on their head. When we commit ourselves to a life of discipleship, we may well find ourselves becoming less dependent on, 'losing', the things of the world – money and status for example. But we gain another life with a greater sense of fulfilment, participating in a life bigger than our own, in projects that take us out of our own self-concerns to concern for others. We may be physically unable to be active out there in the world. We may be constrained by the Covid19 crisis still upon us. We may be unable to see how God might be calling us to serve the needs of those around us in our local community. All those constraints though need not limit our discipleship and our commitment to God. There are other ways we can live out our discipleship – by praying for those in need, supporting those who fight for justice in the world, giving what we can of our resources to those who are able to be out there in places and amongst people we are not called to be, challenging prejudice in the attitudes of those around us, offering compassion and words of comfort to the sick and the cast down.

Wherever we are this week let us always be on the alert for how we can be disciples of Christ today.

Jesus said, "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

O God, the creator and preserver of all,
we pray for people in every kind of need;
make your ways known on earth,
your saving health among all nations ...

We pray for the good estate of the catholic Church;
guide and govern us by your good Spirit,
that all who profess and call themselves Christians
may be led into the way of truth,
and hold the faith in unity of spirit,
in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life ...

We commend to your fatherly goodness
all those who are any ways afflicted or distressed,
in mind, body or estate;
comfort and relieve them in their need,
give them patience in their sufferings,
and bring good out of all their afflictions ...

We remember those who have gone before us
in the peace of Christ,
and we give you praise for all your faithful ones,
with whom we rejoice in the communion of saints

...

All this we ask for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Trusting in the compassion of God,
let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom
in the words our Saviour taught us.

**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.**

Blessing

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

We go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory.