



Heacham Parish Church



Sunday 3rd October 2021 – Trinity 18

Opening music – Adrian plays 'Sicilienne' by Maria Theresia Von Paradis (1759-1824)

It's Sunday the 3rd of October. A very warm welcome in the name of the Lord. Welcome wherever you are engaging with this service, on line, in church, or at home with the service sheets. Thank you to all who make the several expressions of this service possible.

We hold silence and prepare our hearts to worship.

Father of all creation we ask that you would lead us now as we prepare to worship you. Help us to see you, hear from you and praise you in spirit and in truth, for we ask in the precious name of Jesus. **Amen.**

O Lord, open our lips.

and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Give us the joy of your saving help

and sustain us with your life giving spirit.

Blessed are you, oh Lord our God, creator and redeemer of all, to you be glory and praise forever. From the waters of chaos you drew forth the world and in your great love fashioned us in your image. Now, through the deep waters of death you have brought your people to new birth by raising your son to life in triumph. May Christ your light ever dawn in our hearts as we offer you our sacrifice of thanks and praise.

Blessed be God, father, son and Holy Spirit. Blessed be God forever. Amen.

We hold silence again before we make our confession.

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.

Lord God we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrong doing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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 saviour. **Amen.**

Hymn: **Jesus is Lord**

1 Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
for by His power each tree and flower was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;
sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: 'Jesus is Lord!'

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!

Praise Him with hallelujahs, for Jesus is Lord!

2 Jesus is Lord! Yet from His throne eternal
in flesh He came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From Him all life proceeding,
yet gave His life a ransom thus setting us free.

Jesus is Lord . . .

3 Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death He rose and all His foes shall own His name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends His Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is Lord . . .

Bible reading – Ephesians 6:10-24 read by Richard C

A reflection – by Revd Dan Tansey

We've come to the end of this season of teaching on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, a letter in which Paul helps us to remember what it is to be the church of Jesus Christ.

Paul begins by reminding the church of its identity in Christ. Paul then reminds us of how we can remain in that identity in our daily lives and resist falling away from it. And, in today's reading under the heading of "the armour of God", Paul reminds us of how we can walk on in that identity, participating with Christ in the salvation of all of creation.

Throughout the letter Paul contrasts life in the church with life in the world of the Ephesians. The world of the Ephesians was one utterly dominated by the Roman Empire. Ephesus was one of the great commercial cities of the time, on a par with Alexandria and Rome itself. And it was a place where many cultures mixed, but all of them under the authority of the Roman emperor, of Roman law and of Roman culture. In Roman society all must ultimately submit to the authority of Rome. And in this context Paul tells the church to submit to the ultimate authority of Christ.

Over the past couple of weeks John and Penny have taught on the challenging passages of chapters 5 and 6, about what it means for Christians in Ephesus to 5:21 "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." In this teaching Paul

applies the call to submit to one another to the context of life in Roman society and culture. And today we need to put in the mental effort to discern what it means to "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" in the context of the society and culture of today, which is not necessarily the same thing.

Paul's message, in this last section of his letter, carries on in the Roman context as he guides the church in how to go forward into the world, as those who submit to the authority of Christ in the context of the authority of Rome. And Paul uses a very Roman analogy of armour to communicate his advice. Armour and weaponry were essential to Roman authority. It was through military power that Rome conquered. Through superior military strategy and tactics, through investment in military strength and training, and through military technology.

Today we might imagine Paul's analogy of Roman armour and weaponry as something light-hearted, as the sort of fancy dress that we might see at a Passion Play during Holy Week. But Paul wasn't talking about plastic swords and cardboard breastplates. He was describing aspects of the most deadly military technology of the time, with which the Roman Empire subdued continents. Roman armour was the finest and most impenetrable. The same goes for the Roman shield - a revolutionary piece of technology in itself, that enabled units of soldiers to surge into the enemy with brutal efficiency. Then there is the deadly Roman sword, the most dangerous weapon of its time when placed in the hands of a well-trained soldier.

So, if we want to translate Paul's imagery into the modern age we might do better to think not of a Roman soldier but of a modern one. Instead, polished metal armour a camouflage uniform, complete with flack-jacket. Instead of a shield we might imagine a tank. Instead of a sword, imagine an assault rifle.

Then translate Paul's analogy to "the combat uniform of God."
The tank of faith. And the assault rifle of the Spirit!

I don't know about you, but I find this translation more jarring!
It's no longer a slightly quaint historical analogy. It now has the immediacy of real and frightening violence! Isn't it a little uncomfortable?

Well, it seems that Paul was relating to the church in Ephesus in the uncomfortable terms of their age. Roman soldiers, with the capacity for great violence, walked the streets of the city every day. And anybody who challenged the authority of Rome was potentially subject to their violence. The Christians listening to Paul's letter will, some of them at least, likely have borne wounds inflicted by those swords.

So why does Paul use such raw imagery to describe what it is to walk forward as a Christian, to live under submission to Christ as people of his church? Well firstly it was because it was their reality. And Paul always sought to teach in terms that his audience related to.

Secondly, and vitally, is the context of Paul's teaching. Paul's wider teaching here is how to live in the tension between life under worldly authority and life under Christ's authority. And to do so is to live in Jesus' way, not the Emperor's. In verse 10 Paul says to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." And the power of the Lord Jesus is not violence or military might. The power of the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested in faith and sacrificial love. And so, the weapons of Christ are not weapons of physical violence, they are truth, righteousness, peace, faith, prayer and, ultimately, the Holy Spirit - which is the Word of God.

Paul is calling on the church to go into battle depending on these things, on heavenly things, not depending on worldly things. Because, as he writes in verse 12, they are not "fighting against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." In the same way that no small band of believers in first century Ephesus would stand a chance in hand-to-hand combat with the Roman army, nor can any of us hope to overcome the dark forces of evil by our own strength or with worldly weapons. We cannot defeat such vast forces, and certainly not on their own terms. Rather, what Paul reminds the 1st century church in Ephesus and the 21st century church in Heacham is that only Christ can overcome these forces. Only Christ, the Word of God, with the full authority of God can overcome these things, and that on the cross Christ has already overcome them. He has the victory already.

The calling on his church is to live in that victory, and to trust that it has been won, and to step forward with the weapons of the Kingdom of God, truth, righteousness, peace, faith, prayer and, ultimately, the Holy Spirit - which is the Word of God. In all these things we join with Christ in his victory and begin to live his way in his Kingdom, in our time and for eternity.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession - Led by Jennifer

A verse from Psalm 5

"Each morning You listen to my prayer as I bring my requests to You and wait for Your reply"

And from our Bible reading today

"Never stop praying, especially for others".

So, we have confidence that our prayers of intercession, of asking, will be heard by God, and answered while we wait.

Let us pray:-

Lord as we come to You we need to remind ourselves again that we come to Almighty God Who made the universe and Who knows and loves every person on our planet. Were that not so the needs and problems of our times would overwhelm us. Strengthen and build our faith and help us to value the privilege of being invited to come into Your presence to pray.

1. We pray for the war-torn countries where there is no justice, no peace, no stable government and where so many have had to flee from their homes. Please protect the aid agencies as they act to help. We pray for peace and understanding and generosity in these places.

Lord in Your mercy hear our prayer.

2. We pray that the Covid pandemic will be controlled. Please give those who make decisions wisdom and skill in their judgments and enable them to give sound advice. Help us to do all we can to follow that advice and to remain careful of ourselves and others.

Lord in Your mercy hear our prayer.

3. We pray for our Queen and her family. Thank you for the faith in You by which she lives. It is an example and encouragement to us all. Bless and comfort her as she adjusts to life without Prince Philip.

Lord in Your mercy hear our prayer.

4. We pray for our government as they deal with so many difficult issues. Please give them wisdom and the desire to improve life in our country, especially for those who are living in poor circumstances.

Lord in Your mercy hear our prayer.

5. We thank You for this lovely village in which we are privileged to live. We thank you for all the community efforts that have arisen to help with the Covid crisis. We pray for the Parish Council and the work that it does and the decisions that it makes. We thank You for our schools and pray for the staff, governors, pupils, and parents as they address the gaps in education that have occurred during lockdowns. We pray for the staff at the surgery and ask that they will be able to provide a safe service until there is open access to the building again. We pray for the staff in Social Services as they assess and organise help and support across all age ranges.

We pray for our residential homes; for Fridhem, Millbridge, Rebecca Court and Summerville. Give the staff understanding of the needs of their residents so that their lives will be safe and enjoyable.

We pray for our vicarage family asking for peace and a constant sense of your presence with them.

We thank you for Dan, our curate asking that his ministry will bless us and that we will bless him with our friendship and prayer. Guide him in the next step of his ministry for You. We remember the businesses in the village and pray that they will be able to manage financially after the closures during lockdowns.

Lord in Your mercy hear our prayer.

6. Lord we remember those who have been bereaved recently and ask for Your comfort as they grieve. Give them healing and hope for the future.

Lord in Your mercy hear our prayer.

7. Father we know of many very sick people in our community, and we ask that proper and sufficient care will be available to them. We ask for the comfort of Your presence, for Your healing touch and for the love and support of family and friends. For those who are nearing the end of their earthly lives we ask You to take them gently into their new, abundant, everlasting life with You.

Lord in Your mercy hear our prayer.

8. Father we remember before You Rachel Karrach and the work of the hospital in Tansen, Nepal. Be with them in their difficulty in coping with large numbers of patients with Covid while trying at the same time to provide an adequate service to all the others.

Be with Andrew and Shona Goodman as they minister from Chiang Mai in Thailand. Thank you that the three children were able to visit them recently.

We pray for the reopening of the King's Lynn night shelter in their new premises. Give the staff and volunteers energy and understanding as they care for homeless people.

Lord in Your mercy hear our prayer

9. Then there's us, Lord. We so need Your love, mercy, forgiveness, healing, , and encouragement. Guide us and guard us this week and give us opportunity and courage to talk about You. Help us to see every person as one loved by You and for whom Jesus died. Help us to be more like Jesus, more as You long for us to be as Your children.

Merciful Father accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son, our Saviour. Amen

We pray together the Lord's Prayer.....

The Creed

I believe in God, the father almighty creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn: Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!

- 1 Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
ye soldiers of the cross,
lift high His royal banner;
it must not suffer loss.
From victory unto victory
His army shall He lead,
till every foe is vanquished
and Christ is Lord indeed.

- 2 Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
the trumpet-call obey;
forth to the mighty conflict
in this His glorious day.
Ye that are men, now serve Him
against unnumbered foes;
let courage rise with danger,
and strength to strength oppose.

3 Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
stand in His strength alone;
the arm of flesh will fail you,
ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the gospel armour,
each piece put on with prayer;
where duty calls, or danger,
be never wanting there.

4 Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
the strife will not be long;
this day the noise of battle,
the next the victor's song.
To him that overcometh
a crown of life shall be;
he with the King of glory
shall reign eternally.

Closing prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, we thank you that you have brought us safely to the beginning of this day. Keep us from falling into sin or running into danger, order us in all our doings and guide us to do always what is righteous in your sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord bless us and keep us, the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us. The Lord turn his face towards us and give us His peace. And the blessing of God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. Amen.

Closing music – *Adrian plays 'Rondeau' from Abdelazer by Henry Purcell (1659-1695)*

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