

Morning Service 21st June

Thank you for joining us for this morning service for Father's Day. Our first live streamed service was for Mothering Sunday, and here we are 3 months later, celebrating Fathers. We are hoping to return to worship in church as soon as we can, and will be live streaming those services too. I'm Rev John Musson, vicar of Cudham and Downe and I'm joined by Helen Musson, Ordinand at St Augustines college.

You'll find the words of the service on the church website pcd.org.uk

We reflect on Jesus' story of the prodigal son – or is it the forgiving father?

The Greeting

God told his people: honour your father and your mother,
so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

**We pray that this day might bring honour to our fathers,
healing to broken hearts
and glory to you, our heavenly Father. Amen.**

Our Opening Hymn is Now thank we all our God

**1 Now thank we all our God
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.**

**2 O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
to keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.**

**3 All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son and Spirit blest,
who reign in highest heaven
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.**

Opening Prayer

See what love the Father has given us
that we should be called the children of God.

You are my sons and daughters:
this day have I begotten you.

See what love the Father has given us.

As many as received him,
to them he gave power to become the children of God.

See what love the Father has given us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

**See what love the Father has given us
that we should be called the children of God.**

We now spend time reflecting on our need to say sorry and to hear God forgive us.

Let us pray

God spoke these words and said: I am the Lord your God;
you shall have no other gods but me.
You shall not make for yourself any idol,
whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above,
or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.
You shall not bow down to them or worship them.
You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.
For six days you shall labour and do all your work.
But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

**Lord, have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this law.**

Honour your father and your mother.
You shall not murder.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness.
You shall not covet.

**Lord, have mercy upon us,
and write all these your laws in our hearts.**

After a few moments of silent reflection...

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him
**Father,
we have sinned against heaven and against you.
We are not worthy to be called your children.
We turn to you again.
Have mercy on us,
bring us back to yourself
as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Prayer for Today – 2nd Sunday after Trinity

Faithful Creator, whose mercy never fails: deepen our faithfulness to you
and to your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible Reading *Luke 15:11-32 (NIV)*

¹¹ Jesus told this story “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Talk

I’ve been thinking a lot about my father this week. His birthday was 16th June, so often his birthday would fall near father’s day, a double celebration. It’s often been reported that father’s day was something invented by the greetings card industry, but it’s origins lay further back, well over 100 years ago, when a church service was held in America to honour fathers and their place within the family and society. Back to my father - He was born on 16th June 1920, so he would have been 100. I put this on facebook this week, and a friend from my childhood responded by saying what a kind man he was, and someone else who knew him later on also said the same.

Often we don't know what other people think of us or our loved ones. In this story that Jesus told, we know exactly what the younger son thinks, what the older son thinks, and what the father thinks too.

If I reflect back on my life, I was a bit like that younger son – I'm actually an only child, and like many older children could be a bit spoiled, took my parent's love for granted, and didn't appreciate them until they'd gone.

Looking at our bible reading a little deeper, it's the third of a series of stories Jesus told about things that were lost – the lost sheep, the lost coin, and here the lost son. Except in each story that which was lost was found, with rejoicing! The difference in this story is that the rejoicing is brought to an abrupt end by the older son, who feels like anything but rejoicing. What is going on?

The sad thing about this story is that neither of them saw how much their father loved them – and it's clear that he did. Look at what happens when the younger son goes away. Jesus describes in vivid detail what he got up to, and when a crisis comes along how he plans to come back home. All the time the father is watching and waiting, and when he sees his lost son at a distance, unceremoniously picks up his robes and runs to greet him, hugging him and celebrating. His love for his firstborn is no less, as we can see from the tenderness with which he addresses him- my son, you are always with me, everything I have is yours. Both sons had somehow got their relationship with their father wrong. This story is all about the father, seen through the eyes of the two sons. This might cause us, if we are fathers, to make sure our children know how much we love them, rather than assume that's the case. And we might want also to reflect on our relationship with our own father. For some, that's difficult, as we might not have experienced much love, or even known our father at all or for very long. Yet our reflection can be about how we honour them, as the commandments we said at the beginning of our service make clear, making sacrificial choices to love and to forgive even if we've not experienced love in return.

But the main point of this story is not to give us an example of fatherhood to emulate, or to compare our own fathers against. This father's love is so exuberant, so extreme, so overwhelming that what Jesus is asking us to do is to reflect on his Father's love for us – how he opens his arms in love, waits for us to turn around (that's what the word repent means) and to come back to him – echoed in Jesus words 'But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him'. That's the father's love for us; it's a challenge – we might be wayward like the younger son in our relationship with God, or so religious and always doing things that get in the way of seeing God's love like the older one.

On this Father's day, why not make the Father's day, simply by seeing him for who he is, in his love ready to embrace you and to bring you home, to celebrate with you in his relationship with you now and always.

Here to end is a prayer of reflection that you might like to make your own:

Father, it was said of the Prodigal Son that he "came to himself."

Help us to wake up to ourselves, and to You.

Set us free from the illusion of trying to be perfect

so that we might be more fully human.

Help us not to chase after an imaginary life,

and to find satisfaction in our real lives.

And turn us away from our self-rejection

so that we might see that Your arms open in welcome. **Amen.**

Please join us for homegroup on Wednesday at 8pm via zoom as we look again at this passage - Meeting ID: 892 9981 7200 Password: 508170 John will be sending out notes soon, please ask if you'd like a copy.

Song of Response – *How deep the father's love for us*

How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss –
The Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life –
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart –
His wounds have paid my ransom.

The Creed

Let us declare our faith in God.
We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.

We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The prayers

Sovereign Lord,
your Son has revealed you as our heavenly Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

Father of all

hear your children's prayer.

You have made your Church a spiritual family,
a household of faith.
Through baptism we are reborn as the brothers and sisters of Christ.
Deepen our unity and fellowship in him.

Father of all

hear your children's prayer.

You sent your Son to give his life
as a ransom for the whole human family.
Give justice, peace and racial harmony to the world he died to save.

Father of all

hear your children's prayer.

You gave your Son a share in the life of a family in Nazareth.
Help us to value our families, to be thankful for them,
and to live sensitively within them.

Father of all

hear your children's prayer.

Your Son drew around him a company of friends.
Bring love and joy to all who are alone.
Help us all to find in the brothers and sisters of Christ a loving family.

Father of all

hear your children's prayer.

You are the God of the dead as well as of the living.
In confidence we remember those of the household of
faith who have gone before us.

Bring us with them to the joy of your home in heaven.

Father of all

hear your children's prayer.

After a moment to bring our own prayers to God:

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
so in faith and trust we pray:

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

As we thank Father God today for his love for us, we reflect on our own fathers, living and departed as we pray:

**Heavenly Father,
you entrusted your Son Jesus,
the child of Mary,
to the care of Joseph, an earthly father.
Bless all fathers
as they care for their families.
Give them strength and wisdom,
tenderness and patience;
support them in the work they have to do,
protecting those who look to them,
as we look to you for love and salvation,
through Jesus Christ our rock and defender. Amen.**

Closing Song:

*He's got the whole world in His hand,
He's got the whole wide world in His hand,
He's got the whole world in His hand,
He's got the whole world, in His hand.*

**He's got the wind and the rain in His hand,
He's got the wind and the rain in His hand,
He's got the wind and the rain, in His hand
He's got the whole world in His hand.**

**He's got the sun and the moon in His hand,
He's got the sun and the moon in His hand,
He's got the sun and the moon in His hand,
He's got the whole world in His hand.**

**He's got the plants and the creatures in His hand,
He's got the plants and the creatures in His hand,
He's got the plants and the creatures in His hand,
He's got the whole world in His hand.**

**He's got everybody here in His hand,
He's got everybody here in His hand,
He's got everybody here in His hand,
He's got the whole world in His hand.**

Thank you for joining us in worship today. Details of our next services are found on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PCDChurches/> where you can watch the service live or catch up later, and you'll find this week's notice sheet and other useful information on the church website pcd.org.uk

*Please also contact the Vicar, Rev John Musson if you need any help or just for a chat! vicar@pcd.org.uk
01959540012*

Blessing

The Lord God almighty is our Father:

he loves us and tenderly cares for us.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour:

he has redeemed us and will defend us to the end.

The Lord, the Holy Spirit, is among us:

he will lead us in God's holy way.

To God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be praise and glory today and for ever.

Amen.