

Parish of Central Exeter

Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion

2nd Sunday after Trinity 21 June 2020

'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard....'
Genesis 21:17

Thanks to Sheila who has written the commentary on today's reading and chosen the hymns.

Today as we look at the story of Hagar and Ishmael, we see that God cares for all people so our opening hymn 'All people that on earth do dwell' reminds us that all over the world people praise God. We may not be able to enter buildings to worship God together, yet we can, by the Spirit, together praise our compassionate Creator.

Follow the link for a recording during Songs of Praise at the Old Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich. The words appear on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xM6Ke4IKJM>

Opening prayer

From the moment we awake
to face the day ahead,
you are with us,
through good times and bad,
Your presence enough for our needs.

Every day I will praise you
And extol your name for ever

Through the hours of the day,
wherever we are, whatever we do
you are with us;
in decisions we must make,
Your wisdom is enough for our needs.

Every day I will praise you
And extol your name for ever

Developed from prayer by John Birch, faithandworship.com



We acknowledge our shortcomings

Compassionate Christ, you have shown your love
in works of healing, forgiveness, and justice,
and by giving yourself to us and for us,
in your death and resurrection.

Yet we are slow to love and to serve,
we seek to have our own needs met
before caring for the needs of others;

We fail to give ourselves,
and choose instead to preserve our safety,
our comfort and our privilege.

Forgive us, heal us,
and teach us to live lives of compassion following your example.

Assurance of forgiveness

Jesus, in extravagant compassion,
has already secured our forgiveness,
and calls us to live as those who are renewed and
thankful.

Receive this grace, and share it.
We are so grateful;
we will go and live differently
because of what you, Jesus, have done for us.
(www.sacredise.com)



Alternative collect for the Second Sunday after Trinity

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

Reading Genesis 21:8-21

8 The child (Isaac) grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. ¹⁰So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.'
¹¹The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. ¹²But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named after you. ¹³As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.'
¹⁴So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a

skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, 'Do not let me look on the death of the child.' And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

20 God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. ²¹He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995

The Expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael by (strange co-incidence!) Abraham Bloemaert. 1638.



At first glance this seems to be a typical Flemish country farmyard, but in the background the Biblical drama is being played out. 'Normal' life is going on for the others, but the personal anguish of Hagar, her son, and Abraham too can only be guessed at.

Reflection

I want to begin our consideration of this difficult story by encouraging you to imagine yourself as one of the four main characters – Abraham, Sarah, Hagar or Ishmael. (Isaac is too young to fully understand what is happening.) What are your feelings as the story unfolds? You may notice that Ishmael is not named. The word ‘boy’ together with other language used in the text, and the pictures which the story has inspired, suggest a young child; but if we take into account the stated ages of Abraham at the birth of his two sons, we probably have a young man of 16 or 17.

Sarah takes the initiative. She is in charge in the domestic sphere. Sarah had offered Hagar to Abraham when she was still barren and getting beyond child-bearing age. They had failed to trust God’s promise of an heir and sought to find their own solution. Now she has her own son, she demands that Hagar and Ishmael must leave. For Abraham he would lose his first-born and never see him or his mother again. Hagar would be desperate, sent out into the wilderness with some bread and water, knowing the dangers of the desert and wondering what had happened to the Lord’s promise to her when she was pregnant and first ran away from Sarah’s taunts (Gen 16:6-12). If Ishmael was in fact a young child you may imagine him frightened and crying; whereas an older boy may be more resourceful, though still scared.

The narrator shows that this separation of Abraham’s two sons was necessary and decreed by God. Isaac is the child of promise, but Ishmael is also a son of Abraham and will father a nation. The word to Hagar is ‘Do not be afraid, for God has heard’. Throughout scripture the word from God is ‘Do not be afraid’. God would not abandon Hagar and this child of Abraham since the promise given in Genesis 12:3 is that ‘in Abraham all families of the earth shall be blessed’. Ishmael would become the ancestor of the nomadic Arab people who lived around Israel.

This ancient story is one that Jews, Christians and Muslims all read and interpret differently (as they do with Genesis 22). It shows us that though God had a special plan for the people of Israel, nonetheless, even from the beginning, God cared for the outsider and marginalised – the African slave woman and her child. This means that God cares too for their descendants. Here is the challenge for us today, particularly if we have privilege and power due to our background, education, income, and other factors.

In this world of inequality, of discrimination often related to skin colour, and great injustice, how do we show our care and concern, which challenges do we take up, and which ones do we leave with God in prayer? I write this with an awareness of the recent ‘Black Lives Matter’ protests, the annual refugee week, and Monday 22nd June being Windrush Day. There are no easy answers but when we cry out to God, we can trust the message Hagar received ‘Do not be afraid, for God has heard’.



Hymn 'There's a wideness in God's mercy

This may not be the tune everyone is familiar with, but seems to be the usual one on YouTube! This is recorded in St Mark's, Maida Vale. Words appear on the screen. Access on:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJwfT3SY_PU

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God who is love
and who has given the earth to all people;
We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God, who came to heal us,
and to free us from all forms of oppression;
We believe in the spirit of God
who works in and through all who are turned towards the truth;
We believe in the Church: the community of faith
which is called to worship and serve God
and to be at the service of all people;
We believe in God's power to transform and transfigure,
fulfilling the promise of a new heaven and a new earth
where love, justice and peace will flourish. Amen

Intercessions

Let us open ourselves to the grace of God,
to the brokenness of our world,
and to the call to be agents of healing and recreation.

Where human greed has stripped the world of beauty and life,
and robbed people of dignity and subsistence,
We pray, O God, for a new vision of abundance,
and a new commitment to nurture the world that feeds us
and share with those who do not have.

Lord in your mercy...

Where human hatred has severed relationships,
and broken the connection that unites creation,
We pray, O God, for love to be renewed,
and compassion to draw us back into union.

Lord, in your mercy...

Where human loneliness, weakness, sickness and grief,
and the suffering of our planet and its inhabitants
hide the signs of your life,
We pray, O God, for healing, comfort and strength
and for the courage to keep hoping
in the renewed creation to come.



Lord, in your mercy...

O God, restore our faith,
revive our hope,
rekindle our love,
and hear our prayer;
for we offer it in Christ's name. Amen.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.



Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As we prepare for communion you might like to access 'Ave verum corpus' by Mozart sung by the choir of King's College, Cambridge. This chant, written in the fourteenth century, was often sung during the elevation of the bread.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXjn6srhAIY>

Ave verum corpus, natum
de Maria Virgine,
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine
cuius latus perforatum
fluxit aqua et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum
in mortis examine.

Hail, true Body, born
of the Virgin Mary,
having truly suffered, sacrificed
on the cross for mankind,
from whose pierced side
water and blood flowed:
Be for us a foretaste [of the Heavenly
banquet]
in the trial of death!

Although this may not represent Anglican belief, it is a wonderfully reflective piece of singing.

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen. *(after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester)*

Post-Communion Prayer

Loving Father, we thank you for feeding us at the supper of your Son:
sustain us with your Spirit,
that we may serve you here on earth
until our joy is complete in heaven,
and we share in the eternal banquet
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Closing Prayers

Dear Lord
I offer you the day ahead
because *it's* the one you've given me,
the one I hope you'll walk in with me
the day I want to walk in with you...

I offer you this day's burdens, Lord:
large and small, heavy and light,
and pray you'll help me carry them...

I offer you this day's mistakes
- even before I make them:
help me avoid them, Lord,
and, please, when I make them,
forgive me...

I offer you:
this day's work, that it be fruitful;
this day's rest, that it be peaceful;
and this day's time, that it be blessed...

I offer you this day's smiles and joys
and pray you make sure
I don't miss even one of them...

I offer you this day's worries and fears,



the real and the imagined,
and pray you'll be in all of them
my courage and strength...

I offer you this day's challenges,
the ones I can expect and those that will surprise me:
be with me and help me through every one...

I offer you every opportunity I have today
to comfort and heal, to forgive and pardon
to lift up any who, in need,
may reach out for my help...

I offer you what little I have
and pray that I'll be open, Lord,
to all you offer me...

Amen.

(From Concord Pastor)

Benediction

May God's Spirit surround you,
and those whom you love.
Rest now, in that calm embrace,
let your hearts be warmed
and all storms be stilled
by the whisper of his voice.

We close this morning with Amazing Grace sung here by a virtual choir from 50 different countries all affected by Covid 19.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA7pdABvpnc>



**Night Prayer is on the
next page**

Night Prayer



If you are able to do so, you might wish to light a candle near a window.

Our candle – a photograph
our church - a virtual chapel,
our musicians – on YouTube—
but we are gathering in real time, Lord,
and our prayers rise up from hearts and souls
that ache, rejoice, weep, laugh and find *you*
in the words and songs we share
from our iPad, laptop, smart phone pews...

(Adapted from Concord Pastor)

'The Lord bless you and keep you', sung here at the Cathedral of our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, conducted by the composer, John Rutter.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICpxgEHqjFA>

Reading

On June 22 1948 the Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury bringing over 500 people from the Carribean looking to create a new life for themselves in the UK. These were the first of many to make the same journey on this boat. Since 2018 this day has been recognised as Windrush Day to commemorate the contribution made to our country by immigrants and to celebrate the diversity of our nation. This is something that many people still have difficulty with.

Galatians 3 28,29

So there is no difference between slaves and free men, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham, and will receive what God has promised.

Reflective prayer

I was in church yesterday morning, Lord,
speaking with several people
- and we were all masked...

It struck me how muffled we all sounded:
how just a layer or two of thin cloth
could muffle our speech so effectively...

I reflected on that for the rest of the day:
how easily and in how many ways
our voices are muffled, muzzled and muted...
How racism muffles people of colour...

How injustice stifles the cry of the poor...

How power muzzles our progress towards peace...

How prejudice distorts the words on our lips...

How doubt mutes our search for the truth...

How selfishness smothers the generous spirit...

How fear silences our hearts' convictions...
Some masks keep us healthy, Lord,
while others only muffle the words we need to speak,
muzzle the Spirit moving within us
and mute our voices, raising the cry
for justice, equality and peace...

Unmask our doubts and our fears, Lord:
open our voices, full-throated,
to cry out for others what needs to be said,
and to speak with conviction
what we know in our hearts to be true...

Amen. *Concord Pastor*

An evening collect

Lighten our darkness,
Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.



Conclusion and Blessing

In peace we will lie down and sleep;
for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.

Abide with us, Lord Jesus,
for the night is at hand and the day is now past.

As the night watch looks for the morning,
so do we look for you, O Christ.

The Lord bless us and watch over us;
the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.
Amen.

As we bring worship to a close you might like to access Bee playing the Taizé chant Ubi Caritas et Amor The words are below. Just left click as usual, but there is no picture.

<https://www.parishofcentralexeter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Taize-converted.mp3>

*Ubi caritas et amor,
ubi caritas,
Deus ibi est.*

*(Where there is charity and love,
God is there.)*

Thanks

*Thanks to everyone who has contributed to these services:
Especially to Sheila for this morning's comments and Bee for her music.
Other material taken or developed from various websites and blogs is normally identified in the text.*



*Evening falls at Port Victoria jetty,
South Australia.*