

## Traditional Home service Sunday 26th Sep

### OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:  
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
Amen

### PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**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 wrongdoing 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.** *cf Psalm 51*

### PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts. Open our lips, Lord:  
**and we shall praise your name.**

*HYMN 1 (All People That on Earth Do Dwell)*

READINGS - James 5.13-20  
Mark 9.38-50

### TALK

### 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 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.

### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.*

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

*HYMN 2 (When we walk with the Lord)*

### CONCLUSION

The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself, the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service, the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.  
Amen.

## HYMNS TO USE

1 All people that on earth do dwell,  
sing to the LORD with cheerful voice.  
Serve him with joy, his praises tell,  
come now before him and rejoice!

2 Know that the LORD is God indeed;  
he formed us all without our aid.  
We are the flock he surely feeds,  
the sheep who by his hand were made.

3 O enter then his gates with joy,  
within his courts his praise proclaim!  
Let thankful songs your tongues  
employ.  
O bless and magnify his name!

4 Because the LORD our God is  
good,  
his mercy is forever sure.  
His faithfulness at all times stood  
and shall from age to age endure.

1 When we walk with the Lord  
in the light of his word,  
what a glory he sheds on our way!  
While we do his good will,  
he abides with us still,  
and with all who will trust and obey.

*Refrain:*  
*Trust and obey,*  
*for there's no other way*  
*to be happy in Jesus,*  
*but to trust and obey.*

2 Not a burden we bear,  
not a sorrow we share,  
but our toil he doth richly repay;  
not a grief or a loss,  
not a frown or a cross,  
but is blest if we trust and obey.

*[Refrain]*

3 But we never can prove  
the delights of his love  
until all on the altar we lay;  
for the favor he shows,  
for the joy he bestows,  
are for them who will trust and obey.

*[Refrain]*

4 Then in fellowship sweet  
we will sit at his feet,  
or we'll walk by his side in the way;  
what he says we will do,  
where he sends we will go;  
never fear, only trust and obey.

*[Refrain]*

Sermon - Adrian Morton  
Mark 9.38-50 There's a war on...

I want us to wrestle with this Mark reading this morning..

In many ways its a hard reading and it can also seem a bit disjointed...

Ending with seemingly random phrases about salt...

What had been happening was this...

The disciples has just been arguing on the road about who was the greatest...

And Jesus redefines greatness for them..

Then they had told someone to stop driving out demons in Jesus' name because he wasn't one of them.

And Jesus tells them not to do that...

And then we get our reading...

*43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where " 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'*

Philip Yancey in his book, "The Jesus I never knew" says this about Jesus:

*"How is it that the church has tamed such a character? The Jesus I got to know in writing this book is very different from the Jesus I learned about as a child. In some ways he is more comforting; in some ways more terrifying."*

This reading falls into the latter category!

Thos who say we should take the bible literally will struggle with this passage!

Though there are some reports that a number of early Christians did take this

passage literally... which doesn't bear thinking about.

I believe Jesus is using 1st century Semitic language and technique to drive home a point.

And the point is this:

"There is one goal in life worthy of any sacrifice"

Actually Jesus is setting out two alternatives before human kind.

One is called Life.  
The other is Hell.

And to choose life is worth any sacrifice...

What was he really saying about hell...

The actual word used here for 'hell' is the word 'Gehenna'.  
It is a word with history.

It referred to a valley on the south slope of Jerusalem.

In olden days, in this valley, wayward kings had sacrificed to the false God Molech, even to the point of sacrificing their own sons in the fire.

So it was the scene of one of Israel's most terrible lapses into godlessness.

The reformer king Josiah has declared it an unclean place.

And so in Jesus' time it was a place set apart where the refuse, the rubbish, of Jerusalem was placed and burned.

It was an unclean place where worms bred on the rubbish, and the rubbish constantly smoked and smouldered...

Which makes the language used by Jesus here more understandable maybe...

*their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'*

But it was the place to avoid.

In Jesus' time 'Gehenna' had already become a metaphor for the fate, after death, of those who reject the ways of God.

So the word would have aroused a sense of dread in people.

Jesus is setting out two alternatives before human kind.

Kingdom life, that is worth any sacrifice.  
Or the alternative, which is to come under the eternal judgement of God.

<Talk about Jason & Alpha...>

Interestingly as well, Jesus tended to speak of hell to his disciples and of heaven to those who knew they were sinners.

The church has tended to reverse that. We have tended to speak about hell to those who don't believe.. to try and scare them into the kingdom.

And we speak heaven to bring comfort and hope to believers.

But lets be clear, Jesus is laying out two choices for humankind...

One is called Life.  
The other is Hell.

<P>

I love the way Bishop Tom Wright speaks about this passage.  
He summarises it as follows:

*Don't think you can drift along doing whatever you feel like.  
There is a war on; the kingdom is breaking in;  
Sacrifices are required;  
To think otherwise is to risk total ruin.*

Simon Guillebaud, in his book, 'Choose Life' tells the following story:

*"In the aftermath of the Second World War, William Francis Gibbs was commissioned by the US government to construct a state of the art troop carrier for the navy. His brief was to design a ship capable of carrying 15,000 troops across the seas at high speed*

*during war time. The SS America was duly completed by 1952. She was a stunningly impressive ship, built at massive cost, capable of travelling at over 50mph and completing 10,000 miles without needing to refuel. Within 10 days she could reach anywhere on the planet by sea, and she had no competitor to the title of fastest, most impressive and most reliable troop carrier in the world. It seemed that exciting days lay ahead...*

*... but ironically, she never carried any troops to war. Apart from during the Cuban missile crisis a decade later, during which she was put on standby, she lay completely redundant, her capacity and potential untapped. And in the end, she was decommissioned and turned into a luxury liner - impressive in a different way- but far from the grandiose goals of defending her nation. Now she entertained wealthy patrons as she gently meandered her way across the oceans. Instead of carrying 15,000 troops to do battle, she catered for 2,000 indulgent pleasure-seekers who enjoyed the 695 staterooms, 4 dining saloons, 3 bars, 2 theatres, 5 acres of open deck with a heated pool, and more."*

When we look at the western church... even our own here.. which incarnation of the SS America do we, as a church, most closely resemble?

Or which incarnation more closely reflects our idea of church.

that of crack troops or of the care free holiday maker...?

Jesus is laying out two choices for humankind...

One is called Life.  
The other is Hell.

Tom Wright again.. he says:

"following Jesus isn't about personal fulfilment and satisfaction. It's not a personal spirituality that will meet our felt needs."

Following Jesus is more about going to war. To bring the kingdom of God to bear...

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In ancient days, the religious context was one of pluralism, or polytheism. Basically belief in many God's.

There were numerous gods, demons, angels who were seen to be ruling over every sphere of life.

Some considered to be nice, some really not nice!

So for example, if you were a practicing polytheist, and you simply wanted to go down to the river to draw water - it was a religious nightmare.

In order not to offend the Baal of the field you walked past you had to take a sacrificial offering and perform a religious ritual.

Any imposing trees on the way were thought to contain nasty spirits called dryads. To appease those you would have to perform a prescribed ritual.

Once you got to the river, you would have to appease the river god to ensure it either wouldn't dry up or flood in the future.

So even simple life tasks meant a religiously complex process. Must have been exhausting!

Into that context came ancient Israel's cry, "Yahweh is one"

From Deut 6:

*"Here, O Israel: The Lord our God is one..."*

In other words, there is only One God, there is no other God beside Yahweh, and he is lord of creation.

Fast forward to Jesus' time...

For the first disciples.. kingdom life equated to "Jesus is Lord."

Again the religious context was polytheism.

The gods were now not Baal, or the dryads in the trees. But they were now greco-roman gods - venus, diana, apollo...

The political system of Rome at that time was to bring all these gods under the lordship of Caesar.

It brought a kind of unity. People were allowed their deities alongs as they were subject to Caesar.

Which is why the early Christians got into so much trouble when they proclaimed.

Jesus is Lord, not caesar is lord.

It was a subversive claim. The emperors knew that and they persecuted the early Christians terribly for it.

But for the early Christians, for those first disciples, Jesus is Lord was the heart of their faith.

And they would not surrender that claim. Even if it meant death.

Jesus is Lord effectively excluded all other claims to ultimate loyalty.

Fast forward to 2021, 26th Sep in Bozeat/ Wollaston... time?

I think our religious context in the West is again polytheism.

And the gods have changed.

Yes there are supposedly other God's - Allah, Budda... etc

But the more subversive gods now are things like, **consumerism**, **Materialism**, the pursuit of things. **Individualism** - I have a right to control my life.

I have a right to a comfortable life, a certain standard of living...

I have a right to live by my own moral framework.

**Leisure time...**

Jesus is Lord as long as its convenient!

For the early disciples, every aspect of their lives was to come under the Lordship of Jesus.

That's the battle line...

That's where the war is fought...

Jesus is Lord means He is Lord over our

Marriages  
our parenting  
friendships  
work life  
leisure time  
finances  
health  
futures...  
church life

and yes, to bring it back to our reading, He is Lord over what our hands grasp for.  
He is Lord over where our feet take us.  
He is Lord over what we allow our eyes to see and desire.

And actually, wherever Jesus is not Lord, that is the place where sin reigns...

Because all sin is rooted in rebellion against God...

A quick word about the last 2 verses...

These seem to have many interpretations...

Some people think there are random sayings of Jesus just thrown together by the author of the Gospel because they all contain the word salt.

Others try and connect them together...

v49 "Everyone will be salted by fire."

According to Jewish law every sacrifice must be salted with salt before it was offered to God..

So people understand this verse to mean.. a sacrificial life that is acceptable to God is one which has undergone the fire of trials and testing...

If we think about what we have been wrestling with this morning..

Kingdom life will involve sacrifices... and trials and testing...

If we stand up for Jesus in the face of the consumerism, materialism, individualism etc...

Its inevitable that if we make Jesus Lord, that will involve sacrifice and hardship along the way....

v50... *"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other..."*

This is probably referring back to the squabbling disciples...

Salt flavours, purifies.. If we lose this as Christians, our influence in the society we find ourselves in, then it will be difficult to get it back.

And if we are to be followers of the prince of peace we must learn to live at peace with each other...

Jesus is essentially laying out two choices for humankind...

One is called Life.  
The other is Hell.

And as Tom Wright says, there's a war on.

Lets be prepared...

Amen.