

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

Let us confess our sins to God our Father.

Heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault;

by what we have done and by what we have failed to do.

We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ who died for us, forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. *Amen*

Absolution Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy on you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all
goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Genesis 18:1-15 [A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah]

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, 'My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.' Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' The LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and

Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. He said, 'Oh yes, you did laugh.'

The LORD dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Now Sarah said, 'God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.' And she said, 'Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.'

This is the word of the Lord;

Thanks be to God.

Matthew 9:35-10:8 [The Twelve Apostles]

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Sermon

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

"The oaks of Mamre" is a real place – it's in the hills south of Bethlehem, quite close to the Dead Sea. But really, that is beside the point, because this passage from Genesis has an important story to tell us: of one of those very rare occasions when God connected with another human being - Abraham and his wife Sarah.

Its told in naturalistic detail: something which we could believe actually happened. We hear that, in the heat of the day, Abraham looked up from his tent and saw three men standing near him.

Not approaching, but, suddenly: there. Our passage began with “The Lord appeared to Abraham”, but I almost missed that, as I tried to read forward. But it is quite clear: it was the Lord who appeared. Because this is a totally spiritual story, clothed, but almost hidden, in naturalness.

As any desert person would, Abraham’s instinct is one of hospitality. He hastens to provide water for their feet, bread and cakes to refresh them; curds and milk, and then a freshly killed calf. The best he could provide. And he stood by them while they ate.

But then: “They said to him, where is your wife, Sarah? One said, I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son”.

And she laughed to herself at the impossibility of this old lady producing a child of her own. Then, and this is the kernel of the story:- “The Lord said to Abraham ‘Why did Sarah laugh, and say, shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old? Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?’”

So this old couple – much too old to have children – produced a child. This is no obstetrical story. It is as I’ve said, a spiritual one. Sara, in her old age, was moved to say, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me. Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children?”

This fantastical tale is still celebrated by all who can see the hand of God in a mundane story of hope and trust. It has sustained people for millenia. And it’s encouraging us even today in the 21st century to believe that with God, nothing is impossible.

This same power of God spills out of the gospel story. Jesus’ choice of people whom he called apostles were men who, according to the Gospels, were chosen from among the disciples (students) of Jesus Christ. That’s why they’re called by that special name: apostles. Because they were chosen - selected - to be people on a mission.

Ordinary men: not important or wealthy or royal. They had nothing to make them stand out from everyone else. Except – except that they were chosen by someone who we come to acknowledge as - not just a local rabbi - but the Son of God. And that is one of those things that we become convinced to believe through the gospels, through our church community, through our personal faith – to be the Son of God.

So: today we have two stories from insignificant Middle Eastern men whose names and fame have outlasted anyone else from their time. Who are revered and celebrated today. Why? because they remain for us as signs that this life is guided by a higher power. We call him God. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

So let each one of us now declare our faith in God.

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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.

Intercessions, beginning with the Collect of the first Sunday after Trinity

God, the strength of all those who put their trust in you:

Mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in the keeping of your commandments
we may please you, both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

As we have been called to be disciples in the Church of God, may we be worthy of our calling. Inspire us to proclaim the good news, to bring comfort to the needy, seeking no reward but giving thanks for the grace we have received.

Great shepherd, look with compassion on the peoples of the world who lack purpose and direction. Have mercy on those who have been scattered by war or persecution and lead them into the secure fold of your love.

We pray for those suffering because of COVID-19. We ask God to comfort them and their families in their uncertainty, their fears. We give thanks for their carers, for

their selflessness. We ask that they too may be sustained and comforted in their vocation of care.

We pray for the spirit of mission, the power to speak of the faith that is within us and to show it in our lives. Open our eyes to see where the harvest is ripe in this community. Bless those who minister to the needy and the homeless; those who teach in our school. Sustain their parents as, above all else, they provide love.

We pray for the sick in mind or body, the outcasts from society, and those who are in the power of evil. May all who work to heal or reclaim be given the compassion and the power which led the first disciples to fulfil the command of their Lord.

We pray for those whose harvest has been gathered in and now behold their Shepherd in his glory. We give thanks that, free from all that can harm them, they have entered the Kingdom of Heaven.

We pray in the name of Christ who has compassion on his wandering sheep.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Dismissal:

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

To God, who by the power at work within us,
is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think,
to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations for ever and ever, **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
in the name of Christ. Amen.