

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.

Let us recognise his presence with us.

As God's people we have gathered.

Let us worship him together.

What God has prepared for those who love him,

he has revealed to us through the Spirit;

for the Spirit searches everything.

Therefore let us in penitence open our hearts to the Lord,

who has prepared good things for those who love him.

Penitence: God of mercy,

we acknowledge that we are all sinners.

We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done,

and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.

For the sake of Jesus who died for us,

forgive us for all that is past,

and help us to live each day

in the light of Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Absolution: O King enthroned on high,

filling the earth with your glory:

holy is your name,

Lord God almighty.

In our sinfulness we cry to you

to take our guilt away,

and to cleanse our lips to speak your word,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

Laban said, 'I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. My master made me swear, saying, "You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son."

'I came today to the spring, and said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! I am standing here by the

spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, 'Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,' and who will say to me, 'Drink, and I will draw for your camels also'—let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son."

'Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water-jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, "Please let me drink." She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, "Drink, and I will also water your camels." So I drank, and she also watered the camels. Then I asked her, "Whose daughter are you?" She said, "The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him." So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. Then I bowed my head and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left.' And they called Rebekah, and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' She said, 'I will.' So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

'May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads;
may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes.'

Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, and said to the servant, 'Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?' The servant said, 'It is my master.' So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

This is the word of the Lord;

Thanks be to God.

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Jesus said to the crowds, "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn."

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.'

At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

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.**

Our extract from Genesis is another legendary story of the beginnings of what we term "the children of Israel". It's worth reflecting on it every now and then: it is determined to show the family of God's chosen people" as coming not from Canaan, but from further east, in what is now Iraq.

But I want to focus on the gospel reading today. And I'll begin with a simple story:

A water bearer in India had two large pots, one hung on each end of a yoke he carried across his shoulders. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a long time, this went on every day, with the water bearer delivering only one and a half pots of water to his master's house. The cracked pot was ashamed of its imperfection, and miserable that it was able to carry only half a load of water.

One day it spoke to the water bearer by the stream. "I am ashamed and I want to apologize to you." "Why?" asked the water bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house."

The water bearer replied, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." And as they went up the hill, the cracked pot noticed the sun warming the beautiful flowers on the side of the path. This cheered the pot some, but he still felt bad about being broken.

The water bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I used it.

I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For years now I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

We are all broken; we are all flawed. And we are all perfectly worthy to receive God's love and care, because of Jesus Christ. One of the burdens we can give up is the burden of thinking we need to do things on our own, that we need to match some picture of perfection, otherwise Jesus will not want to be yoked to us.

Having a burden we want to set down is the only requirement for picking up Christ's light burden. Being yoked to something we need to let go of is the only requirement for allowing Christ to give us a new yoke, tailor-made for us. "Come to me all you that are weary and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

As Christians, we make a startling claim that we are always dependent, and that's a good thing. Our gospel begins with Jesus giving thanks that those who get his message, those who really understand it, are like children, who are dependent and open.

Too often, we want to handle things ourselves, rather than use our real strength, which comes from handing our burdens over to Christ. Too often we are like the mountain climber in the old joke who slipped and fell on a difficult cliff. He grabbed a branch and hung on as tightly as he could.

He shouted out, "Is there anyone up there? Help me!" A voice came from the skies and said, "I am all good, the God who loves you. I will save you if you let go." The climber thought for a few moments and then said, "Is there anyone else up there?"

Too often we are reluctant to let go. But Jesus has promised that we can. If we are able to give things up to God, to take on Jesus' easy yoke and light burden, we need to be open to the ways the relief will come.

If you need healing from some despair, if you need help with some struggle, turn it over to God, and then be open to the ways that burden will be lifted. Say yes to the help that comes your way. God will help.

But very often that help will come through people who will offer you comfort or direction. That help may come in little pieces that fit together into a whole, a life-giving, burden-lifting whole, but you need to say yes to the pieces.

Sometimes we don't ask for God's help, because we don't think we're actually deserving of it. Our need for help somehow tells us, not that we're human, like

everyone else, but that somehow we are fatally flawed, and undeserving, not worthy of help. We see ourselves as too broken to be of any use or value.

God knows where we are broken. God knows where we are hurting and aching, and chafing under our burden, and wants only to take that burden from us. God loves us and can use us, as weary and broken as we may be. Pray that he will use us to fulfill his purpose.

And now to the one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion, power and glory. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

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 Fourth Sunday after Trinity

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:

Increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide,
we may so pass through things temporal
that we finally lose not the things eternal:

Grant this, heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord. **Amen.**

Servant Lord, grant us both the opportunity, and the will to serve you day by day.
Give to our politicians, and all in authority, that same urge to offer love, service and sacrifice to all, especially those who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens.

Praise to you, God, for all your work among us. Yours is the vigour in creation, yours is the impulse in our new discoveries. Make us adventurous, yet reverent and hopeful in all we do. We ask you to bless our Archbishop Michael, and all who serve in your church.

Lord, quieten us down, as we place into your hands those for whom we want to pray. May bring your presence and your comfort to those who are sick; those suffering with COVID-19 and its aftermath. We know that you love them with a greater love than we could ever imagine. In the stillness of your house, we are here, with you, for them.

Lord God, we thank you for calling us into the company of those who trust in Christ and seek to obey His will. May your Spirit guide and strengthen us in mission and service to your world; for we are strangers no longer but pilgrims together. And when our span of life is over, we pray that we will join with all your saints in the joys of your eternal kingdom.

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 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,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen