



**DURHAM
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Praying Together

during the week beginning Sunday 5 July

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

During this time of great anxiety and uncertainty, we want to stay in touch with our regular worshippers and indeed with everyone who is associated with the Cathedral family.

The residential clergy are still saying the Daily Offices at home or from church, and they are being live-streamed via the cathedral website where there is a link that takes you to the Cathedral's Facebook page (you don't need a Facebook account).

We are delighted that Durham Cathedral is open for private prayer and quiet reflection. If you'd like to come to the cathedral for prayer, there are some important measures we'd like you to know about, to ensure the safety of members of the public and staff. You can find this information on our website: www.durhamcathedral.co.uk

We will continue to live stream services until such time as congregational worship is permitted inside the Cathedral again. We're not quite ready for that yet but are working hard to put everything in place to make it possible later this month.

Gospel

Matthew 11. 16-19, 25-end

Jesus said, 'But 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.’

Thought for the Day

by the Reverend Canon Professor Simon Oliver

In the passage we’ve just heard, St. Matthew records a beautiful and memorable teaching of Christ: ‘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.’ The context for this teaching is quite specific. For the crowd whom Jesus is addressing, the Jewish law as it is interpreted and embellished by the Pharisees has become a terrible burden. It does not bring freedom, but only the weight of guilt and condemnation. So Jesus says to the crowd that his yoke, his burden, is light. How can any yoke be light? What Jesus offers is not the oppressive burden of the Pharisees’ interpretation of the law, but the freedom of gracious love which God wills for all his people. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. His yoke is not burdensome for he bears its weight with us. It leads to truth and life.

I’m going to come back to the Christ and the rest that he offers to weary souls in just a moment. First, I’d like to say something about one area of the law that was particularly contentious for Jesus’ followers, namely how to keep the Sabbath rest. Immediately after the passage we’ve just read from St. Matthew’s gospel, he records a dispute about the sabbath. Why is the sabbath so important? Why is rest so important? That’s what I’d like to talk about this morning. To do that, I need to take us back two and half millennia to look at the origins of the Sabbath rest in the creation story in Genesis.

So let’s go back to the sixth century BC around the time that Genesis was being composed. The Jewish people were in exile in Babylon where they heard many mythological stories about creation. In one of the most important of those stories, called *Enuma Elish*, human beings were created as a by-product of conflict between the gods in order to labour for the gods. What it was to be human was to labour. What it was to be divine was to rest. When the Jews returned to Jerusalem and wrote Genesis, their account of creation was influenced positively and negatively by the stories they’d heard in Babylon. In the creation narrative we learn of Adam and Eve’s

labour after their first sin, but there is also a command to keep the Sabbath, to rest. To labour is human, but God also granted to humanity, and indeed to wider creation, a share in his rest in keeping the Sabbath. In other words, the Sabbath is about our share in God's life, in what it is to be divine. In sharing God's life we become friends of God. Jewish and Christian commentators also point out that the Sabbath, the seventh day, is the only day in the creation story not to have an evening. This is taken as pointing to the eternal and never-ending Sabbath when, as the book of Revelation puts it, night shall be not more. There is an important sense in which the resurrection of Jesus on the dawn after the Sabbath is the renewal of that Sabbath and its fulfilment. The risen Christ is the morning star, always new, reconciling creation to God and drawing creation into God's eternal Sabbath, into God's eternal rest. In Mark's gospel, Jesus teaches that he is Lord of the Sabbath and it is a gift for humankind; the Sabbath orders humanity to its proper end in the divine rest. So humanity is not for the service of the Sabbath, but the Sabbath is for humanity. It is Jesus who dies, who lays down his life in love for his friends, in order to give us a share in that eternal Sabbath – that eternal rest – as friends of God. Because a share in the Sabbath is an aspect of human dignity and identity as formed in the image of God, the implication is that the cult of work and the exploitation of labour, so characteristic of our contemporary culture, is inhuman.

So when Jesus says to the crowd, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest', he is referring to the burdens of the law. He is also say that he, the Christ, is the Sabbath, the one who gives us divine rest and shows us how to receive God's commandments not as a burden, but as utterly liberating and life giving.

For many of us, life becomes a burden from time to time. Being human is a perpetual question and struggle because of our sin and the sin of the world. How are we to live the good life which God wills for us? How can that cease to be a burden and become a yoke that is light? Only by living the life which Christ shows us, for he is the way, the truth, and the life. It's a way of love and forgiveness which does not deny the burdens of our humanity, but gives us the grace and strength to bear them with an eternal hope.

A final thought. Deep in Jewish and Christian history, it used to be the case that we would work in order to rest. In other words, rest or the enjoyment of life for its own sake was humanity's God-given goal. In the modern period, that priority was flipped. Now, we rest in order that we might work more and more. So Sunday is just a rest day for some, in order that they might be more productive workers on

Monday morning. Our priorities are quite the wrong way round. The sabbath is not a day that serves the other labouring days of the week. We labour in order to enjoy God's sabbath. We labour now in this life, learning the way of Christ with the gift of a weekly sabbath, so that we might share in God's eternal sabbath, God's eternal rest. '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.'

A Form of Intercession

We pray that Christ may be seen in the life of the Church.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us into the family of those who are
the children of God.
May our love for our brothers and sisters
be strengthened by your grace.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us to be a temple
where the Holy Spirit can dwell.
Give us clean hands and pure hearts,
so that our lives will reflect your holiness.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world,
so that those in darkness come to you.
May our lives shine
as a witness to the saving grace you have given for all.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us to be members of your body,
so that when one suffers, all suffer together.
We ask for your comfort and healing power
to bring hope to those in distress.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us to be the Bride,
where you, Lord, are the Bridegroom.
Prepare us for the wedding feast,
where we will be united with you for ever.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
**hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy for ever.
Amen.**

Hymn

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
Hold me with thy pow'rful hand:
Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through;
Strong deliv'rer,
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side;
Songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.

Poem: One Foot in Eden by Edwin Muir (1887-1959)

Edwin Muir's Calvinistic upbringing on Orkney and the late flowering of a more sensitive faith inform this poem in which Muir contrasts the tragedy and indifference of human existence with the eternal possibility of transcendent love. Far from easy grace, the divine meets the human in what is often darkest and most abject. Our hope in this great possibility draws us into a relationship with God which is one of trust — on both sides.

One foot in Eden still, I stand
And look across the other land.
The world's great day is growing late,
Yet strange these fields that we have planted
So long with crops of love and hate.
Time's handiworks by time are haunted,
And nothing now can separate
The corn and tares compactly grown.
The armorial weed in stillness bound
About the stalk; these are our own.
Evil and good stand thick around
In fields of charity and sin
Where we shall lead our harvest in.

Yet still from Eden springs the root
As clean as on the starting day.
Time takes the foliage and the fruit
And burns the archetypal leaf
To shapes of terror and of grief
Scattered along the winter way.
But famished field and blackened tree
Bear flowers in Eden never known.
Blossoms of grief and charity
Bloom in these darkened fields alone.
What had Eden ever to say
Of hope and faith and pity and love
Until was buried all its day
And memory found its treasure trove?
Strange blessings never in Paradise
Fall from these beclouded skies.

Calendar of Holy Days

Monday 6 July *Thomas More, scholar, and John Fisher, bishop, martyrs, 1535*

Saturday 11 July *Benedict, abbot, c 550*

Eternal God,
who made Benedict a wise master
in the school of your service
and a guide to many called into community
to follow the rule of Christ:
grant that we may put your love before all else
and seek with joy the way of your commandments;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Saturday 11 July would have been the Miners Gala in Durham and the Miners' Festival Service would have taken place at the Cathedral that afternoon. We hope that some form of service will take place later in the year (possibly on Friday 13 November at 6.00 p.m.) and the preacher who would have been with us on Saturday, the Right Reverend James Jones, former Bishop of Liverpool and Chair of the Hillsborough Independent Panel, will preach then.

He breaketh open a shaft away from where men sojourn. They are forgotten of the foot that passeth by.

Remember before God the Durham miners who have given their lives in the pits of this county, and those who work in darkness and danger today. Amen.

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A Prayer for use during the Coronavirus outbreak

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

A Candle for Peace

We light a candle for peace, Lord.
May its light scatter the darkness;
may its flame be a symbol of hope;
may its burning be a sign of faith
joining with any other lights for peace.
We light a candle for peace.
May our lives be an expression of peace making;
pointing to you, Jesus, the Prince of Peace,
and following you in the way of peace.
Let our candles burn, as a sign of peace, offered to you.
Amen.

The next issue of *Praying Together*
will be published on Monday 13 July