



(image:e-hymnbook)

We take a breath and come intentionally into God's presence

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us, open our hearts and minds to all you have to say and show us this day. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Bible Reading: Matthew 16:13-20**

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

### **Reflection**

Today we are asked a big question of our faith. Who do you say Jesus is?

Helpfully for us (well me!!) Peter has already given a 'perfect' answer, so just assume we too have answered equally as eloquently! And then consider what first comes to your mind if you are asked who Jesus is.

Is it a Wikipedia historical type answer or something more relational?

Would it be a different answer depending on who you were with or how you were feeling?

What if we were to rephrase the question to be more personal and ask 'What does Jesus mean to you?'. Would you recall times when you have cried recognising your part in Jesus' death upon the cross? Would you recall his presence surrounding you when you were in uttermost despair? Would you smile as you recall a time of certainty and perfect peace in the knowledge that the full trinity of God loves you?

There is Church history and there is the personal history of our faith, we all have a 'catholic' and own story to tell.

I have been watching 'Vikings' on Amazon Prime and am intrigued by the depiction of the 'Christian' and 'Pagan' characters, and how their faith in their God or gods is so central to their life, their battles and their death. It is the guide by which they lead their lives and measure their failures. It is upmost in their minds.

I wonder if we can we say the same? Has Jesus – your faith made a personal difference to your life, your thoughts, your hopes, your plans?

Pastor Michael Marsh says ' Jesus' life and presence among us calls into question everything about our lives, our world, the status quo, and business as usual. That's why we ought not answer his question too quickly, too glibly, or with too much certainty. It's not a question to be figured out as much as it is a question to be lived'.

Might that be what Jesus was getting at, for them , for us, to acknowledge a living God and a living faith that makes a difference in how we live our life. The 'key' to our life on which everything else is built?

It is notable I think that Jesus asks them what others say, but then quickly moves it back to them as individuals 'who do *you* say that I am?'. Our community of faith and the Creeds that we say together are important, but here Jesus puts emphasises on our individual response and declaration. It is not a biblical test but rather an examination of our hearts beliefs. Who or what is it that we put first in our life? What are the most important things to us? How courageous are we to visibly and verbally own our faith?

The early 20 Century Christian Pastor A.W. Tozer said 'It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is why he does it.'

Is God in our reasonings and our actions as we go through each day, or neatly packaged away for high days and holy days?

A dear Christian friend who had endured many tragedies in his lifetime replied when I asked him about his enduring faith 'Nikki, if I wake up in the morning I praise God and say to him 'what are we doing together today then?''

May our Saviour, our faith, be joyfully embodied in the whole person that we are. Amen.

## **Worship Music**

Dear Lord and Saviour of Mankind- with Lyrics by Thenba:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqOnjmr9Ah0>

My Jesus My Saviour with Lyrics by Lauraahlooiscool:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqSQvoinDE4>

I the Lord of sea and sky - Lucy Gibson (attached)

Nearer my God to thee with Lyrics by Michael Curb:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=414J9NAJ9fs>

**Prayers of Intercession** (Our first prayer today is from All Saints, Bedford).

God of all the Earth, be present with us now, in each of our homes, as we connect together and unite as one family under heaven. We come to you with open hands, some of us with hearts full of questions, some of us fearful of what the future holds, all of us stunned by the events of this year, draw us close as we place our questions and hopes into your hands.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our government, district and local councils. Guide their decision making at this difficult time with your wisdom and compassion.

Be with all those making difficult decisions with-in organisations.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the worlds healing, for the sharing of knowledge and resources.

For peace and justice.

For safe and legal passage for refugees and the countries and counties feeling overburdened. We pray for a positive way forward in the channel, and for the family of the young man who drowned.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in need; the hungry, the fearful, the lonely, the unemployed.

Those living with job and financial insecurity.

For our young people making decisions in confusing circumstances.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, heal and hold close those who are hurting, all who are struggling in body, mind and spirit. We name before you those who are unwell....

We thank-you for our NHS, medics and carers, may they be protected and supported in their work.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We commend to your safe and eternal keeping those who have recently died, and ask your comfort for those who grieve.

We remember before you those whom we have loved and look to see again in your eternal kingdom...

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

*In this moment of stillness we lift before God the prayers of our own hearts this day  
.....*

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our 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 them that 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.

### **Blessing**

The Lord bless you and watch over you,  
the Lord make his face shine upon you  
and be gracious to you,  
the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace;  
and the blessing of God almighty the  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen.**

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