

MOUNT ELIZA ANGLICAN CHURCH — HOLY COMMUNION — 18 OCTOBER, 2020  
— ST LUKE, EVANGELIST AND MARTYR —

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**OPENING PRAYERS**

WELCOME

The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.

SENTENCE

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ask therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Luke 10:2

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Let us pray.  
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.

TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22.37–40, Mark 12.30–31

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

In penitence and faith,  
let us confess our sins to Almighty God:

Merciful God,  
our maker and our judge,  
we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
and in what we have failed to do:  
we have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;  
we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.  
Father, forgive us.  
Strengthen us to love and obey you  
in newness of life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God,  
who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith:  
pardon you and set you free from all your sins,

strengthen you in all goodness  
and keep you in eternal life,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Gracious and loving God,  
you chose Luke the evangelist  
to reveal in his gospel  
the mystery of your love for the poor and outcast:  
unite in heart and spirit all who profess your name,  
and lead all nations to seek your salvation  
in Jesus Christ, your Son;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**READINGS**

**2 Timothy 4:9-17a**

**Psalm 145:10-18**

**Luke 10:1-9**

(As Bishop Paul preaches from notes, this sermon has been transcribed, with his permission, from his audio recording at <https://otter.ai>, and edited/corrected by Sav)

## 2 Timothy 4:9-17a

Well, friends from St James, it's good to be in your parish - sorry that you can't be here with me. But I hope next time that will be the case and my prayers and best wishes.

*Let's pray. Gracious God, speak to us from your word, write it in our hearts, that we may believe it and live by it faithfully to the end, for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

All we heard earlier are the last final written words from the Apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy chapter four. There's really just the blessing at the end, virtually, after today's reading.

And so it's the most famous biblical writer writing his final words. He's in prison. He is in Nero's Rome, most likely, it's the 60s AD. He's had 30 years of Christian life and most of that in ministry. And as far as we know, probably, his ministry mission is pretty much over. That's what he seems to expect in this letter. He's faced, it seems, a preliminary hearing and defence and it seems that he expects the trial will be the end of his life. And like Jesus, in a way, deserted in Gethsemane, there's a couple of echoes of that here. He is almost alone.

And so what we heard were the mention of a whole range of different people. Some of them may sound very unfamiliar to you. Demas, for example, at the beginning of today's reading, *Demas, in love with this present world has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica*. Demas has been a Christian it seems. Was at one point, a friend of Paul, a loyal friend but now has deserted him. Maybe Paul in prison has turned him away from the Christian faith made him scared for his own life. He's fallen in love with this present world is what we're told.

And that is a love that has now overtaken his love for God and I guess the gospel of Jesus.

So he's someone now who perhaps started the Christian life well, served with Paul in some way or other, but now loves earthly pleasures more than heavenly glory. I'm sure we all, if we've been Christians for a while, know of people in that category.

Crescens and Titus are mentioned next. They've gone too but for different reasons, probably more likely, it seems they've gone for ministry purposes, to Galatia and Dalmatia -that's in verse 10.

So they've not abandoned Paul and the faith. But they've left Paul to go off on other ministry. Titus is the one to whom Paul wrote the letter of Titus, most likely.

And then Tychicus, we're told in verse 12, he has also gone; possibly he's taken this very letter to Ephesus. We're not certain about that. But Tychicus is mentioned elsewhere. And so he's gone to Ephesus, probably with this letter, because Timothy, to whom the letter was written, was then the pastor of the church in Ephesus.

And so we're told in verse 11, *only Luke is with me*; only Luke, a companion of Paul through parts of Turkey and Greece, as we call it today. And also in Jerusalem. The writer of the Acts of the Apostles. So in the Acts of the Apostles, where it says, "we" went somewhere, or sailed or whatever, Luke writes, and it's *we, Luke with Paul and others*. Luke, the same gospel writer, a physician, a doctor and historian. Only Luke, faithful, loyal Luke, is left with Paul. And I guess that's why this reading is chosen for St Luke's day: this brief, fleeting mentioned here of faithful Luke.

Paul goes on to say that at his defence, in verse 16, ***no one came to my support, but all deserted me.*** Maybe Luke was not there with him at the time or at the defence, we're not particularly sure. They've deserted Paul, maybe ashamed of the gospel, maybe afraid of what might happen to them if they declare their faith alongside Paul as well. A bit like the disciples fleeing Jesus at his trial as well.

No wonder through this letter of 2 Timothy, Paul keeps on saying to Timothy and then to the readers, us included, do not be ashamed of the gospel, do not be ashamed of even Paul the bearer of the gospel. But despite being deserted by so many of these people, some of whom perhaps were still Christians, but fearful of the Roman Empire, and some like Demas who'd abandoned the Christian faith all together, and some Christians who've gone off to do other ministry, presumably, Paul left alone, prays for mercy. He says, ***may it not be counted against them.***

So Paul recognizes, if you like, the weakness of the human spirit, and prays for God's mercy to be on those who perhaps have, at times, felt ashamed of the Christian gospel. God, after all, is a forgiving and merciful God. That's in contrast to Alexander, who's mentioned back in verse 14, ***Alexander the coppersmith, did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds.*** He opposed Paul's message, verse 15 says. There's no prayer for mercy for Alexander. It's not that he was just weak, he actually opposed Paul. Maybe again, like Demas, one who's come to faith and been a Christian for a time and, and now turned against Paul, for whatever reason we're not particularly told. So Timothy is warned about people like Alexander as well.

It's a fairly lonely scenario, really. Nobody with Paul apart from Luke, others who've abandoned him for various reasons, some friends off ministering elsewhere, as well. No one's stood by him at his preliminary hearing. And so, therefore, Paul says to Timothy, do your best to come to me soon. That's how today's reading actually began.

Partly he's lonely, partly he wants a cloak. He mentions that in verse 13. Winter is coming, and he's left his cloak at seams in Troas in northern way of Turkey to Northern Greece. He also wants books and parchments; the books would be scrolls probably in the parchments would have been written on leather. We don't know what they are, whether they're Paul's own writings, or whether they're Luke's writings, or whether they're the Old Testament, we don't know what they are.

And he also asked Timothy to bring to him Mark. Mark, who at one earlier point in the Acts of the Apostles had gone off with Barnabas; and Paul and Mark seem to have had a bit of a disagreement and dispute but now it seems there's reconciliation. Most likely it's the same Mark that wrote the gospel. And if Mark did indeed come with Timothy, you could imagine here Mark and Luke, two gospel writers whose gospels have lots of similarities, with Paul in Rome, while he's facing trial. No wonder perhaps the Gospels have so many similarities, none of which should give us cause to think the gospels are unreliable either.

Well, despite the isolation, and the imprisonment and the impending death of Paul, he is not in despair. That's one of the key things to take from this, I think, this strange and maybe little read passage today. So he says at the end of today's reading in verse 17, ***but the Lord stood by me and gave me strength.*** Yes, people had left him, by and large, Luke excepted, ***but the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.***

That's how today's reading ends. There's just a little bit left of the letter after that. Throughout this letter, he's urged Timothy to rely on God's power and strength. And at the end of the letter, Paul testifies to that same power and strength of God for his own ministry, not that it will necessarily preserve his life or thwart the Roman trial or save him from execution – all the tradition says the Paul died at the hands of Nero executed for his faith – but rather that the gospel will keep spreading. That is, the presence and the power of God with him as for the sake of the spread of the gospel, not the comfort or ease or safety of Paul.

We so often think of God's presence or power with us as being an easing of some problem for us. But Paul sees it as a slightly bigger way, that the presence and power of God is ultimately for the spread of God's

gospel, regardless of the hardship that we may face. And so he asked Timothy several times in his letter, relying on the strength of God, relying on the Holy Spirit: words like that to Timothy through this letter. So that even in trial, even in lockdown in prison, the gospel may indeed flourish.

Our situation, of course, is very different. It's a lockdown, but not imprisonment, not facing death, really, for most of us. But nonetheless, Paul thinks not so much of his own frustration or inability to move around, but rather that the gospel will flourish. Something that should challenge us, I think, even in our own frustrations in these times as well. There's never a guarantee that hardship won't affect Christians. There's never a promise that evil will not fiercely attack us. And there's never any certainty, I think, that Christians will not suffer unjustly. But there is every assurance and every confidence we can have, therefore, that God can and will guard us and protect us to the final day.

As Paul reflects on those who've left him – some, admittedly, to go on and do other good ministry – in a way it should be a caution to us. Demas and Alexander in particular, may have abandoned the faith, turned against Paul. Maybe at an earlier stage were with Paul – Demas certainly was. And now they've turned away, for whatever reason. Demas falling in love with the world.

I can think of countless people, to be honest, whom I've known either as friends or in church ministry over the last 30 or even 40 years since I was at university, who in some ways are like Demas, they've fallen in love with the world. They've fallen in love with their jobs, or the income that comes from their jobs or the promotion, or even the comfort of their family life to the expense of loving God and being part of church and in many cases, abandoning the faith altogether. It's sad and tragic when that's the case. And Paul, I think reflects that in his language, about Demas in particular.

But in contrast, Luke, loyal Luke with Paul to the end, fearless, we assume, because he's associating with Paul on death row. And it seems that the church in Ephesus where Timothy was pastoring, were tempted to abandon Paul as well. Hence, in fact, this letter to Timothy, but Luke's faithfulness to the end, the writer of gospel the writer of Acts, the loyal friend of Paul, even in the face of some probable personal danger, to associate with Paul on death row, could well endanger Luke's own life, though, as far as we can tell, he was spared at that time, at least.

Paul's language here and in fact, in the earlier chapter, chapter three, as well picks up the importance of love. Demas, in love with this present world, he says, in contrast to those who are lovers of Jesus. In chapter three, Paul talks about those who love themselves, or love pleasure or love money. Here, it's in love with this present world – all much the same. That's always a temptation to us, not least in a wealthy society, I think. But of course, the laurel wreaths of our present world, dry up, wither and fade very quickly. But for the lovers of God, and the lovers of Jesus, coming again, his appearances as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it's an eternal crown of glory that will never fade or perish, a crown of righteousness that will shine forever.

Luke, I think, mentioned here loyally with Paul, as we commemorate St Luke's day today, of course, is one example, along with Paul and many others through church history, of those who courageously, bravely, steadfastly, faithfully, stood firm to the end in love with God.

And how about us? The encouragement here not to give up our faith, not to let it wither away.

The temptation will be for us in the next months, presumably, is to think, "I think I'll just keep watching some church while I lie in bed", and gradually drift away from God and Christian Fellowship.

But let us be like Luke and Paul and others, steadfast to the end, not falling in love with this present world, but remaining in love with God, his gospel and his son.

*Let's pray. Gracious God, keep stirring up within us and rekindling our love for you, that we may serve you loyally faithfully to the end of our lives as we await the crown of righteousness from Christ. Amen.*

*God of Life, God of Kindness, God of Christ*

God of life,

In you, with you

All love and creation unfolds—

Noticing the breath our own lungs breathe, we thank you for the life you give. “Lord, you are good to all” (Ps 145:9): meeting us in each new day; in flowing rivers, spring rains and gardens ripening with food; in forests renewing and unfurling after fire; in kind conversations and gentle gestures of care; in hard work and harder fought and won equalities; in difficult moments when rhythms of breath bring peace and restoration—God of life, in whom, with whom all love and creation unfolds:

In your mercy,

*Hear our prayer.*

God of kindness,

In you, with you

All desires are known and satisfied—

Becoming aware of the desires of our own hearts, we pray for those among us and beyond our communities whose desires remain unnamed and unmet. God, in keeping with your kindness, “open your hand, satisfy[ing] the desire of every living thing” (Ps 145:16). Today, when pandemic stresses and risks persist and frustrate even the most basic things in our everyday—here and throughout the world—bring patience and healing. In places stricken by the trauma and poverty born out of conflict—Armenia and Azerbaijan; Hong Kong; even parts of our own country where the harm experienced by First Nations people remains unacknowledged—bring justice and compassion. In ecosystems threatened by market forces, consumption and climate change—the world’s forests; its oceans and atmosphere—bring awareness and action enough to restore the Earth. In churches encumbered by ideologies, systems and disagreements that (however intentionally or inadvertently) work to exclude and oppress people—in our Anglican communion, where the bodies and ordinary lives of LGBTQIA+ clergy and lay people are threatened or ignored—bring fresh visions, fresh theologies, fresh imaginings of how you and we might be and become together. In homes unsettled by discontent, violence and abuse—even in our own communities—bring safety and solace—

God of kindness, in whom, with whom all desires are known and satisfied:

In your mercy,

*Hear our prayer.*

God of Christ,

In you, with you:

All in all—

Confident that you “are near to all who call” your name (Ps 145:18); confident in the hope that your deep incarnation reaches down and touches every living thing, we remember those known to us in sickness, grief, need or trouble, naming them quietly now—

God of Christ, All in all:

In your mercy,

*Hear our prayer.*

We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

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.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are  
yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

## **GREETING OF PEACE**

We are the body of Christ.  
His Spirit is with us.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
And also with you.

## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.  
Accept and use our offerings for your glory  
and for the service of your kingdom.  
Blessed be God for ever.

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

The Lord be with you,  
And also with you.  
Lift up your hearts;  
We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All thanks and praise, glory and honour,  
be yours at all times, in every place,  
holy and loving Father, true and living God.

We praise you that through your eternal Word  
you brought the universe into being  
and made us in your own image.

You have given us this earth to care for and delight in,  
and with its bounty you preserve our life.  
We thank you that you bound yourself to the human race  
with the promises of a gracious covenant  
and called us to serve you in love and peace.

Above all, we give you thanks for your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ:  
born as one of us, he lived our common life  
and offered his life to you in perfect obedience and trust.

By his death he delivered us from sin, brought us new life,  
and reconciled us to you and to one another.

Therefore with angels and archangels,  
with apostles, and prophets,  
with holy men and women of every age,  
we proclaim your great and glorious name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.

Holy God, we thank you  
for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine,  
and we pray that we who eat and drink them  
in obedience to our Saviour Christ,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
may be partakers of his body and blood,  
and be made one with him and with each other  
in peace and love.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread;  
and when he had given you thanks  
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,  
'Take, eat. This is my body given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup,  
and again giving you thanks  
he gave it to his disciples, saying,  
'Drink from this, all of you.  
This is my blood of the new covenant  
shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died,  
Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded:  
proclaiming his offering of himself  
made once for all upon the cross,  
his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,  
and looking for his coming again,  
we celebrate, with this bread and this cup,  
his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice  
for the sins of the whole world.

As we eat and drink this holy sacrament,  
renew us by your Spirit  
that we may be united in the body of your Son  
and serve you as a royal priesthood  
in the joy of your eternal kingdom.

Receive our praises, Father,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
with whom and in whom,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
we worship you in songs of never-ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power,  
are yours forever and ever. Amen

**THE BREAKING AND SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE**

**We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.**

**We who are many are one body,  
for we all share in the one bread.**

**DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION**

**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We believe in one God,  
who made and loves all that is.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ,  
God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was born, lived, died and rose again,  
and is coming to call all to account.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
who calls, equips and sends out God's people,  
and brings all things to their true end.**

**This is our faith, the faith of the Church:**

**We believe in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

**Living God,  
in this holy meal you fill us with new hope.  
May the power of your love,  
which we have known in word and sacrament,  
continue your saving work among us,  
give us courage for our pilgrimage,  
and bring us to the joys you promise.**

**Most loving God,  
you send us into the world you love.  
Give us grace to go thankfully and with courage  
in the power of your Spirit.**

**BLESSING**

**The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds  
in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

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

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