

YouTube link to order of service <https://youtu.be/sGo1Y9gnxg0>

**Collect of the Second Sunday after Trinity**

Lord, you have taught us  
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:  
send your Holy Spirit  
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,  
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,  
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.  
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

**Gospel** *Matthew 10.24-39*

Jesus summoned the twelve and sent them out with the following instruction: <sup>24</sup>‘A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; <sup>25</sup>it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

<sup>26</sup>So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. <sup>27</sup>What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. <sup>28</sup>Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the hairs of your head are all counted. <sup>31</sup>So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup>Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; <sup>33</sup>but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup>Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

<sup>35</sup>For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

<sup>36</sup>and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

<sup>37</sup>Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup>and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.’

At various times I have spoken of the system of readings we use in Church each Sunday, the Revised Common Lectionary, a system we share with Christians of a wide range of traditions. I have spoken of its advantages, emphasising a unity of worship and reflection right across barriers of language, of culture, of tradition.

But there is a downside, on some occasions I will open up the passages for a particular Sunday and say inwardly to myself, ‘O Lord, I really wish you had

not said that.’ It does mean though, that the preacher has to tackle and think through passages that, left to his own devices, he would gently pass over.

Such a passage is our Gospel passage for today. You could almost imagine the 1<sup>st</sup> century tabloid newspaper headline ‘Renegade preacher tells kids to defy parents!’ ‘O dear Lord. I wish you had n’t said that.’ But it is there. Do we just put our fingers over that bit and wish it wasn’t there or do we try to get a handle on what this has to say to us in our own generation? First of all we have to recognise that different idiom, different literary styles that suit one culture can jar on another. I recall in the late 60’s English papers making fun of the Chinese people saying ‘May Chairman Mao live for 10,000 years.’ When I asked a Chinese friend about this he said; ‘Don’t be stupid. No-one thinks Chairman Mao is going to live for 10, 000 years – it is just the Chinese way of saying ‘Long live Chairman Mao.’’

So let us step back from the passage and look at it as a whole. It is about loyalty, a radical loyalty to Jesus that underlines and informs our other loyalties to family and to friends and community.

Let’s take this a stage further. A radical loyalty to Jesus that informs and underlines our other loyalties. When I begin to look at it this way Jesus becomes less of an adversary who demands to be appeased rather a companion along the way, a demanding companion, a companion who expects high things of us but a companion none the less. To help us reflect on this let us just listen to this presentation of the Lord’s Prayer some of you may have heard before.

*Drama Script – Lord’s Prayer*

A *Our Father, who art in heaven:*

B *Yes*

A *Our Father, who art in heaven:*

B *I’m listening.*

A *Will you stop interrupting – I’m busy praying!*

B *I know and I’m listening – don’t you expect me to listen?*

*Carry on.*

A *hallowed be thy name,*

B *How do you propose to do that?*

A *Do what?*

B *hallow my name.*

A *Well I’ll ..... I’ll ..... what do you think I should do?*

B *Hallowing is honouring. I think the best way you can honour my name is living your life the way I would like to see you do it.*

A *How do I know that?*

B *Well we could start with the commandments; my Son’s teaching in the Sermon on the Mount gives*

*you a pretty fair idea of what I am talking about.*

*Carry on.*

*A thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

*B Sounds good to me – what are you going to do about it?*

*A What do you mean, ‘What am I going to do about it?’*

*B Well, if you are not prepared to do my will, how do you think my will is going to be done on earth?*

*A Do you mean it depends on me?*

*B Not just you – but lots of people like you. If enough people started going by what I desired, what I wanted this world could be a very different place.*

*A But it’s hard on our own Lord.*

*B You won’t be on your own – I am here to help, to listen to your problems.*

*What else is on your mind?*

*A Give us this day our daily bread.*

*B I do that.*

*A But you don’t do you?*

*B What do you mean?*

*A There are so many people starving in this world, living in real hardship – but you don’t seem to*

*do anything.*

*B But I have - I have given you all a wonderful world in which to live. There is in fact plenty of food to go around if only people would be prepared to share instead of just looking after themselves.*

*A And forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

*B You cannot be serious?*

*A What are you talking about?*

*B That argument you had with your brother?*

*A He started it!*

*B You had nothing to do with it?*

*Not even a little bit?*

*A Lord – you have no idea how annoying he can be!!! I suppose I did wind him up a bit.*

*This forgiveness business is hard Lord –*

*B I know.*

*A What if he just throws it back in my face?*

*B We'll face that when it comes – you'll probably find that he is feeling just as bad about this – that he would like to make a fresh start as well and feels just as awkward as you do.*

*A And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.*

*B You seem quite capable of finding temptation without any help from me don't you?*

*A Lord, I really do want to do what is right – and yet it still seems so difficult. I find myself doing things, saying things, even thinking things I know I shouldn't – I feel so helpless, I feel like giving up at times.*

*B Believe me, I know it is hard at times – my Son knew what it was like to be tempted. But you don't have to do this all by yourself. I promised I will be with you always – and I will. When you need help just ask and I will be there. You will make mistakes but I do understand; I do love you and I do forgive. So let's just tackle this problem together.*

*A Thank you Lord  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory Amen*

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The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us of this fundamental truth:

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need *Heb 4:15*

The Jesus who asks of us an uncompromising loyalty, a loyalty that informs and underlines all our other commitments, is the same Jesus who travels the road with us; who, who knew the pain and the loneliness of Gethsemene and Calvary, who met frightened disciples on the Road to Emmaus, listened to their pain and confusion and making himself known in the breaking of bread sent them back to tell the good news. It is the same Jesus who came to Simon

Peter by the Lake, lifting from him the pain of his memory of denial and commissioned him afresh to service, ‘Feed my sheep’.

This same Jesus comes to us in our strengths and our weaknesses, our faithfulness and our failure, in all the complexities of our relationships in work, in business, in the home and community and calls us to further service in his name.

So let us indeed ‘approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.’