

Worship at Home
The Tenth Sunday after Trinity
With the Community of Muknell Abbey

THE WELCOME

Br. Stuart

Grace, mercy and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

All: And also with you.

Welcome! Welcome to this Church of England Sunday Service for the tenth Sunday after Trinity.

This morning's service comes from Mucknell Abbey near Worcester in the West Midlands. My name is Brother Stuart, and I'm a member of this community of monks and nuns, Anglican and Methodist, who live here. Our ages range from 27 to me at 74, which makes me the grandpa!

We're part of the Order of St Benedict which has been on the go for something like fifteen hundred years, though our particular community was founded only in 1941, with the special intention of praying for Christian unity, an intention which has broadened into praying for the peace and unity of people of all faiths and none.

Because we wanted to live more simply and sustainably, twelve years ago we sold our old monastery in Oxfordshire and bought this place. At the time it was a derelict farm. When we bought it, we didn't know that for at least five centuries before King Henry VIII closed the monasteries, in the 1530s, this farm was owned by the Benedictine monks of Worcester Cathedral. It's recorded in the great Domesday Book of 1086 as "Muckenhill" and the name, like the mud, has stuck!

In his Rule, St Benedict says that guests are to be received "as Christ". All sorts of people come here to share something of our life, some simply pop in for a service, some for a few hours of peace and quiet, some for a few days of retreat, and some young people come for several months to live alongside the community, sometimes as part of a gap-year, sometimes as an exploration of their sense of calling. And Benedict says that monasteries are never without guests, but since the Covid-19 lockdown in March we have been without either guests or visitors, and it has felt decidedly odd! So, you are particularly welcome to share the service with us this morning.

Now, back in the 1850s this farm was re-built as a model farm with the buildings round a rectangular farmyard. Apart from the old farmhouse, all the buildings have been kept and re-furbished. Wherever possible we've used recycled and locally sourced materials.

We have solar panels and photo-voltaic cells on the roofs to heat the water and generate the electricity. The monastery is heated by a biomass boiler and all the rainwater is harvested to flush the toilets, the waste goes into a biodigester and then on into reed-beds.

The farm is reduced to 40 acres and we've planted several thousand woodland trees as well as orchards. We've developed a huge kitchen garden where we grow as much of our food as possible. Looking after it all, as well as running a large household and caring for our guests and visitors on top of our principal work of prayer, study and generating income to pay the bills, is more than enough to keep us occupied!

During the service you will meet our Abbot, Thomas, who will read the Gospel, our two novices, Sister Jessica, who will share her testimony, and we'll hear Sister Gregory as she sings a piece written by Hildegard of Bingen, a Benedictine nun, born in 1098. Brother Adrian will read the first lesson, preach and lead the intercessions.

But now, let's join the Community in our Chapel singing one of our morning hymns:

HYMN

O Splendour of God

Sung by the Community of Mucknell Abbey

O splendour of God's glory bright,
True light begotten of God's light,
Full light of light, light's living spring,
O day, our days illumining.

Come righteous sun of heavenly love,
Pour down your radiance from above;
And shed the Holy Spirit's ray
On every thought and sense today.

With prayer the Father we implore,
The Father glorious evermore:
Almighty, source of grace and power,
Be with us in temptation's hour.

To guide whatever we may do,
With love all envy to subdue,
To give us grace to bear all wrong,
Transforming sorrow into song.

All laud to you, O Father, be,
To you, O Son, eternally:
To you, the Spirit, equal praise
From joyful hearts we ever raise. Amen.

Words: St Ambrose

As we prepare to listen to God's word, we ask forgiveness for all that has been amiss in our lives and in the world.

O God, our Creator, we come to you asking for the gift of repentance. Lord, have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

O Christ, our Redeemer, we come to you asking for the gift of forgiveness. Christ, have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

O Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier, we come to you asking for the gift of wholeness. Lord, have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sin, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

REFLECTION

Sr. Jessica

I'm Sister Jessica and I've been here at Mucknell Abbey for three years. I was clothed as a novice two years ago, having spent a year living alongside the Community before that. Being clothed as a novice meant that I was given a habit to wear, and also that I officially became a nun.

One of the most distinctive aspects of our life, I think, is our prayer. We're Benedictines, and in his Rule, Benedict calls our corporate prayer, we call we the Daily Office, the Opus Dei, the Work of God. Prayer is our job, essentially. We also engage in all the work of running a large household, managing our estate and gardens, and, in more normal times, welcoming guests, but all of that work is aimed at making possible and sustaining our real work, where we gather in chapel 7 times each day to pray the Office and celebrate the Eucharist.

The majority of the Office consists of saying or singing the psalms, and it's this aspect of our work in particular that has opened up my heart in so many ways over the last three years.

In my first months at Mucknell, I was very struck, and surprised, by the anger present in the psalms, and I found it very difficult. Anger's an emotion that I have a hard time with, and imagining God angry was almost impossible, and quite upsetting. Then one morning we came to Psalm 18, which begins with the psalmist in trouble and distress. He calls out to God in desperation, and then we read:

God heard my voice from his heavenly dwelling; my cry of anguish came to his ears.

The earth reeled and quaked; the roots of the mountains shook; they reeled because of his anger.

The Lord thundered out of heaven; the Most High uttered his voice.

He reached down from on high and grasped me; he drew me from the great waters.

He delivered me from my strong enemies and from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me.

He brought me out into an open place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.

Those verses opened my eyes to a completely different way of seeing God's anger, anger here at the way a precious child is being treated, anger that causes God to storm down from heaven and essentially say, "don't you treat my child that way". It was a revelatory moment for me, both in terms of an acceptance of strong emotions, if God can have them, then maybe they're ok, and also amazement that God would come to our defence, to my defence, with such passion. Strong emotions like anger are still not always my forte, but coming round to this psalm every other Wednesday helps to keep my heart open to an aspect of God, and of life, that maybe I don't always find comfortable, and might otherwise ignore.

The psalms also keep my heart open to the needs of the world. Pretty much every human experience finds its expression in the psalms; joy, praise, delight, love, anger, despair, betrayal, depression, vengeance and much more besides. Just occasionally we hit a psalm that expresses perfectly to God how I'm feeling in that moment, but much more often that's not the case, nor do I expect it to be, and in that moment the psalm that I don't identify with today reminds me that someone, somewhere, is feeling this, does need to say this to God, but maybe doesn't have the words, but I, and we, can have them, and pray them, for and with that person, even though they know nothing about it, and we don't know who they are. Even the psalms about vengeance, which many people find profoundly challenging, open my heart to the complexity of humanity, and especially the challenges inherent in peace making and in breaking cycles of anger and revenge. The psalms keep my heart and my prayer open to God and to the needs of the world, and for that I'm profoundly grateful for them, and their place in our lives here at Mucknell.

And now the collect for today:

Let your merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of your humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions. Make them to ask such things as shall please you; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN

Brother, sister

Sung by St Martin's Voices

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
fellow travellers on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christlight for you
in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
'till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

*Words and Music: Richard Gillard
Tune: The Servant Song*

OLD TESTAMENT READING (Isaiah 56. 1, 6 – 8)

Read by Br. Adrian

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord: maintain justice and do what is right for soon my salvation will come and my deliverance will be revealed. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath and do not profane it, and hold fast to my covenant. These I will bring to my Holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar. For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus, says the Lord God, who gathers the outcast of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

For the word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 67

Sung by the Community of Mucknell Abbey

Let all the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

May God be merciful to us and bless us,
show us the light of his countenance and come to us.

Let your ways be known upon earth,
your saving health among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide all the nations upon earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has brought forth its increase;
may God, our own God, give us his blessing.

May God give us his blessing,
and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe of him.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

THE HOLY GOSPEL (St Matthew 15. 21 – 28)

Read by Abbot Thomas

All: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'have mercy on me Lord, son of David, my daughter is tormented by a demon'. But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him saying, 'send her away for she keeps shouting after us'. He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. But she came and knelt before him saying, 'Lord, help me'. He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs'. She said, 'yes Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters table'. Then Jesus answered her, 'woman, great is your faith, let it be done for you as you wish'. And her daughter was healed instantly.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

All: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

SERMON

Br. Adrian

CHANT

O Virtus Sapientiae

Sung by Sr. Gregory

You've heard some of our chant. It is relatively simple. As I said, Hildegard of Bingen was a Benedictine nun. Her works include extensive correspondence and writings, including chant melodies that are much more elaborate than the standard chant. Sister Gregory is now going to sing one of her chants.

O virtus Sapientie, que circuiens,
circuisti, comprehendendo omnia in una via que habet vitam,
tres alas habens, quarum una altum volatet
altera de terra sudat et tertia undique volat.
Laus tibi sit, sicut te decet O Sapientia.

Words and Chant by Hildegard of Bingen

THE INTERCESSIONS

Br. Adrian

Lord Jesus, you showed mercy and healing to the Canaanite woman. Strengthen your Church that we may be a channel for your love in the cause of justice. We pray for Archbishop Justin and all who lead your Church, that they may do so with humble hearts and in the cause of truth. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, the Canaanite woman turned to you in the need of mercy. Help us to be humble and show compassion to a troubled world in need of healing. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you responded to the faith of the Canaanite woman and healed her daughter. Bring healing and hope to all who are in distress or sickness at this time. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you raised Lazarus from the dead to new life in you. We pray for all who have died.

Rest eternal grant unto to them, O Lord,

All: and may light perpetual shine upon them.

May they rest in peace,

All: and rise in glory.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Benedict and all the saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. Merciful God,

All: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Sung by the Community

As our Saviour taught us, we 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.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Br. Stuart

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, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always.

All: Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: In the name of Christ. Amen.

HYMN

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Sung by St Martin's voices

Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation:
come ye who hear,
brothers and sisters draw near,
praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shelters thee under his wings, yea, so gently sustaineth:
hast thou not seen
all that is needful hath been
granted in what he ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work, and defend thee;
surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
ponder anew
all the almighty can do,
he who with love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath come now with praises before him!
Let the Amen
sound from his people again:
gladly for ay we adore him.

*Words: Joachim Neander (1680); Translator: Catherine Winkworth (1863)
Tune: Lobe Den Herren*

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