

**WRITTEN WORSHIP**  
**Sunday 2 June 2024**  
**Mrs Rowena Ward Barrow**

**1 after Trinity**

**Welcome & Intro - Jesus sheds light on a right attitude to the Law**

**Hymn: StF 134 Christ, whose glory fills the skies**

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,  
Christ, the true and only Light,  
Sun of righteousness, arise,  
triumph o'er the shade of night;  
Day-spring from on high, be near;  
Day-star, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn  
unaccompanied by Thee;  
joyless is the day's return,  
till Thy mercy's beams I see,  
till they inward light impart,  
glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine,  
pierce the gloom of sin and grief;  
fill me, radiance divine,  
scatter all my unbelief;  
more and more Thyself display,  
shining to the perfect day.

Charles Wesley

**The Preparation:** Let us pray:

Living Lord,

Open our eyes to the reality of your world as it is, in its need of you;  
Open our eyes to the reality of our lives as we are, in our need of you;  
Open our eyes to the reality of your love for the whole of your creation;  
Open our eyes to the reality of your love for each of us;  
Open our eyes to Jesus.

Visit us with your salvation - and may we play our part, day by day, in its coming. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

**Prayer of Approach**

Lord God, you give us great treasures. You fill our life with your love and your presence. You give us talents and abilities. You give us your Spirit. Help us to be aware of the great gifts that are ours, that we may use them to your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Prayer of confession and declaration of forgiveness**

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all. Let each of us bring before the Lord our wrongs of the past week. *Brief silence*

Lord, as you have entered into our life and death and in all the world you call us into your death and risen life, forgive us our sins; and draw us, we pray, by the power and encouragement of your Spirit, into an exchange of gifts and needs, joys and sorrows, strength and weakness with your people everywhere; that with them we may have grace to break through every barrier and to share your love with everyone, for your glory's sake. **Amen**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself, that we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, and be cleansed from all our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Collect for Trinity 1:**

O God, the strength of all those who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in the keeping of your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

### **Hymn: StF 666 Master speak! Thy servant heareth**

Master, speak! thy servant heareth,  
waiting for thy gracious word,  
longing for thy voice that cheereth,  
Master, let it now be heard.  
I am list'ning, Lord, for thee;  
what hast thou to say to me?

Speak to me by name, O Master,  
let me know it is to me;  
speak, that I may follow faster,  
with a step more firm and free,  
where the Shepherd leads the flock,  
in the shadow of the Rock!

Master, speak! tho' least and lowest,  
let me not unheard depart;  
Master, speak! for oh, thou knowest  
all the yearning of my heart,  
knowest all its truest need;  
speak! and make me blest indeed.

Master, speak! and make me ready,  
when thy voice is truly heard,  
with obedience glad and steady,  
still to follow ev'ry word.  
I am listening, Lord, for thee:  
Master, speak, oh speak to me!

Frances Ridley Havergal

**The Ministry of the Word - StF 837 (Psalm 146);**

Praise the LORD!  
Praise the LORD, O my soul!

**I will praise the LORD as long as I live;  
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.**

Do not put your trust in princes,  
in mortals, in whom there is no help.

**When their breath departs, they return to the earth;  
on that very day their plans perish.**

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
**whose hope is in the LORD their God,**

who made heaven and earth,  
**the sea, and all that is in them;**  
who keeps faith forever;

**who executes justice for the oppressed;  
who gives food to the hungry.**

The LORD sets the prisoners free;

**the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.**  
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;  
**the LORD loves the righteous.**

The LORD watches over the strangers;  
**he upholds the orphan and the widow,  
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.**

The LORD will reign forever,  
**your God, O Zion, for all generations.**

**Mark 2:23 - 3:6**

**Mark 2:23-28 & 3:1-6**

**The question about the Sabbath & the man with a paralysed hand**

**Narrator:** Jesus was walking through some cornfields on the Sabbath. As his disciples walked along with him, they began to pick the ears of corn. So the Pharisees said to Jesus:

**Pharisee:** Look, it is against our Law for your disciples to do that on the Sabbath!

**Narrator:** Jesus answered:

**Jesus (to Pharisee):** Have you never read what David did that time when he needed something to eat? He and his men were hungry, so he went into the house of God and ate the bread offered to God. This happened when Abiathar was the High Priest. According to our Law only the priests may eat this bread - but David ate it and even gave it to his men.

The Sabbath was made for the good of man; man was not made for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

**Narrator:** Jesus went back to the synagogue, where there was a man who had a paralysed hand. Some people were there who wanted to accuse Jesus of doing wrong; so they watched him closely to see whether he would heal the man on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man:

**Jesus:** Come up here to the front.

**Narrator:** Then he asked the people:

**Jesus:** What does our Law allow us to do on the Sabbath? To help or to harm? To save a man's life or to destroy it?

**Narrator:** But they did not say a thing. Jesus was angry as he looked round at them, but at the same time he felt sorry for them because they were so stubborn and wrong. Then he said to the man:

**Jesus:** Stretch out your hand.

**Narrator:** He stretched it out and it became well again. So the Pharisees left the synagogue and met at once with some members of Herod's party, (speak slowly here) and they made plans to kill Jesus.

**Cast:** This is the word of the Lord

**ALL:** **Thanks be to God**

## **Sermon**

### **Jesus & the Law**

Jesus has the words of eternal life - He sheds light on a right attitude to the Law. When Jesus heals on the sabbath, He requires that we look beyond the rules of sabbath to the greater rule of love.

Jesus appeals to the spirit of the law as against the letter of the law. It was permissible to pluck corn in a neighbour's field, provided no implement **was used**. There was no reason, according to the law, why the fact that this was done on the sabbath should make any difference, unless the obligation to regard it as a day of rest was broken. The narrower type of Pharisee, however, interpreted the law of sabbath rest to make it an offence to do much more than draw breath!

Mark, from the start, pits Jesus against powers and authorities, human and spiritual, actual and self-appointed. The 2 sabbath controversies in our Gospel today aren't merely instances of 'legalism', with Jesus as the great teacher of a non-legal or non-ritual kind of religion. As His popularity rose, Jesus

encountered opposition. The Pharisees claimed to uphold the Law of Moses but were, in fact, defending heavy scaffolding - the additional rules and regulations they had built up around the Law. In so doing, they had distorted the Law and led people away from its real requirements.

At the time referred to by Jesus in the reference to David and his men, David had already been anointed king by Samuel. Saul was still king and David was on the run from him; but David still claimed the right to eat the holy bread, a sign perhaps of his coming kingdom. By using an incident in David's life, Jesus shows human need is more important than religious rituals and that Jesus was Lord of the sabbath and had no problem with his disciples' actions.

Jesus claimed the right to put into action His own kingdom-path, which would make redundant many of the man-made customs within Jewish tradition. And just as one of Saul's servants went and told his master (1 Sam 21:7, 22:9-10), so the Pharisees got together with the Herodians - seemingly a very odd alliance!

The Pharisees were strict and nationalistic in their upholding of the traditional Jewish law, whereas the Herodians, who supported the puppet rulers of the land and were not ill-disposed towards Roman rule, were considered untouchable. Opposition mounts as members of government and religion join forces to destroy Jesus. So often there are groups in modern society that still seek to do this...

The Pharisees would have felt threatened by Jesus - He spoke with authority and challenged conventional thinking and behaviour. The Herodians probably viewed Jesus with suspicion as a revolutionary dissident and rabble rouser because of the popular following He had. John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the coming of God's kingdom and had his own followers, had already fallen foul of Herod (Mark 1:14; 6:14ff).

Why did the Pharisees join ranks with the Herodians? They had no power themselves. They needed to make unlikely alliances - so it would be at the end, as well, when Caiaphas and Pilate together sent Jesus to his death. And not long afterwards, the young Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, would obtain authority from the chief priests to persecute the Christian church.

Throughout his gospel, Mark depicts Jesus as a faithful upholder of the OT Torah. He doesn't attack the Torah itself but the interpretation given to its commands by the religious authorities of His day. It is not the Torah that is at fault but those who misunderstand it.

Jesus refused to draw a distinction between saving life in the narrowest sense and the offer of full life which characterised His ministry. Had He delayed healing the man with the withered hand until after the sabbath, it would have denied the Torah's true intention which is the glory of God and the benefit of humanity.

By their attitude, the Pharisees destroy life rather than save it - by neglecting opportunities to do good, they do harm ie it is therefore they who are the sabbath breakers. Jesus himself fulfils the Torah, which commands us to do good and offers life to those who obey it. There is an irony here in the situation because at that very moment the Pharisees were planning to do harm and to kill Jesus, whose only purpose was to do good and to save life.

Jesus didn't deny that the disciples were out of line with traditional sabbath observance but He pleads special circumstances and scriptural precedence. The implication is that Jesus is the true King marked out by God but not yet recognised and enthroned. He therefore has the right, when necessary, to

bypass the normal regulations - in this instance a deliberate sign that the King is here, the Kingdom is breaking in and the new creation is already bursting upon the old world.

Jesus' actions and their explanations were a coded Messianic claim - a claim that in Him the new day was dawning in which even Israel's God-given laws would be seen in a new light.

50+ years ago, shops were closed on Sundays and no professional sport was played. Everywhere was very quiet on a Sunday - unlike nowadays. Jesus' words cannot be taken as validating the fact that here in Britain most people no longer recognise and share a culture of rest and relaxation together, reminding ourselves of what is really important in life. We need to get our work-life balance right and ensure we make time for God in our lives without being legalistic. As the saying goes: 'Rules are made for the guidance of wise folk and the followance of fools'.

A cartoon of several decades past sums up the attitude and the problem: An anxious father, not wanting to upset the neighbours, tells his little girl she mustn't play with her hoop in the street on Sunday. He tells her she should go into the back garden to play. "Isn't it Sunday in the back garden?" asks the girl.

**Let us pray:** Lord God, you teach us to love You and love one another. Teach us your ways of compassion and mercy, so that the way we treat others may be in line with the way you treat us. **Amen**

#### **Hymn: StF 416 There's a wideness in God's mercy**

There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
like the wideness of the sea;  
There's a kindness in God's justice  
which is more than liberty.

There is plentiful redemption  
in the blood that has been shed;  
there is joy for all the members  
in the sorrows of the Head.

There is grace enough for thousands  
of new worlds as great as this;  
there is room for fresh creations  
in that upper home of bliss.

For the love of God is broader  
than the measures of the mind;  
and the heart of the Eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.

But we make God's love too narrow  
by false limits of our own;  
and we magnify its strictness  
with a zeal he will not own.

If our love were but more simple  
we should take him at his word,  
and our lives would be illumined  
by the presence of our Lord.

Frederick William Faber

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving**

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for you have created light to dispel the darkness and have shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We rejoice that all power and might come from you. Blessed be God for ever. **Amen**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Through Jesus, we are shown God's compassion and mercy; let us pray for that love in our lives, in the Church and in the world. Let compassion and mercy be the hallmarks of our church life and all its activities; let us be noticeable by their shining in our behaviour and our conversations; disrupt any rules which block them out. **Lord of love: let us share in your love**

Loving God, we pray for all who do not know you or love you. We remember especially those who have hardened their hearts against you, for all whose life is joyless or governed by rules rather than love. May your Church be willing to accept and welcome all who come seeking you and your love. Teach us to be generous in our dealings with each other. **Lord of love: let us share in your love.**

Let compassion and mercy take root in every institution, policy and structure; let them challenge accepted wrongs and disturb complacency. Let compassion and mercy guard every doorway and fill every room; let them colour each encounter and drive every decision. **Lord of love: let us share in your love.**

Let compassion and mercy transform our attitudes to all whose illness or frailty makes them marginalised, ignored or despised. Let there be healing of all damaged self-perception and restoration of jarred human dignity. We pray for all who walk in darkness and live in fear, especially those who are persecuted, abused or neglected, all who are depressed and lonely, all who are struggling to survive, all who are ill and all who have been injured in accidents or acts of violence.

**Lord of love: let us share in your love.**

Let compassion and mercy accompany the dying and welcome them into eternity. Lord of life, we rejoice that you have destroyed the darkness of death and opened for us the way to eternal life. We bring to you all those recently departed and pray that they may rejoice in your light. May those who are grieving for loved ones feel your arms around them and have that inner peace, strength and calm that comes only from you. **Lord of love: let us share in your love.**

Let compassion and mercy blossom in all of us, as we live out our thankfulness to the God of love, for all his goodness to us.

Merciful Father, **Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,  
Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **Offering & Prayer of Dedication**

Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them our lives, to be used in your service, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Hymn: StF 526 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy**

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy:  
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe:  
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,  
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace:  
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm:  
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Jan Struther

**Blessing:**

Each day and each night, may the wisdom of the Wonderful Counsellor guide us. May the strength of the Mighty God defend us. May the love of the Everlasting Father enfold us and may the blessing of the Prince of Peace rest upon us; now and always. **Amen**