



Chet Valley Churches



Rogation Sunday

Holy Communion

9th May 2021

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to the Chet Valley Benefice for our service on Rogation Sunday. Rogation comes from the Latin *Rogare*, to ask, and it is traditional on Rogation Sunday to ask for God's blessing on the land.

The Greeting

The Lord be with you **and also with you.**

Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Our modern way of living, with our centrally heated homes and air-conditioned cars, insulates us from the changing seasons, from heat and cold, and from where our food comes from. Our worship can re-connect us with the natural world, God's creation. In our failure to remember that we are made from the dust of the earth, and to dust we will return, we have caused the crisis that humanity faces today. Creation is crying out because of the harm we have inflicted on her. Let us focus again on the world in which we live by giving thanks to God, our creator.

♪ *Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

**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.**

Prayer

**God of heaven and earth, you call us
to share in the care of creation
and to bring food and fruitfulness from field and farm.**

**Hear our prayers on this Rogation Sunday
for all who make their living on the land,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Confession

The minister introduces the confession

In Jeremiah 12:4 we read, “How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, ‘He will not see what happens to us.’” Let us call to mind our sin against the beauty and integrity of God’s precious creation.

Creator God, you made this earth and all its creatures to sing your praises. We confess that our overuse of resources and our destruction of habitats is turning creation’s joyful music into the sound of mourning and the echo of silence.

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Sustainer God, you uphold and cherish your world, and you call us to bear your image in tending and conserving the garden of creation. We confess that we have neglected your call, and failed to reflect your image in our care for your world.

Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

Redeemer God, you sent your only Son to die and rise again, that all creation might be set free from its bondage to decay and all things might be made new in Christ. We confess that we have kept your good news to ourselves and failed to speak and live its truth for all your creatures.

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Absolution—A Minister Proclaims Christ's Forgiveness

Almighty God who renews the face of the earth,
cleanses you from the pollution of your sins, create in you a new heart,
and renew your joy in serving him in his world. **Amen.**

Gloria

**Glory to God in the highest
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the most high, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**



The Liturgy of the Word

📖 First Reading: Acts 10:44-end

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

New Testament Reading: 1 John 5:1-6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the word of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn: For the Fruits of His Creation

**For the fruits of his creation thanks be to God;
For his gifts to ev'ry nation, thanks be to God;
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
Silent growth while we are sleeping,
Future needs in earth's safe-keeping, thanks be to God.**

**In the just reward of labour, God's will is done;
In the help we give our neighbour, God's will is done;
In our world-wide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.**

**For the harvests of his Spirit, thanks be to God;
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God;
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound us,
Most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.**

The Gospel Reading John 15:9-17

Alleluia, Alleluia. The seed is the word of God, says the Lord.
Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my

Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon [Belinda]

'I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last'

This is the time of year when gardeners are very busy indeed, with sowing seeds, pricking out plants, cutting things back strategically and, of course, trying to get on top of the weeds. The unseasonably cold weather has held some of us back while the more dedicated have been outside whatever the weather. Their gardens are bound to bear fruit, whereas mine may be a little late in coming up to harvest, but all of us have been grumbling about the late frosts.

For the farming community things are more serious, with that very dry April holding everything back. Growing things is an inexact science, unless the cultivation is taking place under laboratory conditions. Farmers know that we are all at the mercy of the weather, as we are of many other things in life. It has come as a rude awakening for many of the rest of us to realise that there are some things that we cannot control: our picture of ourselves in the developed world in the 21st century being pretty well disaster-proof has been shattered by the last 14 months of pandemic.

So what is God saying to us in our situation today?

This is a time of uncertainty and loss of confidence. The well entrenched goal posts have shifted and we don't know where they are going to end up. There are still many unknowns: the appalling situation in India, the slow roll out of vaccines in the poorest parts of the world, the shift to

online shopping changing the look of our high streets- all of these things contribute to a feeling of unease. How should we be responding?

Make no mistake, the church needs to respond, if it is to have any relevance in people's lives. And by the church I don't mean the Archbishop of Canterbury, I mean you and me. We are the ones who are supposed to bear fruit. How?

A friend of mine, a very sincere Roman Catholic, always flings that question at me, about any of the world's crises: but what should we do? We're Christians, we are obliged to be on the side of the poor and the marginalised, we're supposed to show God's love in our lives. How can we do that when we have so much and others have so little? How can we see injustices and not do something? I always feel wrung out after one of these discussions. It's easy to get sucked down into a feeling of helplessness when we see the suffering of others or hear of major injustices, but beating ourselves up about it is a pretty unproductive way forward. So many of the things that we hear about on the news are way beyond our control.

I remember going to a meeting of the Movement for the Ordination of Women a good many years ago at the church of St Mary le Bow in London and the then vicar, Victor Stock, telling us that we must all go and talk to all the influential people we knew, to argue the case. As I knew no one the least bit influential, this did not strike me as good advice in my particular situation. Most of us, I would hazard a guess at assuming, are not moving in the corridors of power or rubbing shoulders with those who do. Victor Stock moved in very different circles.

At this point I think it is encouraging to recall the people whom Jesus was addressing in today's Gospel reading. It is part of the farewell discourses, the farewell speech, in effect, that Jesus is giving to his disciples at the last supper. He is not speaking to the movers and shakers of 1st century Palestine who are going to go out and command others. He is speaking to some fishermen, a tax collector and various other ordinary people from an unsophisticated part of the Roman Empire, not an obvious gathering of super-heroes.

They were going to face enormous challenges in their lives, not least in the days that were to follow the last supper. They were going to fail in

some of those challenges. One of them was going to betray him. There were some difficult times ahead, but this assurance of love must have carried them through some dark times.

This is what he is telling them: that they must dwell in his love. Live in his love. Know that his love surrounds them, whatever may happen. And know that it is a matter of great joy to him that this should be so. He is not doing them a favour, or if he is, it is a favour that delights him. Think of it as the sort of unconditional love that surrounds most young children (clearly with a few sad exceptions). Hearing my sister talk with intense detail about her one year old grandson, describing to me exactly how he picks up a piece of fruit, his expression and his pleasure at his first taste of something- that is the same sort of joy that Jesus has in each of his followers. That means you, too.

The instruction to bear fruit doesn't come from a stern scout leader sending the cubs out for a bob a job and wanting to make sure they come back with the cash. It comes from someone who loves us so much that he wants the very best for each of us, for each of us to achieve our potential and to live in the most rewarding way possible. We are not inconsequential in God's eyes, or in Jesus' estimation, because we do not know influential people or do remarkable things or indeed, solve any of the world's major problems.

The disciples had no way of knowing what the future would hold for them and at this point were still relying on Jesus to lead them in person. Initially, when he was not there to lead them, they went to pieces: Peter denied him, others ran away. They didn't have all the answers and had a lot to feel guilty about, but they did have this speech to hold onto, this promise of love.

It's a promise of friendship and support, founded on an abiding relationship with a God who loves us and wants us to succeed. Our success is only possible, though, if we listen to what he is saying. It's the best solution that I have found: to pray for guidance and to act on what comes next. I'm sure you, like me, will have had times when you want an instant answer, when the questions are right there before you. As in any friendship, we don't always get what we want when we want it, but remaining in the knowledge of God's love for us, even when we are tussling with a knotty issue, can at least keep us calm.

This is a time of great need, as I said at the beginning, but knowing that our steadfast and unchanging God is looking with compassion on his suffering world removes an individual pressure on us to act. It's not all up to us. If individual Christians around the world are listening to his promptings and acting on them, then the problems that surround us have a fair chance of being dealt with. If we all dwell in his love and trust him to guide us then we are doing all that we can.

At this point my friend with the searching questions would say 'How do I know that's not just a cop- out? How do I know that I'm not just doing what I find easier?' Well, we don't know, but I suspect our prickling conscience is quite a good guide at this point too. The disciples didn't know either, but ended up doing things entirely out of the usual comfort range for a 1st century fisherman. They listened and did what God was leading them towards, even when it wasn't easy. We can do no more. As we heard in the Epistle of John, 'Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God?'

In her Christmas broadcast in 2016 the Queen said this: 'Jesus Christ lived obscurely for most of his life and never travelled very far. He was maligned and rejected by many, though he had done no wrong, and yet billions of people now follow his teaching and find in him the guiding light for their lives. I am one of them, because Christ's example helps me to see the value of doing small things with great love.' That's a pretty good way to live.

Today as we ask God's blessing on the land we can see his love for us in every part of his creation. The beauty of Spring (even one as cold as this one has been), the renewing of leaves on the trees, new plants sprouting out of the earth, flowers opening- we are greatly blessed and greatly loved.

The Confession of Faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?
We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the church.

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Rogation Day prayers

Almighty God, we the people of the seed come before you to absorb the energy of your love and creativity. We come patiently to be still in your presence. We come with hope to grow to new life. We come to be brought to fullness and to be sown in your world.

On this Rogation Day we ask your blessing on the growth of all things.

For the fields sown with corn that surround us,
loving energy of God **nurture the seed.**

For the seeds that provide food,
loving energy of God **nurture the seed.**

For the growth of livestock for food,
loving energy of God **nurture the seed.**

For farmers that struggle to survive with less and less,
loving energy of God **nurture the seed.**

For those in the food supply industry finding ways to reduce air miles,
loving energy of God **nurture the seed.**

For governments, which seek to allocate food and resources to starving peoples,
loving energy of God **nurture the seed.**

For agricultural scientists who try to feed a hungry world,
loving energy of God **nurture the seed.**

For aid agencies in their work to enable people to grow their way out of poverty,
loving energy of God **nurture the seed.**



The Collect

God of all the earth, you have given us the heritage of this good and fertile land; grant that we may so respect and use it that others may thank us for what we leave to them; through Jesus, the Christ, who is alive with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace

God is love, and those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

The peace of the risen Christ be always with you.

and also with you. Alleluia!

Let us share the peace with each other in our hearts.

Hymn: A New Commandment I Give Unto You

**A new commandment I give unto you,
That you love one another as I have loved you;
That you love one another as I have loved you.**

**By this will all men know that you are my disciples:
That you have love one for another;
By this will all men know that you are my disciples:
That you have love one for another.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Remembrance

The Lord is here. **His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, it is our duty and our joy, at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise, Holy Father, heavenly king, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

And now we give you thanks for your ancient promise that while the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter,

day and night, will never cease. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

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

Accept our praises, heavenly Father, through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and as we follow his example and obey his command, grant that by the power of the Holy Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and his blood;

who, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them saying: drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Therefore, heavenly Father, we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross; we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; we look for the coming of your kingdom, and with this bread and this cup we make memorial of Christ your Son our Lord.

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

Accept through him, our great high priest, this our sacrifice of thanks and praise, and as we eat and drink these holy gifts in the presence of your divine majesty, renew us by your spirit inspire us with your love and unite us in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship you, Father almighty, in songs of everlasting praise:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray.

Our Father in heaven...

**You are also at home in the air, the soil,
the forests and the oceans,**

Hallowed be your name...

By the care we take of your creation.

Your kingdom come...

All that you see is good,

Your will be done on earth as in heaven...

Your will to till and care.

Give us this day our daily bread...

That all may have sufficient to live life in fullness.

Forgive us our sins...

**our greed, our exploitation, our lack of concern
for other species and for future generations,**

As we forgive those who sin against us...

by reconciliation with justice and peace.

Lead us not into temptation...

the temptation to equate dominion with exploitation,

But deliver us from evil...

the evil of destroying your gift of creation.

For yours is the kingdom...

Yours Lord, not ours,

The power and the glory...

in the cross and the resurrection,

For ever and ever...

You were the beginning and you are the end.

Amen, and so it be.

Communion

The President breaks the consecrated bread.

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

**Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

The President invites all to Communion.

Come, for all things are now ready.

Come with all your kin and share with all in need:

the gift of healing for those in pain,
the gift of forgiveness for those in sin,
the gift of assurance for those in doubt,
and the gift of hope for those in tears.



**May we who share these gifts,
share Christ with one another and all our kin.**

Prayer After Communion

Living God, in this sacrament
we have shared in your eternal kingdom.
May we who taste this mystery
forever serve you in faith, hope, and love.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.
Amen.

Hymn: *For the Beauty of the Earth* [John Rutter]

**For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies:
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise.**

**For the beauty of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale and tree and flower,
Sun and moon and stars of light:
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise.**

**For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild:
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise.**

**For each perfect gift of thine
To our race so freely given,
Graces human and divine,
Flowers of earth and buds of heav'n.
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise.**

Blessing of the Soil

The Leader faces the congregation, scoops up a handful of soil in a glass container and holds it up so that all can see it.

O Creator God, Maker of all that is, we offer to you this soil;
we praise you for this marvellous and intricate creation.
Help us to reverence and respect the humble soil
as your chosen means of feeding and providing for us.
Bless this soil and all the soil around us,
the soil in our fields and gardens,
the soil on the marshes and in the woodlands,
so that the whole earth gives glory to you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Blessing

The power of God, displayed in creation,
fill you with grace to serve God in his world; **Amen.**

The peace of God, breathing in every living thing,
enable you to spread God's peace wherever you go; **Amen.**

The love of God, which fills the universe,
flow through you that you might reflect his image, **Amen.**

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! Serving Christ and loving the earth!

We go in peace, serving Christ and loving the earth.

