

Morning Prayer

Friday, June 24



Opening Sentence

Their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world.

Confession

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we have sinned against you

in thought, word, and deed,

by what we have done,

and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,

have mercy on us and forgive us;

that we may delight in your will,

and walk in your ways,

to the glory of your Name. *Amen.*

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. *Amen.*

The Invitatory and Psalter

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

Antiphon

The Lord is glorious in his saints;

Come let us adore him.

Versicle and Response

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

Antiphon

The Earth is the Lord's for he made it:

Come let us adore him.

Jubilate

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands;
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence with a song.
Know this: the Lord himself is God;
he himself has made us, and we are his;
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and call upon his Name.
For the Lord is good;
his mercy is everlasting;
and his faithfulness endures from age to age.
The Lord is glorious in his saints;
Come let us adore him.

Psalm 82 *Deus stetit*

¹God takes his stand in the council of heaven; *
he gives judgment in the midst of the gods:
²"How long will you judge unjustly, *
and show favor to the wicked?
³Save the weak and the orphan; *
defend the humble and needy;
⁴Rescue the weak and the poor; *
deliver them from the power of the wicked.
⁵They do not know, neither do they understand;
they go about in darkness; *
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
⁶Now I say to you, 'You are gods, *
and all of you children of the Most High;
⁷Nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, *
and fall like any prince."
⁸Arise, O God, and rule the earth, *
for you shall take all nations for your own.

Psalm 98 *Cantate Domino*

¹Sing to the Lord a new song, *
for he has done marvelous things.
²With his right hand and his holy arm *
has he won for himself the victory.
³The Lord has made known his victory; *
his righteousness has he openly shown in
the sight of the nations.
⁴He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to
the house of Israel, *
and all the ends of the earth have seen the
victory of our God.
⁵Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; *
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.
⁶Sing to the Lord with the harp, *

with the harp and the voice of song.
⁷With trumpets and the sound of the horn *
shout with joy before the King, the Lord.
⁸Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it, *
the lands and those who dwell therein.
⁹Let the rivers clap their hands, *
and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord,
when he comes to judge the earth.
¹⁰In righteousness shall he judge the world *
and the peoples with equity.

Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost:
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be.
World without end. Amen. *Amen.*

The First Lesson

A reading from Malachi 3:1-5

¹See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. ⁵Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 10 The Second Song of Isaiah *Quaerite Dominum*

Isaiah 55:6-1

Seek the Lord while he wills to be found; *
call upon him when he draws near.
Let the wicked forsake their ways *
and the evil ones their thoughts;
And let them turn to the Lord, and he will have compassion, *
and to our God, for he will richly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts, *
nor your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, *
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
For as rain and snow fall from the heavens *
and return not again, but water the earth,
Bringing forth life and giving growth, *

seed for sowing and bread for eating,
So is my word that goes forth from my mouth; *
it will not return to me empty;
But it will accomplish that which I have purposed, *
and prosper in that for which I sent it.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

The Gospel

A reading from John 3:22-30

²²After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. ²³John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was abundant there; and people kept coming and were being baptized ²⁴ John, of course, had not yet been thrown into prison. ²⁵Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew. ²⁶They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him." ²⁷John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him.' ²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason, my joy has been fulfilled. ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 18 A Song to the Lamb *Dignus es*

Revelation 4:11; 5:9-10, 13

Splendor and honor and kingly power *
are yours by right, O Lord our God,
For you created everything that is, *
and by your will they were created and have their being;
And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain, *
for with your blood you have redeemed for God,
From every family, language, people, and nation, *
a kingdom of priests to serve our God.
And so, to him who sits upon the throne, *
and to Christ the Lamb,
Be worship and praise, dominion and splendor, *
forever and forevermore.

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. *Amen.*

The Prayers

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. *Amen.*

The Suffrages

Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance;
Govern and uphold them, now and always.
Day by day we bless you;
We praise your Name forever.
Lord, keep us from all sin today;
Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.
Lord, show us your love and mercy;
For we put our trust in you.
In you, Lord, is our hope;
And we shall never hope in vain.

A Collect for Fridays

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. *Amen.*

A Collect for Mission

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So, clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.*

Trinity Cycle of Prayer

Robin Collins

Let us pray now for our own needs and those of others.

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

Benediction

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. *Amen. 2 Corinthians 13:14*

The Commemoration

Our principal sources of information about John the Baptist are

(1) references to his birth in the first chapter of Luke,

(2) references to his preaching and his martyrdom in the Gospels, with a few references in Acts, and

(3) references in Josephus to his preaching and martyrdom, references which are consistent with the New Testament ones, but sufficiently different in the details to make direct borrowing unlikely.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus (who wrote after 70 AD), John the Baptist was a Jewish preacher in the time of Pontius Pilate (AD 26-36). He called the people to repentance and to a renewal of their covenant relation with God. He was imprisoned and eventually put to death by Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great, who was king when Jesus was born) for denouncing Herod's marriage to Herodias, the wife of his still-living brother Philip. To marry Herodias, Herod divorced his first wife, the daughter of King Aretas of Damascus, who subsequently made war on Herod, a war which, Josephus tells us, was regarded by devout Jews as a punishment for Herod's murder of the prophet John.

In the Book of Acts, we find sermons about Jesus which mention His Baptism by John as the beginning of His public ministry (see Acts 10:37; 11:16; 13:24). We also find accounts (see Acts 18:24; 19:3) of devout men in Greece who had received the baptism of John, and who gladly received the full message of the Gospel of Christ when it was told them.

Luke begins his Gospel by describing an aged, devout, childless couple, the priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. As Zechariah is serving in the Temple, he sees the angel Gabriel, who tells him that he and his wife will have a son who will be a great prophet and will go before the Lord "like Elijah." (The Jewish tradition had been that Elijah would herald the coming of the Messiah = Christ = Anointed = Chosen of God.) Zechariah went home, and his wife conceived. About six months later, Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary, a kinswoman of Elizabeth, and told her that she was about to bear a son who would be called Son of the Most High, a king whose kingdom would never end. Thus, Elizabeth gave birth to John, and Mary gave birth six months later to Jesus.

After describing the birth of John, Luke says that he grew, and "was in the wilderness until the day of his showing to Israel." The people of the Qumran settlement, which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, sometime use the term "living in the wilderness" to refer to residing in their community at Qumran near the Dead Sea. Accordingly, it has been suggested that John spent some of his early years being educated at Qumran.

All of the gospels tell us that John preached and baptized beside the Jordan river, in the wilderness of Judea. He called on his hearers to repent of their sins, be baptized, amend their lives, and prepare for the coming of the Kingship of God. He spoke of one greater than himself who was to come after. Jesus came to be baptized, and John told some of his disciples, "This is the man I spoke of." After His baptism by John, Jesus began to preach, and attracted many followers. In fact, many who had been followers of John left him to follow Jesus. Some of John's followers resented this, but he told them: "This is as it should be. My mission is to proclaim the Christ. The groomsman, the bridegroom's friend, who makes the wedding arrangements for the bridegroom, is not jealous of the bridegroom. No more am I of Jesus. He must increase, and I must decrease." (John 3:22-30)

John continued to preach, reproving sin and calling on everyone to repent. King Herod Antipas had divorced his wife and taken Herodias, the wife of his (still living) brother Philip. John rebuked him for this, and Herod, under pressure from Herodias, had John arrested, and eventually beheaded. He is remembered on some calendars on the supposed anniversary of his beheading, 29 August.

When John had been in prison for a while, he sent some of his followers to Jesus to ask, "Are you he that is to come, or is there another?" (Matthew 11:2-14) One way of understanding the question is as follows: "It was revealed to me that you are Israel's promised deliverer, and when I heard this, I rejoiced. I expected you to drive out Herod and the Romans, and rebuild the kingdom of David. But here I sit in prison, and there is no deliverance in sight? Perhaps I am ahead of schedule, and you are going to throw out the Romans next year. Perhaps I have misunderstood, and you have a different mission, and the Romans bit will be done by someone else. Please let me know what is happening."

Jesus replied by telling the messengers, "Go back to John, and tell him what you have seen, the miracles of healing and other miracles, and say, 'Blessed is he who does not lose faith in me.'" He then told the crowds: "John is a prophet and more than a prophet. He is the one spoken of in Malachi 3:1, the messenger who comes to prepare the way of the LORD. No man born of woman is greater than John, but the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John." This has commonly been understood to mean that John represents the climax of the long tradition of Jewish prophets looking forward to the promised deliverance, but that the deliverance itself is a greater thing. John is the climax of the Law. He lives in the wilderness, a life with no frills where food and clothing are concerned. He has renounced the joys of family life, and dedicated himself completely to his mission of preaching, of calling people to an observance of the law, to ordinary standards of virtue. In terms of natural goodness, no one is better than John. But he represents Law, not Grace. Among men born of woman, among the once born, he has no superior. But anyone who has been born anew in the kingdom of God has something better than what John symbolizes. (Note that to say that John symbolizes something short of the Kingdom is not to say that John is himself excluded from the Kingdom.)

Traditionally, the Birth of Jesus is celebrated on 25 December. That means that the Birth of John is celebrated six months earlier on 24 June. The appearance of Gabriel to Mary, being assumed to be nine months before the birth of Jesus, is celebrated on 25 March and called the Annunciation, and the appearance of Gabriel to Zechariah in the Temple is celebrated by the East Orthodox on 23 September. At least for Christians in the Northern Hemisphere, these dates embody a rich symbolism.

John is the last voice of the Old Covenant, the close of the Age of Law. Jesus is the first voice of the New Covenant, the beginning of the Age of Grace. Accordingly, John is born to an elderly, barren woman, born when it is really too late for her to be having a child, while Jesus is born to a young virgin, born when it is really too early for her to be having a child. John is announced (and conceived) at the autumnal equinox, when the leaves are dying and falling from the trees. Jesus is announced (and conceived) at the vernal equinox, when the green buds are bursting forth on the trees and there are signs of new life everywhere. John is born when the days are longest, and from his birth on they grow steadily shorter. Jesus is born when the days are shortest, and from his birth on they grow steadily longer. John speaks truly when he says of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

(Of course, it is to be noted that none of this symbolism proves anything, since the Scriptures do not tell us that Jesus was born on 25 December. The symbolism of the dates is used by Christians, not as evidence, but as material for the devout imagination.)