

# Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 2



Stained glass depiction of the Last Supper by Joseph Edward Nuttgens (1952) in St Etheldreda's Church, London

Today's reading comes from the meditation Jesus makes with his disciples during the Last Supper. In some ways, we could understand it as part of his last will and testament. It is the culmination of the disciples' training.

The Fourth Gospel presents Jesus in the light of the female figure of Wisdom in Jewish writings, the one who gathers disciples, teaches them with a view to their becoming "friends of God". Jesus tells those around him that the term "servants" is no longer applicable to them, as they have progressed to the final level: their training is now complete. Normally, disciples would choose the rabbi whose teachings they found most meaningful and by which they could order their life. Jesus is unusual, in that, as he says, "You did not choose me, no, I chose you."

There is also, in this passage, a hint of the making of a covenant between Jesus and his disciples. There is no account in John of the instituting of the Eucharist with its mention of the cup containing "the blood of the covenant" and the giving of the command to "do this in memory of me", as we find in the versions of Mark, Matthew and Luke. Here, we find Jesus saying, "This is my commandment: love one another" and in this way "remain" (or abide) in his love, which is the reflection of the Father's love for Jesus. ■

## REFLECT

A person's last words are often highly valued by his or her family and friends and treated as being of great significance. People's dying wish can be regarded as sacred and those close to them will go to great lengths to see that it is carried out, even though it may not make much sense to those left behind.

There are a couple of rather demanding ideas which occur in our Gospel reading today. One is that Jesus has chosen us, rather than the other way round. Most of us were baptised as infants and brought up in a Christian environment: sometimes people of this sort may envy those who came to the faith or the Church later in life, after making an adult decision for themselves. There are many reasons why people give up the practice

of the faith, but one reason may well be that some never really believed in the first place. Each Easter, we are all invited to renew for ourselves the baptismal declaration of faith and the promises made on our behalf by our parents or godparents. We may regard this as simply a formal exercise, part of the Easter liturgy, or we can make it a really personal act of commitment to God in the person of Jesus, whom we are freely choosing to follow as disciples.

Another challenging lesson from our extract from John's account is that Jesus sums up his commandments in the deceptively simple phrase to "love one another". This means that we have to be much more aware of ourselves and how we treat other people – a rather challenging prospect. ■

## SAY

**Thus may we Godward move, finding God in others.**

(Percy Dearmer – adapted)

## DO

Read through the Renewal of Baptismal Promises from the Easter Vigil liturgy: renew them in the light of today's reading, making the Sign of the Cross with holy water.

## LEARN

John uses the female figure of Wisdom, who functions as God's agent, from the Jewish scriptures, to express his understanding of Jesus and his mission.

The female figure of Wisdom (*Hokmah* or *Sophia*) becomes the masculine Word (*Logos*) in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel.

The training of the disciples of Wisdom or Jesus is complete when they can be described as "friends of God".



**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Proclaim a joyful sound and let it be heard;  
proclaim to the ends of the earth:  
The Lord has freed his people, alleluia.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,

have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

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.

**COLLECT**

Grant, almighty God,  
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion  
these days of joy,  
which we keep in honour of the risen Lord,  
and that what we relive in remembrance  
we may always hold to in what we do.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING** Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

As Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, knelt at his feet and prostrated himself. But Peter helped him up. "Stand up," he said "I am only a man after all!"

Then Peter addressed them: "The truth I have now come to realise" he said "is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him."

While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on the pagans too, since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, "Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as much as we have?" He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 97

Response:  
The Lord has shown his salvation to the nations.  
or  
Alleluia!

- 1 Sing a new song to the Lord for he has worked wonders. His right hand and his holy arm have brought salvation. (R.)
- 2 The Lord has made known his salvation; has shown his justice to the nations. He has remembered his truth and love for the house of Israel. (R.)
- 3 All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout to the Lord all the earth, ring out your joy. (R.)

**SECOND READING**

1 John 4:7-10

A reading from the first letter of St John.

My dear people,  
let us love one another since love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.  
Anyone who fails to love can never have known God, because God is love.  
God's love for us was revealed when God sent into the world his only Son so that we could have life through him; this is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us when he sent his Son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: "If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him."  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

John 15:9-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples:

"As the Father has loved me,  
so I have loved you.  
Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments  
you will remain in my love,  
just as I have kept my Father's  
commandments  
and remain in his love.

I have told you this  
so that my own joy may be in you  
and your joy be complete.

This is my commandment:  
love one another,  
as I have loved you.

A man can have no greater love  
than to lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends,  
if you do what I command you.  
I shall not call you servants any more,  
because a servant does not know  
his master's business;

I call you friends,  
because I have made known to you  
everything I have learnt from my Father.

You did not choose me,  
no, I chose you;  
and I commissioned you  
to go out and to bear fruit,  
fruit that will last;

and then the Father will give you  
anything you ask him in my name.  
What I command you  
is to love one another."

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come 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 life everlasting.  
Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

May our prayers rise up to you, O Lord,  
together with the sacrificial offerings,  
so that, purified by your graciousness,  
we may be conformed to the mysteries of  
your mighty love.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

If you love me, keep my commandments,  
says the Lord,  
and I will ask the Father and he will send you  
another Paraclete,  
to abide with you for ever, alleluia.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Almighty ever-living God,  
who restore us to eternal life in the  
Resurrection of Christ,  
increase in us, we pray, the fruits of this  
paschal Sacrament  
and pour into our hearts the strength of this  
saving food.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

