

**SERMON PREACHED AT ST ANDREW'S WALKERVILLE BY THE REVEREND
STUART LANGSHAW, LOCUM TENENS, SUNDAY JULY 9, 2017. THE THIRD IN
THE SERMON SERIES BASED ON THE HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE.**

I have been trying to think of pictures to go with the two parts of the Communion Service that we have preached about so far. We began with the *Prayer of Preparation (or Collect for Purity)* 2 weeks ago, and the picture that came to my mind is a magnifying glass with which we look at our lives, to see their true nature ... and so we prayed, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts ..." Last week we looked at *The Gloria*. The picture came to me was of the New Year's Eve midnight incandescent fireworks display at Sydney Harbor – we praise God in *The Gloria* with all the energy and verve and colour of those fireworks. And so we praised, "Glory to God in the highest..."

Today in this 3rd sermon we come to the "Prayer of the Day," or the "Collect of the Day" as it used to be known. A "collect" is a short prayer - appropriate for the day of the year - that "collects" or "sums up" the theme of the day or the Church season. Collects have a specific structure that we'll look at in a while. They are short prayers that ask for one thing only, focused on a single theme. In our liturgy the Prayer of the Day comes after the exuberance and colour of *The Gloria*, and so it is always in danger of being swamped and overwhelmed by the energy and enthusiasm of *The Gloria* – especially in a sung service where *The Gloria* is sung heartily by everyone. After the exuberance of *The Gloria* comes the quietness of the *Prayer of the Day*.

On Page 3 of today's Pew Sheet is the Prayer of the Day, and in traditional form, it prays for one thing only ... "... give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all ..." That's a rather important prayer for us Christians. When we recall some of the details of the life and ministry of Jesus, we quickly recall his being a servant to the men and women of his time ... healing the sick (Matthew 4:23) ... feeding the hungry (Mark 6) ... putting himself out for the sake of little children (Mark 10:13-16)... going out of his way to associate with the unpopular and the outcasts (Matthew 9:10ff) ... acting as the household slave to his disciples when he washed their feet on Maundy Thursday (John 13). When we recall some of the details of the speeches and preaching of Jesus, we quickly recall his instructions about serving others ... "the last shall be first and the first shall be last" (Matthew 19:30) ... "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34) "... inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:45) ... and so we could go on. While the Prayer of the Day prays for one thing only, it's a really big thing. Praying that we may have the will and the inclination to roll up our sleeves and serve others, just as Jesus Christ our redeemer was the servant of all.

What I like about St Andrew's is that we don't have to look very hard at all to see that this prayer is being fulfilled by many people who come here. In practical ways – and I guess also in quiet and unseen ways – congregation members reach out to others with Christian love and service. Some of us do it through the various opportunities that the Church gives us, such as through the Mary

Magdalene dinner where we prepare a meal for and service it to our city's homeless and poor people. Others of us do it through community groups and service clubs. Others of us do it through the work and service we offer in our jobs and callings. But if we didn't stop and draw attention to these things in Jesus' ministry and teachings, and also in our own congregation's life, this Prayer of the Day would simply glide away un-noticed, overwhelmed by the echoes and reverberations of *The Gloria*.

There is a definite structure to the Prayer of the Day or the Collect of the Day. First of all there is an address to God. In today's Prayer of the Day that address to God is ... "Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ has taught us that what we do for the least of his brothers and sisters we do also for him:" (Matthew 25:40). Other prayers use such addresses as "God our Father," "Gracious God" and so on.

In a collect's structure, after the address to God comes the petition. This is the thing that the Collect of the Day prays for. In our case today, it is "give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all ..."

In most collects, after the address to God and the petition, comes the aspiration (but not in our Prayer of the Day today). The aspiration is the reason for the petition. Usually it is introduced by the word "that." In the Prayer of Preparation, the aspiration is, "that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name."

The Collect ends with a doxology – giving our glory and worship to God – sometimes in as simple a form as "Through Jesus Christ our Lord," or in as extended a form as our Prayer of the Day today ... who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**"

An address to God ... the petition ... the aspiration ... the doxology.

The Prayers of the Day, or Collects of the Day, could slip past un-noticed and unloved. But they have a great deal to teach us. When I was prepared for Confirmation my father got all the confirmees to memorise a Collect. Mine was the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent from the old Book of Common Prayer. "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen."

Later in the Holy Communion service we have the Intercessions – very different sort of prayer. In the Prayer of the Day all the parishes in all the Dioceses are praying together for the same thing. The Prayer of the Day is a unifying feature of our liturgy as we pray with our friends and fellow Anglicans throughout Australia in this prayer.

If the *Prayer of Preparation* is a magnifying glass, and if *The Gloria* is a fireworks extravaganza, the *Prayer of the Day* is a one-coloured rug, spread on the ground,

where we may all gather and pray together, quietly, for the same, single thing. The Intercessions will be a multi-coloured and patterned rug ... but more of that later.

Each Sunday, let us spend a little time before the service reading through ... rather ... **praying** through the Prayer of the Day ... recognising its theme and the one thing it prays for ... and let us remember that in parishes and churches all around Australia, we are joined with our fellow worshippers as they pray with us, and as we pray with them, the Prayer of the Day.