



Service for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, 17th May 2020

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Spirit of truth, given to us, enables us to discern the Living, Risen Christ.

HYMN: Come let us sing of a wonderful love

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Come let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2 Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to
dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3 Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home! weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4 Come to my heart, O thou wonderful
love,
come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Robert Walmsley

PRAYERS

God, You call us into Your presence; to be present with You and present with one another.

God, You call us into conversation; to converse with You and to converse with one another.

God, You call us into turning; to turn afresh towards You and to turn once again to one another.

Presence, conversation and turning; making the unknown into the known, making the unfamiliar into the familiar.

In this we find the revelation. From this we know healing. Through this we discover peace.

Lord, we are thankful for another day to serve You and those around us.

Lord, teach us to lead the way by examples of loving and caring for all we encounter.

Lord, teach us to rebuke prejudices as you would.

Forgive us when we are weak and lead by consumerism. We pray, Lord, that after these difficult days we will all be refreshed and full of Your love to go into our communities and serve as You would have us serve.

These prayers we offer for the sake of Jesus Christ, our loving Saviour. Amen.

HYMN: Hark, my soul, it is the Lord

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Hark, my soul, it is the Lord;
'tis thy Saviour, hear his word;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,
'Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?

2 'I delivered thee when bound,
and, when wounded, healed thy wound;
sought thee wandering, set thee right,
turned thy darkness into light.

3 'Can a woman's tender care
cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
yet will I remember thee.

4 'Mine is an unchanging love,
higher than the heights above,
deeper than the depths beneath,
free and faithful, strong as death.

5 'Thou shalt see my glory soon,
when the work of grace is done;
partner of my throne shalt be:
say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?'

6 Lord, it is my chief complaint
that my love is weak and faint;
yet I love thee, and adore;
O for grace to love thee more!

William Cowper

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1 Peter 3: 13-22

¹³ Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for doing what is right, how happy you are! Do not be afraid of anyone, and do not worry.

¹⁵ But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honour him as Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, ¹⁶ but do it with gentleness and respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that when you are insulted, those who speak evil of your good conduct as followers of Christ will become ashamed of what they say. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if this should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸ For Christ died for sins once and for all, a good man on behalf of sinners, in order to lead you to God. He was put to death physically, but made alive spiritually, ¹⁹ and in his spiritual existence he went and preached to the imprisoned spirits. ²⁰ These were the spirits of those who had not obeyed God when he waited patiently during the days that Noah was building his boat. The few people in the boat — eight in all — were saved by the water, ²¹ which was a symbol pointing to baptism that now saves you. It is not the washing off of bodily dirt, but the promise made to God from a good conscience. It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone to heaven and is at the right side of God, ruling over all angels and heavenly authorities and powers.

St John 14: 15-21

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will obey my commandments. ¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. ¹⁷ He is the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you.

¹⁸ "When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you also will live.

²⁰ When that day comes, you will know that I am in my Father and that you are in me, just as I am in you.

²¹ “Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them.”

REFLECTION

The letter from Peter is as relevant today as it was when it was written. Peter advises us to hold on for dear life. I expect by now we all know of someone who has had the deadly virus and maybe someone who has died from it. I certainly do on both counts.

Hold on for dear life in Christ; Christ, who is God's dependable love. His love will bring us through all things with the energy of resurrection life.

Peter likens our baptism into faith, by using the drowning and washing, to the same way that Noah and his family were brought through the destructive flood waters to a new life and new experiences. A new start is awaiting us: a refreshing we may not have experienced ever before.

We are alive to Christ. Alleluia.

John's Gospel message is clear. Jesus is clear. Love is the message.

It is not what we look like that will help us be recognised as Christians, but how we love. We cannot hide behind high sounding and noble ideas. We have to live obediently to the commands of love that set us apart and proves we are true followers of Jesus Christ.

Well-intentioned, but never getting round to it, is not part of the deal! Neither are excuses, cop-out clauses, or allowable exceptions!

It is clear from today's Gospel reading that if we really, really love, we shall live out that love in a sacrificial way that may at times hurt and may lead to ways we find uncomfortable.

What's in it for us, you might ask? We have Jesus' promise that whoever loves Him and obeys His teaching will have the Father and Him alive within them. A real experience of the living person who brought us into being, redeemed us and loves us forever.

When this pandemic is over, we as Christians have a wonderful opportunity to be refreshed: to lead our Community by example of love, love and more love.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, which 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 them that trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.

HYMN: Praise, my soul, the King of heaven

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing?
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him, praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!

2 Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress.
Praise him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him, praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness!

3 Father-like he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him, praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows!

4 Angels, help us to adore him;
ye behold him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him, praise him!
Praise him, praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

H F Lyte

THE GRACE

Now may the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore.

Amen