

A service for 17th May 2020

Bible Reading: Psalm 66: 8-20

Hymn: Lord I come to you https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9_0jiO5ZRM

1. Lord, I come to you,
Let my heart be changed, renewed
Flowing from the grace
That I found in you.
And Lord, I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of your love.
*Hold me close,
Let your love surround me;
Bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
And I will soar with you,
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of your love.*
2. Lord, unveil my eyes,
Let me see you face to face
The knowledge of your love
As you live in me.
Lord renew my mind,
As your will unfold in my life
In living every day
By the power of your love.

Prayers

Loving God, we come, each of us just as we are, with hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, and lay them all before you
Help me to know that you are with me now. Grant me the assurance that, in your love, you receive me, accept me
and forgive me.

Give me a thankful heart for all that you have done for me through your Son, Jesus Christ, and let your Holy Spirit
guide me as I worship you.

Bible Reading Acts 17: 22-31

I went to the filling station today to diesel up my car for the first time in weeks, a man pulled up at a pump opposite my car and tried to put some fuel into his car, unsuccessfully. There was a large yellow sign on the pump that said "Pay at the pump only" he was squeezing the trigger, but clearly not getting any fuel out. The girl in the kiosk spoke over the tannoy and explained his error, but he still continued to fiddle with the nozzle, in the end the member of staff directing people into the kiosk one at a time went over and explained the situation, the car driver gave him a piece of his mind and effectively told him that he was in the wrong, before driving off in high dudgeon.

Paul is very privileged to be able to speak to the people of Athens who were Gentile people, he could so easily have told them that they were wrong and here he was to tell them a much better way, the right way, the only way. I will never know, but I guess that the response would have been that nobody would have been converted to Christendom that day. What Paul actually does is draw their attention to what he understands of their belief and then shows them how the Christian faith can make sense to them.

Consider:

- *In recent weeks we have possibly all witnessed, heard of or been on the receiving end of acts of kindness. Some people will have done these things because of their faith, others because of their work and others still simply because they can. Think of examples of kindness and love that you will remember from this time*
- *Are there ways that we can help others to see that we recognise these act as reflecting the love that God shows for the world?*
- *Would you be able to do what Paul did in Athens and use such an act as and opportunity to share what you believe with others?*

Hymn: **We have a gospel to proclaim** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2FX0-kS7wA>

1. We have a gospel to proclaim
Good news for all throughout the earth
The gospel of a saviour's name
We sing his glory, tell his worth
2. Tell of his birth at Bethlehem-
Not in a royal house or hall,
But in a stable dark and dim,
The Word made flesh, a light for all
3. Tell of his death at Calvary:
Hated by those he came to save,
In lonely suffering on the cross,
For all he loved his life he gave.
4. Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
Empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
That we might share his victory.
5. Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
By all creation glorified.
He sends his Spirit on his Church
To live for him, the lamb who died.
6. Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim:
We sing his glory, tell his worth

Epistle: **1 Peter 3: 13-22**

Over the last few weeks we have seen people on the television and in our newspapers who are being thanked very publicly for acts of kindness, the nation seems to have taken on a kind and friendly persona which I believe is wonderful. Somebody said to me the other day how much joy he got out of going shopping for people who are housebound, he'd received a letter thanking him, but he realised that he was receiving at least as much as he was giving.

The letters of Peter are interesting, whereas Paul writes to specific Church congregations, Peter is writing generally to the whole Church and his message is for us today. Over generations Christians have been seen as being "do gooders" and we have been mocked and scorned and it would appear that even in the early Church, this was an issue. I think that Peter is challenging us to think why we do what we do.

Consider:

- *What motivates you to do good for others?*
- *Do you think that it is possible that God is prompting people to perform kind acts at the moment without the individual ever knowing why?*
- *Is it necessary for them to know that they are doing God's will?*

A time of prayer

Ask God, our heavenly Father, to make the presence of the Holy Spirit real to you now. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pray.

Remember before God your local church and all its people. Give thanks that its mission continues even if it cannot meet for worship at present. Pray that the Holy Spirit may direct its work and strengthen all its members in the tasks to which they are called. Pray for the wider church that by word and action it may proclaim to the world God's love in Jesus Christ.

Remember before God our world and its leaders. Pray for peace, for a just and sustainable use of its resources and for greater recognition of our responsibility to care for all creation. Give thanks for those who work to combat disease; for scientists, doctors, nurses and all who care for the sick, the aged and the vulnerable. Ask God to bless and strengthen them.

Remember before God people you know who particularly need your prayers at this time: family members, friends, neighbours, fellow church members, people you would normally meet regularly but from whom you are now separated. Think of those who are ill, or anxious, or grieving. Pray that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit may surround and sustain them.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can be part of the answer to your prayers. Christian Aid Week has just ended, and the work of Christian Aid among the poor of the world is as important as ever at this time. Perhaps you could send a donation, bearing in mind that much of their usual fundraising may not be possible this year. Maybe someone you have prayed for would love to receive a phone call from you. As God blesses you, so may you be a blessing to others in Jesus' name.

The Lord's Prayer
Our Father

Hymn: To God be the glory, great things he has done!

1. To God be the glory, great things he has done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
Who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!*

*O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
And give him the glory – great things he has
done!*

2. O perfect redemption, the purpose of blood,
to every believer the promise of God!
And every offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!*

*O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
And give him the glory – great things he has
done*

3. Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see:

Chorus

Gospel: John 14: 15-21

I worked for a couple of years with an man who was quite a character, we would travel from Bradford to Doncaster every weekday, run training courses together and then drive back in the afternoon. I got on really well with him and thought the world of him and during the time we worked together he celebrated a big birthday and his gift from his family was a three weeks trip to America on his own, they even bought him a bungie jump as a part of the gift, he was delighted, I guess I would have been quite suspicious if Karen and the girls had done this for me. The lesson I learned is that love is strange emotion, that gift was given in love, I'm not sure that I would have accepted it in the same Spirit that it was given.

We like to use the word "love" but we possibly need to recognise that it is not an easy emotion. I find myself from time to time standing in front couples embarking on a married life together I would love to be able to tell them that the journey they are starting is easy, but the reality is that any relationship needs to be worked at, there will be highs and there will be lows, it is inevitable in all human relationships. I think that it is wonderful as I read this passage of scripture that Jesus understands this, he knows that his disciples will find the command to love one another as Jesus loved them, difficult at times, impossible at others.

The assurance that he will not leave them alone is a precious claim, he knows that in a short while, they will see him no more, but as he prepares them for that, he promises further help and that is the help we call on during these times. For the early disciples, they had to wait for the coming of the Spirit. The promise is here and now for us, God has already poured his Spirit out on people and even during these times when we might well struggle with loneliness, we know that God is around us in all we do.

Consider

- *Time and time again over the last weeks I have heard people talking about how the only thing they had left was prayer. When you are struggling, is your first reaction to pray.*
- *I've heard people say "I don't know how to pray" and I understand that. My understanding of prayer is our personal opportunity to speak directly with Jesus, prayer is not the reserve of the professionals, any of us can simply commune through the power of the Holy Spirit who will help us.*

Hymn: Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BagH-zTfnsQ>
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

Prayer

A prayer of blessing

May God the Father bless us;

May Christ take care of us;

May the Holy Spirit enlighten us all the days of our life.

The Lord be our Defender and Keeper of body and soul, both now and for ever, to the ages of ages. **Amen.**