

A service for 24th May 2020

Bible Reading: Psalm 68: 1-10, 32-35

Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Hts8wvqPY>

1. An army of ordinary people,
A Kingdom where love is the key,
A city, a light to the nations,
Heirs to the promise are we.
A people whose life is in Jesus,
A nation together we stand.
Only through grace are we worthy,
Inheritors of the land.
2. A people without recognition,
But with Him a destiny sealed,
Called to a heavenly vision:
His purpose shall be fulfilled.
Come let us stand strong together,
Abandon ourselves to the King
His love shall be ours for ever,
This victory song we shall sing.

*A new day is dawning,
A new age to come,
When the children of promise,
Shall flow together as one:
A truth long neglected,
But the time has now come,
When the children of promise,
Shall flow together as one.*

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A new age to come,
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Prayers

As I come before you God help me to praise your name. Focus my mind on your presence with me and remind me that I am joined together with people around the world worshipping at home. May your name be glorified in our worship. Amen.

Everyday God,

We praise you that you are with us in every part of our lives and you never stop loving us.

We praise you for the world you created and the beautiful things we see around us.

We praise you that you came to earth in Jesus to show us in person how much you care about us and the world we live in. As we remember your ascension we thank you that you did not leave us alone but sent your Spirit so that we can always know you are with us.

You invite us to join in your work of loving people and the planet and we pray that you show us how we can share in your mission of love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

A Collect for Aldersgate Sunday

God of overwhelming grace,

you ignited the spark of your grace in John and Charles Wesley and a passion for holiness, justice and sharing your great love with others.

Warm our hearts that we may trust in you.

Renew our conviction and inspire us to embrace new opportunities even in difficulty.

Pour out your spirit on your people that we may be united in your love and ready to share hope with the world through Jesus who is one with you. Amen

Bible Reading Acts 1: 6-14

As I look back at over twenty five years of my life working in the world of business I can recall working with some amazing people who were gifted at planning strategically to guide the businesses through times of growth and periods of crisis and I have admired their gifts and knowledge. As I look back at my career, I tend to see myself continually fire fighting and generally muddling through and long for that ability to think strategically and confidently.

We often think that the early Church is the perfect example of the perfect Church, yet as we look at the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we tend not to see great strategic thinkers, but a group of individuals, who muddle through, making mistakes, misreading the signs and running into trouble. Jesus understands that the early disciples were only human and in their own strength they were always destined to fail, so he promises the helper.

The early Church devoted themselves to prayer and God generously responded to their needs. Today as we face circumstances that challenge the Church more than at any time in a few generations, the Church needs to respond in the same way. The Spirit of God will guide us through this, and we need to call upon him for our direction.

Consider:

- *Think about the situations you have faced in your lifetime, when you really thought that you couldn't identify a clear route through, how did you manage to survive?*
- *Think of times in your life when you have had to rely on the help of others. It isn't always easy admitting that we need help, but I guess that everybody recognises that we cannot do everything ourselves.*
- *Stop for a moment now and consider anything you need help with at the moment and offer these things to God, through the power of his Spirit.*

Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0r3EogSdfPU>

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| 1. Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:
Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name. | death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:
Yours the glory... |
| 2. Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:
Yours the glory... | 4. Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!
sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love:
Yours the glory... |
| 3. Suffering servant, scorned, ill - treated,
victim crucified! | 5. So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song:
Yours the glory... |

Epistle: 1 Peter 4: 12-14 & 5: 6-11

One of the things I have started to do during this time of lockdown is to start working on the garden at the manse. Please don't be expecting anything too grand, because as I've admitted on several occasions quite publicly, I am no gardener. We went to a garden centre yesterday, which was my first experience of some of the social distancing measures in shops, it is now over nine weeks since I have set foot in a shop and I have to confess, I was scared and suddenly realised the negative effect that all this is having on me.

As Peter speaks to the early Church, I think that he is absolutely right in recognising the pride of the people he is talking to. As human beings we like to be self-sufficient, in control of our own lives and destiny and there is maybe a general belief that accepting our need for outside help is a sign of weakness, I've heard it said that God is a crutch for those who can't stand in their own strength.

I disagree with that sentiment; I believe that there is great strength in recognising our reliance on one another. That said, I also recognise how difficult it can be accepting that we need help and how more difficult it can be asking for such help. I think that the first step to a life of faith is recognising our reliance on God, who is constantly there for us and wants to help us navigate our way through the challenge's life throws up for us.

Consider:

- *Who are the people that you turn to when you are in need? name them.*
- *How easy do you find asking them to help you?*
- *How easy would you find helping them if they were in trouble?*

A time of prayer

God our protector,

We come before you in prayer for your world, your children and ourselves.

We pray for the world that you have made. We thank you for the renewal of creation springing up as human activity has been restricted. We pray that we will learn to value these gifts and to live more gently in the future.

We pray for the leaders of nations making impossible decisions on our behalf. We pray that they will speak and act with integrity and protect those who are most vulnerable.

We pray for our church communities. We bring you our sadness at not being able to meet together and we thank you for the people finding it easier to explore faith at this time. We pray that we will find new ways to reach out to the world.

We pray for the people we miss. Our friends and families and those we long to see face to face. We pray for safety and protection for our loved ones.

We pray for those who have lost someone they love and haven't been able to say goodbye. We pray that they will know the comfort of your loving presence and that you will show us how to reach out in love and friendship.

We pray for ourselves in these difficult days shared by so many people but also lived in isolation. Help us to know your protecting love and to live in the power of your Spirit.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiklhSpvuis>

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| <p>1. Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see</p> <p>2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed
<i>My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace</i></p> <p>3. The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures</p> | <p><i>My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace</i></p> <p>4. The Earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine
<i>My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace</i></p> |
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Gospel: John 17: 1-11

Adrian Plass the Christian author and poet released a new album during 1999 which had a profound effect on me, there's a YouTube link and the words printed out below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfSRdJpImGU>

Lord, you said on the cross. "It is finished, it is finished" Finished? Is it? I don't think so.
Not until the funny little woman on the Friday bus means more to me than I do to myself.
Not until I read aright the message of your pain filled eyes that I must take the ones You loved and left behind to live with me as my responsibility.
Not until I freely place my stock of cherished

certainities like sad surrendered weapons at Your injured feet.

Not until the public and the private faces of my troubled Christianity can meet and know they recognized each other when they met.
Not until I know the names of more than half the people in my street.
Finished? No, I don't think so, not yet.

Maybe as the Disciples looked into heaven on the day as Jesus was taken up and away from them, they thought that it was all over, that this was the end, that God's mission was complete. With the benefit of hindsight, we might look on and say "how little they knew"

Today in 2020 two thousand years on we stand at the threshold of a new challenge for the Church of Christ and there are those who will say "the Church has had it's day" I think that the words of Adrian Plass are vital to the twenty first century Church, do you believe that God's mission for his disciples is complete, maybe I feel like Adrian Plass and say "I don't think so, not yet"

Consider

- *What changes have you seen in the Church in your lifetime, for some of you this will feel like a long time, for others it won't feel to be very long.*
- *What would you like to see God do with his Church, what changes do you feel would make the Church better equipped for the twenty first century? Have you shared your thoughts with others?*
- *Feel free to write, phone or e-mail Derek with any thoughts you have.*

Hymn: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1oNP4vaW_c

1. Earth's creator, Everyday God,
Loving Maker, O Jesus,
You who shaped us, O Spirit,
Recreate us, Come, be with us.
2. In your presence, Everyday God,
We are gathered, O Jesus,
You have called us, O Spirit,
To restore us, Come, be with us.
3. Life of all lives, Everyday God,
Love of all loves, O Jesus,
Hope of all hopes, O Spirit,
Light of all lights, Come, be with us.
4. In our resting, Everyday God,
In our rising, O Jesus,
In our hoping, O Spirit,
In our waiting, Come, be with us.
5. In our dreaming, Everyday God,
In our daring, O Jesus,
In our searching, O Spirit,
In our sharing, Come, be with us.
6. God of laughter, Everyday God,
God of sorrow, O Jesus,
Home and shelter, O Spirit,
Strong and patient, Come, be with us.
7. Way of freedom, Everyday God,
Star of morning, O Jesus,
Timeless healer, O Spirit,
Flame eternal, Come, be with us.
8. Word of gladness, Everyday God,
Word of mercy, O Jesus,
Word of friendship, O Spirit,
Word of challenge, Come, be with us.
9. Gentle father, Everyday God,
Faithful brother, O Jesus,
Tender sister, O Spirit,
Loving mother, Come, be with us.
10. Our beginning, Everyday God,
Our unfolding, O Jesus,
Our enduring, O Spirit,
Journey's ending, Come, be with us.
11. Alleluia, Everyday God,
Now and always, O Jesus,
Alleluia, O Spirit,
Through all ages, Come, be with us.

Bernadette Farrell

Prayer

A prayer of blessing

Holy God,

be with me as I leave this time of worship.

May I know your presence in my every day and live your message of love and hope.

Amen