

## A service for Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020

**Bible Reading:** Psalm 119: 105-112

**Hymn: Teach me, my God and King** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GOMtBLtLrQ>

Teach me, my God and King,  
in all things thee to see,  
and what I do in anything  
to do it as for thee.

A man that looks on glass,  
on it may stay his eye;  
or if he pleaseth, through it pass,  
and then the heaven espy.

All may of thee partake;  
nothing can be so mean,  
which with this tincture, "for thy sake,"  
will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause  
makes drudgery divine:  
who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,  
makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone  
that turneth all to gold;  
for that which God doth touch and own  
cannot for less be told.

### **Prayers:**

When the seeds of new life are sown, let us praise the Lord.  
When crops ripen in the field, let us exalt our maker.  
When the wind blows, or the snow falls, let us draw close to God.

Lord, for all your gifts in creation, for the gift of each other and the gift of the Church we offer our thanks.

Most of all for the gift of Jesus who went about among us as teacher and friend, who lived, died, and rose again we offer our deepest gratitude and amazement. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us take a time of quiet to bring to mind the ways in which we feel we have let God or ourselves down during the last week...

Lord, when we are slow to listen, forgive us.

Lord, when we are hasty in our actions, forgive us.

Lord, for the things we have done, that we should not have done, forgive us.

Lord, for the things we have not done, that we should have done, forgive us.

Rejoice, for in Christ we know our sins are forgiven. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lord God, I am in wonder at the world you have created and the life you have given me. I thank you for that gift of life and the joy of sharing my life with others.

I have not always lived my life as you would wish. Yet, even as I confess this to you, I know your forgiveness by the suffering and death of your Son, Jesus Christ, my Saviour. Amen.

## Old Testament Reading

## Genesis 25: 19-34

We had our hair cut this week, by a professional alleluia!!

One of the things we are told we shouldn't do in the current situation is converse with people. I will challenge every single one of you to try to have your hair done and not chat with your hairdresser/barber, I have decided that is an impossible task. Julie, an ex-church member of mine from south Norfolk has become a close friend and after four months, it was understandable that we should catch up, she asked what we would take forward from the last four months and what we were happy to give up.

It always shocks me how easily Esau gives up his birthright in the Genesis story for a bowl of stew. It seems to me to be a bit of a poor trade off to me, to put this into context, Esau gave up all his rights as the first-born son, which was of vital importance in his age and culture, for one solitary meal, unbelievable! Esau and Jacob are very contradictory characters, Esau, the hunter gatherer, Jacob the decent family man, Esau favoured by his father, Jacob by his mother, sadly, as I read the story, I am challenged by the fact that Jacob appears to take advantage of Esau.

Throughout the Bible, we are faced with challenging questions about right and wrong and I think that throughout life we are faced with similar questions. The questions posed by Julie as she cut my hair are important, do I simply want to go back to where I was at the beginning of March, return to a Church I have known and loved for all my life, or do I believe that God is calling me to something different.

*Consider:*

- *Think for a moment about the story of Esau and Jacob, who is taking advantage of whom? What do you think that God is telling us in this story, given that it is part of the foundation of our faith?*
- *Where does the balance of power lie in the Church today? Internationally, nationally, and locally? Whose voice are heard and whose remain silent? Is that right?*
- *Do you believe that your voice is heard? How does that make you feel?*

**Hymn:**

**Let love be real**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdx1we0fOUE>

*We would normally sing this to Londonderry air (Danny Boy) I like this version, so hope don't mind*

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,  
without the need to manage and to own;  
a haven free from posing and pretending,  
where every weakness may be safely known.  
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,  
give me your love wherever we may go:  
as God loves us, so let us love each other,  
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,  
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;  
that helps us face the risk of truly living,  
and makes us brave to be what we might be.  
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness,  
give me your love in spite of all you know:  
as God loves us, so let us love each other,  
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

Let love be real, with no manipulation,  
no secret wish to harness or control;  
let us accept each other's incompleteness,  
and share the joy of learning to be whole.  
Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments,  
give me your trust when all my failings show:  
as God loves us, so let us love each other,  
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

## **Epistle                  Romans 8: 1-11**

One of the big dilemmas facing the Christian Church in July 2020 is that if we are not careful, we might have inadvertently created a two-tier Church. The new tier is the digital Church, with things like Live streamed services, websites, and social media, which in three months has meant that we post something in Ipswich, that is then read by people around the world. The other tier is the one that we have had for generations, the congregational Church where we gather together for worship. We are being told (by those in the know) that the two-tier Church is a bad thing, but I would challenge our thinking. We already have a two-tier Church, in my opinion, those who come and those who stay away.

St Paul, when writing to the Romans, is recognising the dilemma of being people of God AND people of the world, we can never be one or the other. The people of God have been set free from the power of sin and death through the life of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Spirit and if generations of people are not helped to understand this, then sin has won and Christ's work becomes folly.

I remember as a teenager getting frustrated because the "grown up Church" wouldn't listen, or value my expressions and understanding of faith, some did, but many didn't. Today, as a church leader, I get frustrated, because I want to engage with the people absent from our Churches, the ones who have chosen to walk away.

*Consider:*

- *Do you think that a two-tier Church is a bad thing? Is Church only "proper Church" when people join us and do what we are doing in the way we like to do it.*
- *How can the Church listen to and relate to the people who possibly will never come into traditional Church, how do we engage, listen and share faith with them without trying to make them like us?*
  
- *Paul reminds us to be open to The Spirit, do we as a Church listen to God's call in the power of the Spirit? Where do we feel that God is calling us to go as we emerge as a new expression of Church post Covid?*

## **Take a time to sit quietly and pray:**

Let us pray for our world; for the worldwide effort to create a vaccine for Covid-19. For all the peoples of the world and for cooperation as we continue to live with this virus.

As we pray for our world, we pray especially for those in government and industry whose decisions effect the lives of so many. And we pray for wisdom for those in power.

We pray for our own land. For the NHS and for all those involved in social care and all keyworkers, giving thanks for the work they do for us. We pray for local communities as we continue to move towards what has been called the new normal.

We pray for the whole Church throughout the world, especially churches in countries with unsympathetic regimes. We pray for the Methodist Church, both at the local level and also the Connexional Team.

We take a time of quiet to remember those who have died, especially those who have been important to us on our own journeys of life and faith.

We make all our prayers in Jesus' name. Amen.

***The Lord's Prayer:***

**Hymn**            **The Spirit lives to set us free** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgvZi8oTZ\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgvZi8oTZ_k) or  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzU9Dv7ZXVY>

The Spirit lives to set us free,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
He binds us all in unity,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light,*  
*Walk in the light,*  
*Walk in the light,*  
*Walk in the light of the Lord.*

Jesus promised life to all,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
The dead were wakened by his call,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light,*

He died in pain on Calvary,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
To save the lost like you and me,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light,*

We know his death was not the end,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
He gave his Spirit to be our friend,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light,*

The Spirit lives in you and me,  
Walk, walk in the light;  
His light will shine for all to see,  
Walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light,*  
*Walk in the light,*  
*Walk in the light,*  
*Walk in the light of the Lord.*

**Gospel**            **Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23**

When we first moved to Ipswich, the farmer who owned the fields opposite our manse would turn up in his tractor during the spring and turn the soil, ploughing nice, neat furrows, then he would turn up and scatter seeds, we used to joke about him planting seagulls, because it felt like the entire bird population of Suffolk would follow the tractor, feasting on the seed as it fell. The whole exercise felt to be pointless, because instead of planting seeds, he appeared to be fattening up birds. However, come the summer, there would be a harvest fit for the picking.

I love the parable of the sower and can always imagine the disciples walking along with Jesus, who saw a man sowing seed in the field, Jesus points to the man and says "you see that bloke over there in the field" and uses what they see as an illustration of what the word of God is like. That always encourages me, as I sit at my desk and pour my

thoughts out onto paper, in the hope that one little bit of what I share will be of value to the life and Work of God's Kingdom.

In this season of the life of the Church, where nothing works in the way it always used to, I believe that God is saying to us once again "don't stop sowing the seeds" one act of kindness, a few moments of listening, one word of comfort, one letter written, even something as simple as a smile, is sowing a seed for Christ. Given where we are at the moment, one kind word shared on social media, can ripple out to thousands, millions of people and the harvest for God will be plentiful.

*Consider:*

- *Is it a bad thing that the birds are fed by the seed? Remember that God works just as effectively with apparent failure as he does with success, can you remember times in your own experience when this has been the case for you?*
- *The harvest is plenty and good. So often the human condition encourages to see only the seeds that didn't grow, and they shake our confidence. What good things do you want to thank God for in the last four months? What do you want to carry forward from this experience?*
- *Pray quietly and offer up your reflections to God, who is the Lord of the harvest.*

**Hymn:** See how great a flame aspires <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-5x4zgFY> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wojT4ZS6RUc>

See how great a flame aspires,  
Kindled by a spark of grace!  
Jesus' love the nations fires,  
Sets the kingdoms on a blaze:  
To bring fire on earth He came;  
Kindled in some hearts it is:  
O that all might catch the flame,  
All partake the glorious bliss!

When He first the work begun,  
Small and feeble was His day:  
Now the word doth swiftly run;  
Now it wins its widening way:  
More and more it spread and grows,  
Ever mighty to prevail;  
Sin's strongholds it now o'erthrows,  
Shakes the trembling gates of hell.

Sons of God, your Saviour praise!  
He the door hath opened wide!  
He hath given the word of grace,  
Jesus' word is glorified;  
Jesus, mighty to redeem,  
He alone the work hath wrought;  
Worthy is the work of Him,  
Him Who spake a world from naught.

Saw ye not the cloud arise,  
Little as a human hand?  
Now it spreads along the skies,  
Hangs o'er all the thirsty land:  
Lo! the promise of a shower  
Drops already from above;  
But the Lord will shortly pour  
All the spirit of His love.

**A prayer of blessing**

Dear Lord.

When times are hard, walk beside us.

When we are unsure of which way to turn, dwell within us.

When we need to listen to others, encourage us.

When our lives and work bear fruit, rejoice with us.

So may the blessing of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us all today and forever more. Amen.