



07 June 2020

A service of worship to guide
reflections
On the circuit theme
"New Life in Christ"

Welcome to worship. Today we continue with the Methodist Circuit series under the banner of St Paul's phrase "in Christ". This is first of the final six sessions on the area of "New life in Christ".

Much of today's passage is about Christ's resurrection so we begin with an Easter hymn:

Hymn - Singing the Faith 348

- 1 He is Lord, he is Lord ;
he is risen from the dead, and he is Lord ;
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord.

- 2 He is King, he is King ;
he will draw all nations to him, he is King ;
and the time shall be
when the world shall sing
that Jesus Christ is King.

- 3 He is love, he is love ;
he has shown us by his life that he is love ;
all his people sing
with one voice of joy
that Jesus Christ is love.

- 4 He is life, he is life ;
he has died to set us free and he is life ;
and he calls us all to live evermore,
for Jesus Christ is life.

Anonymous

We Pray

Today may I give and receive love
Today may I work for justice
Today may I listen and pray
Today may I sing God's praise
Today may I delight in God's Beauty
Today and every day. **Amen.**

From 'Bare Feet and Buttercups' Iona (2008)

Introduction

Today's passage is part of a longer section in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth about belief in the resurrection of Christ and in their own resurrection.

Reading - 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

But the truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised. ²¹ For just as death came by means of a man, in the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man. ²² For just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ. ²³ But each one will be raised in proper order: Christ, first of all; then, at the time of his coming, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come; Christ will overcome all spiritual rulers, authorities, and powers, and will hand over the Kingdom to God the Father. ²⁵ For Christ must rule until God defeats all enemies and puts them under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be defeated will be death.

Comment

Words of Paul to the church at Corinth which perhaps sound strange to our ears today- what exactly does he mean with his references to Adam and being raised from the dead when Christ comes again? Is he referring to physical death and/or spiritual death?

Paul's experience of Christ was intense - you will remember his experience on the road to Damascus. It was an account that captured my imagination as a child and I thought that having an experience such as this must have been amazing and 'out of this world'! The result was blindness for a short time and having to be led to a home where he was taken care of until his sight was restored. His life changed totally from being an enemy of Christ to a great apostle. From then on he was passionate about taking Christ's message everywhere he could travel, he was unafraid when dangers threatened- he felt the presence of Christ at all times with that great intensity. He wanted everyone to experience what he had - this intensity of Christ's presence which had restored union with God that Adam originally had had in the Garden of Eden. That union had been broken by Adam's failure to observe God's law but now was restored in Christ. In Christ we are raised from death to a new life in Christ.

How does this relate to us now? Is Paul saying that we have a human nature which falls short of what God intended for us and in Christ we find and know God's nature? Finding His love, compassion and justice motivates and enables us to live a 'risen life'?

There have been very disturbing events in the USA over these last few days. The death of George Floyd, by a policeman, has shocked and disturbed people around the world. The result has been demonstrations but also riots. This event has uncovered the depth of racism that still exists in the USA. It has been covered up in many ways but this has been the touch paper for action for African Americans who feel that they are still second-class citizens and often treated with contempt. Is this what Paul was talking about - acting in our own interests not caring about the results of what we do? People 'raised to life in Christ' are speaking out as Martin Luther King and his followers did in the past but what can we do? Racism is sadly endemic in many places we must speak out!

I attended a Zoom meeting that the URC had set up about the future of the Church after this Covid19 crisis - what will the post pandemic church be like? There had previously been two smaller

meetings discussing what difference the crisis was making to ministry. Many interesting observations were made and discussed - how perhaps human nature has made us sit back and the church has not always been Christ in the community. Being outside the church has made us realise that buildings are perhaps not as important as we sometimes feel, the need for listening and connectedness, the taking of risks, the use of all modern technology (the Zoom revolution!) and the speed at which we have learned to use it because we had to! Many other exciting ideas came out but one of the last remarks was "This is like Easter all over again!" Maybe we are raised to life in Christ again!

Hymn - Singing the Faith 418

- 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

Edward Joseph Burns (b. 1938)

Prayer Response

We bring before you Lord those who need our prayers at this time

Those who are ill, bereaved, suffering trauma, vulnerable or fearful

Those involved in care either in hospitals, care homes or at home

Those who are seeking to guide us through the current pandemic

Those who are in the media that they may give true and trusted information

Those who have been affected by the recent events in the USA

Those who find it difficult to accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ

Those who seek to do God's will in their lives- give them steadfastness and integrity and compassionate hearts

We ask your blessing on all these for whom we now pray in the name of Jesus

AMEN

Lord's Prayer

Hymn - Singing the Faith 351

- 1 In Christ alone my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song ;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease !
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.
- 2 In Christ alone ! — who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe !
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones he came to save :
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied
for every sin on him was laid ;
here in the death of Christ I live.

3 There in the ground his body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain :
then bursting forth in glorious Day
up from the grave he rose again !
And as he stands in victory,
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am his and he is mine —
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

4 No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me ;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from his hand ;
till he returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand !

Keith Getty (b 1974) and Stuart Townend (b 1963)

Blessing

God has called you to live in integrity and justice
May you love mercy, act justly and walk humbly with God.
AMEN

Jesus has shown you how to love your enemies and neighbours
May you seek to be peacemakers and to live in God's light.
AMEN

The Holy Spirit has comforted and disturbed you with God's
peace

May you be full of joy and courage all the moments of your
nights and days AMEN

May Almighty God bless you, the Maker and the Son and the
Holy Spirit AMEN

From 'Bare Feet and Buttercups' Iona
(2008)

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