



05 July 2020
Interactive

**Theme: The return of
the King**

Gathering Prayer

We are here today, Lord, to worship you.
As we bow our heads before you,
we want to be amazed by your wisdom,
bowled over by your love,
and completely lost in you.
Lord, open our hearts to receive you,
in ways beyond whatever we could ever ask
or even think.
Amen.

Enter God's presence with song

"Hosanna Praise is Rising" sung by Paul Baloché
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAaQ5EExidc>

Prayer of Thanks giving and Praise

As Jesus praised his Father in heaven, so do we.
We praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.
You have hidden things from the wise,
and revealed them to us, your children,
through Jesus, your most precious Son.
We praise you, Lord.
Amen.

Reading

1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11 GNB

Also watch and listen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9OxkLXtgFw>

Bible Background

Paul and the Thessalonians

In the letters and in Acts we hear that Paul, Silas and Timothy, mistreated at Philippi where they established the first Christian community in Europe, travelled westward along the Via Egnatia to Thessalonica.

Acts 17 says they preached in the synagogue, persuading Jews and their Greek adherents, but the letters suggest the community established was entirely Gentile.

The Thessalonians turned from idols (*1Thessalonians 1.9*), and there is neither quotation of Jewish Scripture nor discussion of issues, such as the place of the Law, that concerned Christian Jews.

The letters, emphasising Paul's self-supporting manual work (*1Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8*), and the need to continue working for a living (*1Thessalonians 4:10-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:12*), suggest that Paul and his companions shared the gospel with those among whom they found work.

Thus, a mutual association of labourers became 'the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (*1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1*).

This may explain both Paul's affection for them (*1 Thessalonians 2:8; 3:6*) and the opposition they encountered (*1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-8*).

Questions

1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11

Paul wants his readers to be ready for the New Life in Christ. Paul's ideas about whether he would die before the return of Jesus develop across his writings.

Here it seems as though he has decided that he might.

As a result, **hope** and **expectation** become more important than the exact schedule of when the return of Jesus will happen.

5:10 indicates that the day will come, and this follows on from the passage from 1 Peter in the previous week.

The message for Paul is not when Christ will come but that he is coming.

- What are your thoughts about Jesus returning again?

Confidence and being with Christ is therefore the focus

(5:1)

Along with **being ready at all times** – thus echoing the words of Jesus in the Gospels.

William Barclay says that the Christian is living with Christ so is already prepared.

- Is that true for you?
- If you feel not fully true then what do you need to work on to be prepared for that event?

Paul speaks of **hope** amidst the problems and difficulties which have been affecting him.

- How does this speak to our world situation today?
- What does 5:11 say to us as Christ's followers seeking to aid recovery in our world?
- What do you hope for through your faith in Jesus?

Whatever life throws at us, we are called to wear faith, love and hope (5,8).

At some point, we will be gathered up together again (4:17).

Reflection

As we go forward, we need to be ready for a "new normal", a new way of being Christ in the world now as well as preparing for his future coming.

This reflection is taken from the URC document about church in the "new normal".

You may like to spend some time thinking about it.

We are on a journey through a pandemic, not knowing our destination, but aware we follow in a line of saints of old, who have set off before us in the footsteps of Jesus, walking the way. Like those before us, we may travel with faith and doubt, hope and fear, and, perhaps, have a holy encounter along the way. That we travel at all will mean that we are changed. Pilgrimage is about taking and risking such a journey, faith is knowing that we

are accompanied by God, hope is in a Kingdom destination, and love may be experienced with companions.

Sing

“Yet not I but through Christ in me” sung by CityAlight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwc2d1Xt8gM>

Prayers

Confession, forgiveness, openness to new start:

Lord, you know how weary and bowed down we feel sometimes.

We claim your rest for our souls.

We come to you in our emptiness and cry to you for your fullness.

Rescue me and fill me, Lord. Amen.

Intercessions:

In stillness pray for:

All in authority

- that they will be respectfully conscious of the weight on their shoulders,
- that they will act responsibly for the people they serve,
- for their personal lives, with the worries and cares that only they see.

Our friends, family and colleagues

- that as we walk alongside them, you will use us to bring them close to you, and they will learn of your love.

The people we see every day, perhaps very fleetingly

- The burdens they are carrying,
- the need for a kind word or action from people around them,
- for ourselves,
- that we will see the positive in people, even when it's hard, and reach out to encourage them.

Amen.

Lord's prayer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2vSnQ3JASK>

Sing

“All my hope on God is founded”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DohxO6ytsaU>

Blessing

We bless each other as we say together:

Go in the name of Jesus,
to follow the way of Jesus,
to love with the love of Jesus,
and to be sustained by the peace of Jesus.
Amen.

Service prepared by Christine and Philip Gibson, drawing on material from *Singing the Faith, CCLI 5560 (reproduced with permission)*, and the Christchurch Word Content Group.