

Sunday 17th May 2020

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, I am here to worship you. I join with Christians all around the world, and with all the company of heaven, to offer you my praise.

Hymn: Meet and right it is to sing (Singing the Faith 32)

Meet and right it is to sing,
in every time and place,
glory to our heavenly King,
the God of truth and grace:
join we then with sweet accord,
all in one thanksgiving join;
holy, holy, holy Lord,
eternal praise be thine.

Thee the first-born sons of light,
in choral symphonies,
praise by day, day without night,
and never, never cease;
angels and archangels all
praise the mystic Three in One,
sing, and stop, and gaze, and fall
o'erwhelmed before thy throne.

Vying with that happy choir,
who chant thy praise above,
we on eagles' wings aspire,
the wings of faith and love:
thee they sing with glory crowned,
we extol the slaughtered Lamb;
lower if our voices sound,
our subject is the same.

Father, God, thy love we praise,
which gave thy Son to die;
Jesus, full of truth and grace,
alike we glorify;
Spirit, Comforter divine,
praise by all to thee be given;
till we in full chorus join,
and earth is turned to heaven.

Let us pray together

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.

Today's Gospel Reading:

John 14:15-21

Time to Reflect

Jesus and his disciples are at supper and Jesus has told them he is going to leave them. The disciples are, quite naturally, anxious and bewildered. Jesus speaks to them words of comfort and encouragement. He will ask the Father, who will give them another Helper, who will stay with them for ever.

The Greek word given as "Helper" in the Good News Bible is very hard to translate. Other versions use "Comforter", "Advocate" or "Counsellor". The meaning behind the original Greek is of someone who is called in to help in time of need.

Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit, whom he calls "another Helper", because the Spirit will work in a different way from himself. Jesus has been physically present with his disciples. They could see him at work, and listen to his teaching. As a human being, Jesus has been subject to the constraints of time and place. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, will be with Christ's followers all the time, wherever they may be.

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to all who love him and keep his commandments. They will not be left alone. Whether they are aware of it or not, the Spirit will be there to guide them and strengthen them.

Having told them the Father will send another Helper, who will be with them and in them, Jesus says that he himself will come back to his disciples. They will see him and he will be in them. After he was raised from

the dead, he did indeed return for a while in a visible form, but when his appearances ceased, his followers knew they would never be alone, whatever befell them. God who had been present with them, incarnate, in Jesus Christ, would be present with them as Holy Spirit.

Wherever you may be now, be assured of the presence of the Spirit of the Living God. The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us.

Take a time to sit quietly

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: Listen to: Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me (Singing the Faith 395)

Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
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.

Daniel Iverson (1890-1977)

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.

(The Book of Cerne, 9th century)

Original Materials by John Barnett

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

<https://bible.oremus.org/>