

EASTER 5 - Sunday 10th May 2020

Welcome. We're happy that you have joined us. Our buildings are closed, our congregations are scattered, but the Church of God is still active.

Thought for the day

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, through whom we can come into the presence of God for ever.

COLLECT

Almighty God,
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ has overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:
grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect;
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Ch 7.55–60

Standing before the high priest and the council, Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’

But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him.

Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’

Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he died.

Stephen was one of seven deacons appointed by the apostles to deal with the practical demands of a growing church following a complaint that the widows of Greek speaking Jews were being neglected. Stephen had a vision of a world for Christ. He was a powerful speaker and gifted in argument. He angered the Jewish authorities when he appeared to them to attack the two things they held most precious; the Temple and the Law. Stephen argued that the Law was only a stepping stone to the Gospel and that God does not live exclusively in any Temple made with hands. It will pass away.

He was the first to see that Christianity could not only be the perquisite of the Jews but was God's offer to all the world. He was killed between AD 33-37, aged around 30 years. His feast day is on 26th December.

Psalm 31.1–5, 15–16

Let your face shine on your servants

In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness.

Incline your ear to me; make haste to deliver me.

Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag and my stronghold; for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me

Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, for you are my tower of strength.

Into your hands I commend my spirit, for you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of truth.

My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.

Make your face to shine upon your servant, and in your loving-kindness save me.

Let your face shine on your servants

A reading from the first letter of Peter. 1 Peter 2.2–10
Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation – if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight.

Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: ‘See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’

To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,’ and ‘A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.’ They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

A reading from the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John. Ch.14.1–14

Jesus said to his disciples:

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

And you know the way to the place where I am going.'

Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'

Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.'

Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord **Praise to you, O Christ**

Some prayers from a church in Kenya at this time of Corvid 19 which remind us that we are not alone in this crisis. Others around the world face similar problems and their prayers are very appropriate in our own situation.

Lord, you told us to keep heart and not be troubled knowing that you go to prepare a place for us in the Father's house. We live in this world as pilgrims, as our nation goes through a lot of challenges, economically, socially, and financially, we pray Lord that you help your people put their trust in you and you alone.

God, let the leadership of this nation be godly and caring the way Jesus cares for His disciples. Let them give hope and encouragement to their people the way our Lord Jesus did to the disciples in times of despair.

Lord, we pray for this nation as it now lives in a very difficult moment with the appearance of COVID-19. The future becomes more and more uncertain. Those who trusted in their secured jobs live now in despair, those who accumulated wealth as a way of securing the future are hopeless. Lord, remind us in such situations that you are the solution for all our problems and we have to believe in you.

We pray God that you illuminate the mind of those in power to seek the welfare of all. Father, in the name of Jesus, we pray that you help the leadership of our land to appoint leaders of integrity who can work for societal transformation.

O God, we lift our nation to you for the issue of unemployment and under-employment which are extremely high. People normally live day-to-day. With the issue of lockdown because of COVID-19, it becomes very difficult for common people to get daily bread. Lord, you are the provider for the needy, we pray that you provide daily bread for families who cannot afford it.

Because of the tough economy of the country and the lockdown for COVID-19, insecurity has become a serious issue. Lord, we pray for the protection of your people.

Lord, you said if we ask anything in your name you will do it. Hear our prayers, O God, and respond according to your will.

We pray and believe that you have heard our prayers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Loving Father, thank You that through the person of our Lord Jesus Christ we can see You, know You and have precious fellowship with You. Open my eyes to see more and more of Jesus so that I can see more and more of You, in His name I pray, AMEN.

The Church office is closed during the present crisis
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