

## SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER - 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020

A short act of worship for use in people's homes while churches are closed

You can follow the whole service here [Full Service](#)

OR you can use the text below and watch each element in turn via the link shown beside that section.

### Call to worship

Praise our God, all peoples,  
let the sound of his praise be heard;  
he has preserved our lives  
and kept our feet from slipping. (Psalm 66: 8+9)

### Hymn - Singing the Faith 51 [Join in here](#)

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.  
*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!*  
*Morning by morning new mercies I see;*  
*All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,*  
*Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Thomas O Chisholm (1866 - 1960) <sup>1</sup>

### Prayer of Adoration [Join in here](#)

O blessed God, Father, Son and Spirit, I worship and adore you.

I worship you, our Father, for in your goodness and mercy, you have not left us as orphans, alone in a vast universe, but have given your Son Jesus.

I worship you, our Saviour, because you did not leave us despairing and in need, but gave your life that I might live.

I worship you, Holy Spirit, for you live in us and among us, shaping us to be more like Jesus. As I worship and adore you, Father, Son and Spirit, so may your presence so fill me that I may truly worship you today. **Amen.**

## Prayer of Confession

Father God of love, I am sorry  
that at times my love for you falters;  
that I have wrong priorities;  
that I overlook your guidance.

O God, forgive and renew me.

Loving Saviour, I am sorry  
that I disobey your commandments;  
that I fail to love;  
that I walk by on the other side.

O God, forgive and renew me.

Holy Spirit of truth, I am sorry  
that I disregard your presence;  
that my thoughts and feelings are unrighteous;  
that I follow the world's way.

O God, forgive and renew me.

May your presence abiding in me lead me in the right way, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.** <sup>2</sup>

## Reading Acts 17: 22-31 [Listen here](#)

<sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship – and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

<sup>24</sup> 'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup> "For in him we live and move and have our being." As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring."

<sup>29</sup> 'Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.'

## Reading John 14: 15-21 [Listen here](#)

<sup>15</sup> 'If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

<sup>20</sup> On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

<sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.'

**Reflection** [Watch recorded version here](#)

Last week Rosie mentioned the peace that Jesus brings to his followers. This peace is bound up with the promise of God's continuing and continuous presence made possible by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which Jesus speaks about in the few verses we heard today.

There are three things I suggest it might be good to consider in what Jesus says here, things which will help in our understanding of the Holy Spirit. After all for Christians the Holy Spirit can be difficult to appreciate and connect with. What do you think of when he is mentioned? How would you explain the Holy Spirit to someone else?

**1. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love and relationship.** When you hear Jesus say, 'if you love me, keep my commands and I will...' (v15) it is easy, I think, to hear a condition in that phrase which is not there. It sounds like God telling us we have to do something in order to receive something. This is really hard for many of us. We live in a transactional world where there is payment for goods and services. We are all too aware of what happens when that system suddenly slows down in a global pandemic. The system has great merits.

However, it is not the way love works - certainly not the true, pure love that God is. A better way to translate and understand this verse is, 'if you love me, you will keep my commands and I will...'. The keeping of commandments is automatic in a relationship of love. To use an example, we have household rules that make for smooth(er) running of the home. They relate to the ordinary tasks that have to be done. Some of these unwritten rules I have to confess are still a mystery to me especially when it comes to hanging out washing, but I do my best! What is important is that it is love and kindness, poor and failing though mine may be, that motivates me to keep the rules. Also I know they are good for me, for us. If we love we keep rules, we behave within boundaries, not enforced by willingly complied with, almost without thought.

The same is true of our relationship with Jesus only on a much bigger scale. If we love we will, we cannot help but, do what he tells us in his two fold law of love. And, and the 'and' is not consequential but incidental, he will ask God the Father to send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given through, from and within a relationship of love that it is at the heart of God's existence. That is why Jesus speaks here about not leaving us as orphans; not leaving us without relationship, the relationship of a parent to child. Through the Holy Spirit we are brought into, adopted into relationship as sons and daughters of God the Father.

**2. The Holy Spirit is advocate, helper, comforter.** Those words try to explain the original word which is sometimes just written in English as paraclete from the original Greek word. The Holy Spirit stands with us, alongside us and speaks for us like a good barrister in court. He is on our side against our accuser. The Holy Spirit is there to help, support, guide, inform and encourage. He is there as comforter. This is a beautiful word to describe him. Try not to think too much about duvets or fabric conditioner, soft fluffy comfort blankets although at times that is what we may need. Rather comfort is about bringing strength and courage. In life's trials, troubles, griefs and dilemmas actually this is what we need – fortitude, power, the energy of God with and within us. We need to know that more than ever now.

**Finally, he is the truth bringer.** He reveals truth from God's word, truth about Jesus, truth to guide and direct our ways. He speaks God's words to us in many different ways, in dreams and pictures, through our own thoughts and those of Christian brothers and sisters. He will show us things the world cannot know or understand because they cannot be accessed without awareness of a spiritual existence, without faith. They cannot be accessed if your whole understanding is material, physical and earth-bound.

That is partly why Paul found it so hard to get his message across to the intellectual debaters in Athens because their framework of philosophy didn't allow them to access or accept resurrection, or one God who is spirit and truth, who is not a distant meddler in the world but who is reaching out, seeking a relationship of love and trust.

We need to know God more. We need to experience the relationship of love more. We need the strength, guidance and truth of God's presence - in short we need the Holy Spirit's that Jesus promises to all who love him. So let's pray.

*Be quiet for a moment, rest in the stillness and presence of God. Fix your mind on Jesus. Try to imagine his smile of love and favour directed to you, just to you. Then when you are ready, pray like this or in your own words.*

Lord Jesus you promise to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit, please send Holy Spirit on me now. I open myself up to see him as comforter, as love and as truth. Please let me know his loving, and reassuring presence flood me with peace, joy and light that I may know and follow Jesus. Amen

### **Hymn - Songs of Fellowship 1158** [Join in here](#)

There is a Redeemer,  
Jesus, God's own Son,  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,  
Holy One.

*Thank You, O my Father,  
For giving us Your Son,  
And leaving Your Spirit  
Till the work on earth is done.*

Jesus my Redeemer,  
Name above all names,  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,  
O for sinners slain.

*Thank You, O my Father,*

When I stand in glory  
I will see His face,  
And there I'll serve my King forever  
In that holy place.

*Thank You, O my Father,*

Melody Green (b 1946) <sup>3</sup>

**Prayer of for others** [Join in here](#)

Hear my prayers, O God, as I hold before you my concerns for the world:  
for those who are hungry and thirsty;  
for those who endure poverty or unemployment;  
for those who are bowed down by the weight of injustice and abuse;  
for those who are overfed and drunk with their riches.

*Silence*

Hear my prayers, O God, as I hold before you my concerns for my community:  
for those who serve this community's needs in hospitals, surgeries, and pharmacies; as  
ambulance crews, fire-fighters, and police officers; in hospices and care homes;  
for those I know who are unwell;  
for those recently bereaved;  
for those troubled in body, mind or spirit;  
for all who feel life is on hold;  
for those who are fearful for their livelihoods.

*Silence*

Hear my prayers, O God, as I hold before you my concerns for the Church:

for Christians persecuted for their faith;  
for Christians losing faith and those seeking the renewal of their faith;  
for many to seek faith in Christ;  
for faithfulness in proclamation of the gospel;  
for generosity in showing your love  
and for the church to which I belong.

*Silence*

Hear my prayers, O God, as I hold before you my own hopes and dreams,  
my fears and uncertainties and my faith and doubts.

*Silence*

Now, may I be part of the answer to the prayers I make  
for I pray in the name of Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit's power. **Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn – Songs of Fellowship 1577** [Join in here](#)

We are heirs of God Almighty,  
Apple of the Father's eye;  
Free, forgiven, loved, accepted,  
Clothed in righteousness divine.  
Chosen to be pure and blameless  
From before the world began;  
Grace for every situation,  
Sheltered in the Father's hand.

We have Christ at work within us,  
Shaping us to be like Him;  
Resurrection power sustaining  
Freedom from the snares of sin.  
Saying no to flesh desires,  
Saying yes to righteous ways;  
Filled with passion and with power,  
Lights that burn in darkened days.

We've the Spirit without measure,  
Helper, Comforter and Guide;  
One who brings the gifts of heaven,  
One who comes to walk beside.  
Taste of heaven's endless pleasure,  
Guarantee of what's to come;  
Causing fruit to grow in action,  
Bringing glory to the Son.

Stuart Townend (b 1963) <sup>4</sup>

### **Blessing**

May the power of God's sustaining and guiding love be with me and with all those for whom I pray  
and may the blessing of God Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with me now and always.

### **Acknowledgements**

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