

Our Sunday Service Together

May 22nd 2022

An Easter Acclamation

Praise be to God in the highest. It is our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, almighty and eternal Father, and especially in these days of Easter to celebrate with joyful hearts the memory of your wonderful works.

For by the mystery of his passion Jesus Christ, your risen Son, has conquered the powers of death and hell and restored in men and women the image of your glory. He has placed them once more in paradise and opened to them the gate of life eternal.

And so earth and heaven resound with gladness, while angels and archangels and the powers of all creation sing for ever the hymn of your glory.

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 67 *We say the psalm aloud*

God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,
That your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.
O let the nations rejoice and be glad, for you will judge the peoples righteously
and govern the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.
Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, and God, our own God, will bless us.
God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Acts 16.9-15

During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' ¹⁰When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

¹¹We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. ¹³On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel John 14.23-29

²³ Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

at the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

I suspect we have all heard the sentiments, "thinking of you" or "with you in spirit"; especially when we have faced times of anxiety, illness, trauma. It is a blessing to have family and friends who let us know they are with us in heart, mind and soul, even though they can't be with us in body.

In John we see Jesus, who is about to face utter exclusion, rejection, abandonment from friends who have said they will be with him in all things, no matter what, assures us that the divine person, Father, Son, and Spirit make their home with those who believe. In making their home with us, even if one should be away in body, they are fully present in the Spirit.

This is not a kind thought from someone who is leaving saying I will be with you in my heart, in my memories (which do fade with time), but the promise to be present, and more to be active – for the advocate both speaks up for the believers and also gives counsel. This Spirit is beyond kind thoughts, this is God with us, one with us, this is Emanuel, even unto the end of the age. "The Lord is here, His Spirit is with us!", we so rightly declare.

Paul is coming to terms with this presence, this counsel; just we each have to do, after all this about a relationship – God with us, and we with God. There is a wise saying, "if you want to hear God laugh, tell God your five-year plan". In the earlier sentences of our chapter in Acts we see such human made plans as Paul, Barnabas and John Mark set out to bring the gospel to the masses of the Roman Empire.

Paul's strategy is very reasonable and planned journey makes sense, but God has a better plan in mind – if only Paul will listen and go for it. We read 'The Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to proceed'; God with them has halted them in their tracks (not the first time this has happened to Paul). There is a vision come to him and God gives him some directions for a different road to take (not the first time this has happened to Paul; maybe there is a pattern for him to make note of in how God counsels him).

Paul is to go instead to Macedonia, and thankfully Paul takes note and follows the Spirit of Jesus with him. In taking the counsel Paul's new vision is born and the gospel is received in Western Europe for the first time, rather than Asia Minor. This is a vision that would birth the church in the West, it would take him eventually to Rome; and it is because of this the gospel came to Roman Ilchester, to Britain as a whole. All because Paul was open to the presence of God's Spirit with him.

We are people called to the visions of God in Christ's Spirit; but this takes discernment too for we are not a compass ourselves. The Starting point is both welcoming of the Spirit with us and an openness, a willingness to receive his vision and counsel. We may not be people destined for the same world changing actions as was St Paul, but we might be led into actions that would change someone else's world for the good, which might change for the better the world about us in our villages.

May we be open to the Spirit's presence with us, may we seek His counsel and direction, and may we be faithful in our following; wherever He may lead us.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

Let us pray to the Lord, who is our refuge and stronghold.

For a world where division and distrust reign supreme, bring your compassion to the hearts of leaders, grace to lawmakers and love of neighbour to all. *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us*

For the health and well-being of our nation, that all who are fearful and anxious may be at peace and free from worry: *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.*

For the isolated and housebound, that we may be alert to their needs, and care for them in their vulnerability: *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.*

For our homes and families, our schools and young people, and all in any kind of need or distress: *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.*

For a blessing on our local community, that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship, where all are known and cared for: *Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.*

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God.
Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Collect

All: God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen