

Our Sunday Service Together

May 10th 2026

Easter 6

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.

Psalm 66.7 to end *We say the psalm aloud*

Bless our God, O you peoples; make the voice of his praise to be heard,
Who holds our souls in life and suffers not our feet to slip.
For you, O God, have proved us; you have tried us as silver is tried.
You brought us into the snare; you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.
You let enemies ride over our heads; we went through fire and water; but you brought us out into a place of liberty.
I will come into your house with burnt offerings and will pay you my vows, which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
I will offer you fat burnt sacrifices with the smoke of rams; I will sacrifice oxen and goats.
Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul.
I called out to him with my mouth and his praise was on my tongue.
If I had nursed evil in my heart, the Lord would not have heard me,
But in truth God has heard me; he has heeded the voice of my prayer.
Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, nor withheld his loving mercy from me.
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 17.22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring."

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

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 14.15-21

'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.'

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

Of course, while Luke's Paul is speaking to the movers and shakers of Athens, Luke is speaking to the readers and hearers of the Acts of the Apostles, to ordinary followers of Jesus.

Very few of us, if any of us are called to be like Paul, we are not called on to journey the length and breadth of the empire and to undertake public speaking amongst the leaders of the counties we visit. But we are all called as disciples to reflect on our faith and how this impacts the lives we live.

Within Paul's speech we discover an invitation to reflect on our human identity, on our relationships with one another, and our connections with the rest of the created world.

The Athenians are 'very religious', a compliment to them for sure, but a less generous term for Luke's hearers, who being believers in the one God would see these people as 'extremely superstitious'. Within their superstitions two main philosophies directed their belief – that of the Stoics and of the Epicureans. Epicureans taught that all things of the gods were remote, detached, with no concern for the world. Stoics thought of God as a divine essence in the world, a metaphorical projection of our own human feelings.

Paul talks of a God 'above all things' yet engaged in the world – transcendent yet imminent. Gritty human existent is not beyond the reach of God's love in Christ, and more, through the resurrection, through the bodily resurrection of Christ God is with us and for us. The verses that follow our reading today suggest this was a deeply puzzling idea to many there; 'they scoffed' we hear. The Athenians looked to keep their religious practices at arm's length, but Paul's words emphasised that a desire to know God cannot be separated from our embodied human existence.

Interestingly, in Paul attention is also drawn to the natural world in the reference to "the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them". This is the God whom the crowd is told "has not left himself without a witness in doing good — giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy". In his gospel John draws our attention to this again and again.

In today's verses Jesus talks of how his presence will continue with the disciples after he 'returns to the Father'. This will be through the Spirit of God, the witness of God in their lives, of his counsel, of a 'wisdom that will walk beside' all believers. And we should remember John is not simply reporting what Jesus said, of giving a concept or theory to debate, John includes Jesus' words for his readers' encouragement in their daily life of faith. And more, John includes them because in the decades after Jesus spoke them, he has come to know they are true through his own personal experience.

'And the word became flesh and dwelt amongst us'; abstract concept and theory are of no use to man or dog, neither a God who remains at a distance. In Jesus' life, death and resurrection 'voice' is given, in word and deed to the love and grace of God for all creation.

Paul's understanding of God the Creator, and of Jesus, the Lord and redeemer of heaven and earth, leads him to declare to the Athenians the futility of any attempt through religious practice to bring something of value to God in sacrifice, or to somehow privatize or capture God by what we do.

God's love for the world has never been theoretical, it has always looked to be embodied. To be human is to be created in the image of God who is love. Love that is active, shaped by justice and grace for the world; love that gives life to our faith and seeks to animate our being.

Reading the great public speeches of Peter and Paul rightly worries each and all of us as we think we have to be like them. Words are all well and good, but our call is to be 'like' Jesus, to be those who embody the love of God for the world. It is true that actions often speak louder than words. How will we let our lives do the talking this coming week?

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

We pray 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.*

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