

Morning Service

10th May 2020

You may wish to light a candle.

Introduction – Rev Anne Taylor

Welcome to our online service – I know there are people joining us for worship from both near and far and wherever you are we hope that our time together will help you feel the joy and peace that comes from worshipping together. This Sunday our Curate, Rev Nathan Thorpe, preaches his last sermon as our Curate. We hold him in our thoughts and prayers as he is licensed as Vicar of St Giles, Aintree. If you have any prayer requests please do call or email our Parish Office all the contact details are on the website. Let us worship together.

Opening Sentences

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Hymn - All creatures of our God and king

www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtT3SRnnG0I

The Collect

Risen Christ, your wounds declare your love for the world and the wonder of your risen life: give us compassion and courage to risk ourselves for those we serve, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen

Bible Readings

Epistle – Acts 7: 55-60

read by Pat Downey

But filled with the Holy Spirit, he 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.

Gospel – John 14: 1-14

'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.

Hymn – Christ is made the sure foundation

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bC0tgG_bIE

Sermon – Rev Nathan Thorpe – see below

Prayers

We pray for all who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, for those in our own parish, and for those who live in countries where healthcare is limited and poverty brings huge challenges. We pray for the people of our link parish, women's project and school in St Peter's, Kalule, Uganda. May God grant us all the gift of an open-heart and a generous and compassionate response to those in need. Amen.

Lord, we ask you to lay a healing hand upon all those who are sick. We pray especially for Amanda, Barbara, Graeme. Mike and all those who need our prayers today. We pray for the wellbeing of residents and staff of Care Homes. Make your loving presence known to those who are lonely. Give your strength to those who feel weak. May those who mourn be comforted and we pray for the families of Yvonne Hilditch, Elsie Evans, Margaret Forrest and Paul Birkbeck. In a moment of quietness we pray for those who we know who need comfort and hope at this time.....May all those who we have prayed for have sense of your everlasting love and strength O Lord. Amen.

Generous God we thank for all those who have come together in our communities to help others. We pray for those who work for the NHS, in food stores, delivering post, hospital chaplains, Funeral Directors, bus drivers – those in government who make crucial decisions – and scientists behind the scenes working tirelessly to find a vaccine. We ask you to protect, guide and bless those who are putting the needs of others before their own and ask your blessing on them. Amen

Loving Lord, on this day of farewell we give thanks for the ministry of our curate, Nathan, over the past three years. We give thanks for his pastoral care, his sense of humour and his ability to help others draw closer to you. We pray for the parish of St Giles as he becomes their vicar and that together they may flourish in serving you in Aintree. As we give thanks for Nathan's time amongst us we pray Lord in the years ahead your love will keep and guide Nathan and Poppy as they begin new chapters in their ministry. Amen.

O Lord, in this time of uncertainty we look to the future after the lockdown. We ask that people will heed the message to 'Stay Safe – Save Lives'. Help us to embrace a new way of living, that protects the vulnerable, cares for others and works for the greater good of all people: in our families, in our communities and in our nation. Amen.

The Peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.'

Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.

The peace of the Lord be always with you

And also with you

Taking of the Bread and Wine

Blessed are you, King of the Universe, you provide bread to sustain us, and wine to gladden our hearts. As our forebears Abraham and Sarah offered food and drink to the angels, so may our sharing at this table draw us into closer communion with you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever!

The Lord be with you:

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts:

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give you thanks and praise.



Father, almighty and everliving God,
at all times and in all places
it is right to give you thanks and praise

And now we give you thanks with mind and heart renewed.

You give us a spirit of loving reverence for you and of willing service to our neighbour.

So with all your people, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Your works proclaim your glory, O Lord. In every age and from every place you call a pilgrim people to seek your face. In the fullness of time you sent your Son, Jesus Christ. Journeying through Galilee he called people to follow his way, seeking first your justice and peace.

With every step he brought your mercy and healing love to those along the road, and at his journey's end stretched out his arms on a cross to bear our pain and free us from fear.

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

'Take eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying,

'Drink this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Therefore, Lord Christ, we proclaim your self-offering to the Father on the cross of Calvary; we celebrate your glorious resurrection, and rejoice in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

At our beginning the Spirit formed us and in our earthly life travels with us. May the Spirit rest upon this bread and cup that we may be nourished with Christ's being and life, sustained as members of his body, and strengthened in our pilgrimage.

So, triune God, may all be made one in Christ and know your welcome. Draw your whole Church throughout the world into your kingdom, where we may rejoice for ever in your presence, and worship you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in songs of never ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**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.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.
Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in the one bread.

Prayer after Communion

Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: grant us to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth, and to share his risen life; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Hymn - Lord for the years

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkTrFQLy6js

The Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you, and all who you care for this day and always. **Amen.**

SERMON – Rev Nathan Thorpe

John 14:1-4 – ‘Times Like These’ & The Way, The Truth, and the Life

Do you remember when I played ‘What’s My Name’ by the Ting Tings for a sermon on John? A song that puts this verse into context for me is by the Foo Fighters. Written by Dave Grohl, lead singer and ex-Nirvana drummer - re-released his song ‘Times Like These’ this week featuring famous names for charity.

The words of the chorus go: It's times like these you learn to live again
It's times like these you give and give again,
It's times like these you learn to love again,
It's times like these time and time again.

This morning’s reading may be familiar to many of you as it is most often read at funerals – and I think it may have amused the Vicar when she was setting the rota for my last Sunday at St Peter’s! John 14 also contains one of the verses that is imprinted on my heart the most – John 14 verse 27. You can go and look it up for yourselves!

Although we may recognise this reading from sad occasions – it is often selected to provide comfort and hope to people at a time when they feel there is not a lot of either of those.

In John’s gospel it is positioned after the last supper and before they all go out to the garden of Gethemene – towards all that particular road would entail for Jesus.

It is a good song, and a great reading for those who stand on a threshold of new ways of understanding, belonging or living because it helps us think about what we will be moving towards in future – and about what we understand that to look like in the life of Jesus.

When we look to the future, for a way, for truth, and for life beyond our current restrictions, the buzzword going around at the moment is ‘phased’. It will be vital in the coming months; and vital to listen and learn how to incorporate the voices of the vulnerable, at risk and in distress that we have become more aware of in these past few weeks.

Amidst increasingly weary days and weary people, when the frictions is creeping up, we can be shaping what will come out of all our time apart from each other. This is often true when we say good-bye to someone – we reflect on what their example, words and actions, have taught us – and what we will learn about ourselves and our communities through their absence.

To help us, the way that Jesus lived is still the most powerful message for his followers. Thomas provides the question we all want to ask – showing his independence of thought again. Even while we fall out over method and application; the central message of Jesus’ life is to love God and our neighbour, with all our heart, mind, and strength and like ourselves. That is the hardest, but most worthwhile, task to which we are called. Especially as Jesus does not put any conditions on that love or to who it is shown.

It may be helpful to remind yourselves that Mother Theresa was known to pray, ‘Lord, may I see you today in those who are sick; though you hide yourself behind the disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you in them’. Some would say that she was all of those things too; yet inspired millions with her work, even when in the depths of spiritual drought. In this reading, Jesus’ words have the ability to overcome any self-indulgent pride relating to our faith. We aren’t succeeding in ways that people of other faiths or none are failing at. That isn’t the point. The point is that even when it feels we are overwhelmed by the vastness of the universe, or feel that humanity lurches from disaster to disaster without seeming to learn, or even when grief makes our worlds stop; Jesus is strong.

The second verse to ‘Times Like These’, goes:

I, I'm a new day rising
I'm a brand new sky
To hang the stars upon tonight
I am a little divided
Do I stay or run away
And leave it all behind?

Our role as churches is to pursue the impossible: - a temple of living stones (a contradiction in terms!) built on Christ the sure foundation. Our challenges are to be durable yet creative, just like the God in whose image we believe humanity has within us.

One interesting thing that I have seen while our church buildings are closed is some research that more people have been accessing online services – and that more people than ever have searched something related to ‘prayer’ on the internet. Further research suggested that if a church has an online presence, people view it an average of 7 times before they come. If so, what does that help us learn as we reach out to others? What might we ourselves have to say about prayer? If our aim is to be a community seeking to follow his example then how do we show that a heart of love like that of Christ beats in us collectively?

That thought brings me onto another. The chorus I quoted at the start also reflects how I feel about having been St Peter’s curate. You have been such a supportive congregation (I may add ‘tolerant’ too!). However, I am incredibly fortunate that to have started my ministry with St Peter’s. I was so daunted when I came here; but I have learnt so much. Although this is not the way any of us wanted to say farewell, ‘thank you’ is such an inadequate word for your generosity, warmth and time towards Poppy and I. Please know that the opportunities, experiences, and especially the people (yes – that means you) that make up St Peter’s will be cherished and appreciated even far beyond my retirement!

There is a prayer by the Dutch humanist Erasmus which sums all this up, and which I want to pray for both St Peter’s and St Giles – in the midst of our ‘Times Like These’:

O Lord Jesus Christ, who art the way, the truth, and the life. We ask thee to suffer us not to stray from thee who art the way. Nor to distrust thee, who art the truth. Nor to rest in any other thing but thee, who art the Life. Show us by your Holy Spirit what to believe, what to do, and where to take our rest.

Thanks to God, and thanks to you all again. Amen.