

Morning Service

Sunday 21st June 2020

You may wish to light a candle.

Introduction

Welcome to our online service as we worship together both near and far. A warm welcome to those who may be joining us for the first time and we hope this gives a flavour of who we are in St Peter's and do encourage others to join us online. We welcome those joining us from Co Dublin, Crosby, and Southampton as well as here in Formby. Let us know where you are joining us from. As has been announced churches can open for individual prayer and St Peter's will open each Sunday and Wednesday from 10am to 12noon and you are welcome to drop in.

Wherever you are we hope that our time together will help you feel the joy and peace that comes from worshipping together. Our website has the June Parish Magazine but if you would like one posted do send us a message. If you have any prayer requests or we can help in anyway do contact us. And I ask as restrictions ease for some we do not forget to keep caring for those still isolating.

Let us worship together.

Opening Sentences

Grace and peace be with you,

and keep you in the love of Christ.

Hymn **All people that on earth do dwell** <https://youtu.be/7DibkDQbzEo>

The Collect

Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Bible Readings

Epistle – Romans 6: 1b-11

read by Fiona Martin

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel – Matthew 10: 24-33

read by Elaine Almond

‘A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

‘So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. ‘Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

Sermon – Rev Anne Taylor – see below

Hymn **Jesus calls us** <https://youtu.be/idAoS7at3nQ>

Prayers

by Paul McHenry

When we are willing to take up our cross with Jesus we will also know his risen life. Let us pray to our heavenly Father, who is familiar with our world and understands our humanity. Lord of all, wherever Christians are ridiculed or persecuted for their faith, we ask your courage and inner strength; wherever we are called to be your witnesses, we ask for the grace to communicate your love. Wherever love for you has grown cold we ask to fan the flames again.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY HEAR OUR PRAYER

Lord, wherever the human spirit is ground down by oppression, and wherever our silence allows injustice and corruption to flourish, we ask for deeper compassion and commitment; we ask for our kingdoms to become your kingdoms, and the desires of your heart to be ours. We pray for the residents of Gregsons Avenue, Queens Avenue, Argarmeols Road and Argarmeols Grove

LORD IN YOUR MERCY HEAR OUR PRAYER

Lord of all, wherever families are struggling to stay together, and wherever there are ongoing arguments and family feuds, we ask your anointing for tranquillity and harmony. Wherever children are unwanted and unloved, neglected or in danger, we ask your protection and help.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY HEAR OUR PRAYER

Lord, we pray today for those who are confronted by the sadness, ambiguity and confusion of mental health issues, and for those upon whom they depend for attention and compassionate care. Look with mercy on all whose afflictions bring them weakness, distress, confusion or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace: give to them understanding helpers and the willingness to accept help.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY HEAR OUR PRAYER

Lord, wherever bodies, minds or spirits are wracked with pain, or too weak or too exhausted to pray, we ask the bathing love of your presence, and the practical caring of hands working in your name. Wherever there are doubts and the battle is strong, we ask your empowering and clear guidance. We pray for those who are ill: Barbara, Graeme and Mike

LORD IN YOUR MERCY HEAR OUR PRAYER

Lord of all, wherever the dying are anxious and afraid, we ask your peace; wherever the faithful have passed from this life into eternity, we commend them to unchanging and everlasting love.

We pray for those whose anniversary of death falls at this time.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY HEAR OUR PRAYER

Lord, we pray for Simon, who is preparing to be our new curate. Be with him, guide him and keep him close to your heart.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY HEAR OUR PRAYER

Wherever nature's beauty or the daily miracles around us alert us to see your face, we thank you for the grace to live this resurrection life.

MERCIFUL FATHER, ACCEPT THESE PRAYERS FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR SON, OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.

The Peace

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.
If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.
The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you

Taking of the Bread and Wine

The Lord is here.
His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should always sing of your glory,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord:
And now we give you thanks that,
though the heaven of heavens cannot contain you,
and your glory is in all the world,
yet you chose to hallow our homes for your worship at this time,
and in them you pour forth gifts of grace
upon your faithful people.
And so, with the saints and angels around your throne
we join to glorify your name, for ever praising you.

**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.**

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
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.
So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,



in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice
made once for all upon the cross.
We proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Jesus Christ is Lord:
**Lord, by your cross and resurrection
you have set us free.
You are the Saviour of the world.**

Lord of all life, help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with St Peter and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Wherever you may be let us pray together 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

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise,
that when we were still far off
you met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love,
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.
May we bring life and hope to others;
and we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.
Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,
so we and all your children shall be free,
and the whole earth live to praise your name;
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn **Great is thy faithfulness.** <https://youtu.be/dTKlqmdfHSk>

The Blessing

The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and all whom you love this day and always.

Amen.

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SERMON – Rev Anne Taylor

I am going to start this sermon by saying Bogof!

No, I'm not trying to be rude so take your hand away from the off button I am simply using the acronym for Buy One and Get One Free!

You might think that getting an extra item free with a purchase is something new in supermarkets, but it's as old as the Gospels!

In today's Gospel Jesus says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?" In the corresponding passage from Luke it's given "Are not 5 sparrows sold for 2 pennies?" Two a penny, 5 for 2p! A sort of Buy One and Get One Free!

Now sparrows were as cheap as chips, and when the poor couldn't offer a sheep for sacrifice they could offer birds instead, and the cheapest of all were sparrows.

And the point Jesus is making is that even the most lowly, the most humble, the most overlooked by others, are loved and cared for by God, even the extra sparrow in a 1st century BOGOF.

On one occasion when people were pressing in on Jesus as he travelled to Capernaum, a woman with a haemorrhage slipped through the crowd to touch the hem of Jesus' clothes in order to find healing. And even though nobody else seemed to notice her, Jesus did and he turned to her with a word of healing and encouragement.

Nobody gets lost in the crowd with Jesus. In these times nobody gets forgotten in isolation.

And it has always been.

In the Old Testament book of Judges we read how the Israelites were being overrun and oppressed by the Midianites. The Israelites called out to God for help and relief. God did act, but not by choosing one of the existing leaders. Instead he sent an angel to a young man called Gideon telling him that he was God's chosen instrument to free his people.

And this is how Gideon responded, "How can I deliver Israel. My clan is the weakest and I am the least in my family."

But God doesn't look on outward status and position. He has his own way into everyone's heart. Just because we may think we are insignificant doesn't mean that God can't or won't use us for his purposes.

Commenting on the call of Gideon, one writer has said “God sent an angel to tell a nobody that he was indeed a somebody in God’s sight.” (Larry Keefauver)

That’s the way God is. He uses those who are small in their own eyes to do great things and even extraordinary things.

Gideon saw himself as weak and helpless. But God told the angel to address Gideon as “Mighty man of valour.”

On another occasion, the disciples, out of earshot of Jesus, were arguing amongst themselves about who was the greatest. Happens in so many human organisations and groups. But Jesus knew what was going on and he sat them down. Then he placed a child in their midst and said, “Whoever welcomes one such child welcomes me.”

The least, the smallest, the seemingly insignificant are only important to God. God can be seen most truly not in the brash but in the humble.

In God’s kingdom the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

As Barbara Brown Taylor, the American priest has put it, “In the topsy-turvy kingdom of God, the most unlikely people are the most likely to be agents of God.”

But that’s not the only message of today’s Gospel. As usual, as well as comforting the afflicted, Jesus also afflicts the comfortable. He ends with a challenge, “Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others I also will deny before my Father in heaven.” Strong words.

And for many Christians in the early centuries of church persecution martyrdom was a real and present danger. To acknowledge Jesus was literally a matter of life and death, and for many the only way to avoid either hanging or burning was to deny Jesus and to acknowledge the divinity of the Roman emperor.

Which many, to their great credit, refused to do.

As we live out our lives as Christians today we are more likely to face apathy than attack, ridicule rather than the rack, but we are still challenged to be true to our Christian beliefs, and I believe that it is by our actions as much as our words that we will acknowledge Jesus and show we are true to him. For it is still true as Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “I can’t hear what you are saying because your actions are shouting so loudly.”

Jack Burton, a Methodist minister once wrote “If as Christians we are out-loved by those who profess no faith in Christ, then our discipleship is seriously questioned.”

In the past months so many have put good intentions into action – the group in the local Gild Hall making 910 sets of scrubs for local hospitals, the amazing amount that has been given for our Foodbank collection, all the many phone calls to let someone know they are not forgotten, the shopping trips, the prayers for others said at our Cross of Hope in the churchyard and so much more.

It is so important that we get involved in action groups that support the vulnerable and the lonely, be actively involved in our Uganda project, work for social justice and care for the environment. Acknowledge how important campaigns like Black Lives Matter really are in heightening awareness and defeating complacency.

Actions speak louder than words but words are also important. A Jewish proverb says, "Many have fallen by the sword, but not as many as have fallen by the tongue!" Words can heal or words can wound.

Two chapters on Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks", and concluded "by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned."

Words are important – the words of kindness and care, the words of appreciation and thanks, the words of forgiveness and reconciliation, words that build up rather than tear down. And let's remember the gentle but firm words that refuse to give silent assent to what is wrong, unjust or dishonest.

Today's Gospel offers us both comfort and challenge.

Comfort in the fact that no matter how we write ourselves off as insignificant, God says that everybody is a somebody.

Challenge in word and deed to show love for others in the same way that we are loved by God.

So may God give us grace to be not only hearers but doers of his holy word; not only to profess but to practice our faith; not only to love but also to live the Gospel and so acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and God. Amen.