

Christ Church, Ipswich

Sunday 17th May 2020

Sunday Worship

Sixth Sunday of Easter

With Revd Neil Coulson

Hello, I hope you are well. It's great to be able to share with you again as we worship God together this week. This week, we focus on Jesus' promise to send the Spirit in John 14:15-21. Let us worship God.

A gathering prayer

Spirit of truth, come close to us.
Unite us into the body of Christ.
Enable us to worship God in Spirit and in truth.
Help us to support and encourage each other.
Help us to love as we are loved.
Spirit of truth, come and abide in us.

Amen.

A prayer of approach

Gracious God, we come before you,
drawn by the power of your welcoming love.
We come with our sorrows and joys.
We come with our expectations and apprehensions.
We come with what we have done.
We come as who we are.
In your love we find peace and hope. **Amen.**

Hymn: Lord, the light of your love is shining

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us;
set us free by the truth you now bring us,
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word, Lord,
and let there be light!*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by the blood I may enter your brightness,
search me, try me, consume all my darkness.
shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine...

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
 so our faces display your likeness.
 ever changing from glory to glory,
 mirrored here may our lives tell your story.
 shine on me, shine on me.
Shine, Jesus, shine...

Graham Kendrick (1950-)
 © Make Way Music

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

You make yourself known to us, and you are present in our lives
 even though we do not always recognise or acknowledge you.
 For all that you are,
we thank you, loving God.

You do not leave us orphaned,
 but embrace us with parental love that encourages and comforts us.
 For all that you are,
we thank you, loving God.

You ensure that we are not alone
 by filling us with your Spirit of truth, that inspires and empowers us.
 For all that you are,
we thank you, loving God.

Thank you, Father, for your presence,
 your love and your encouragement. **Amen.**

Bible Reading: John 14:15-21 (NRSV)

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep^[a] my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,^[b] to be with you forever. ¹⁷ 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^[c] you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ 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.”

Reflection

In his farewell speech, as Jesus summarises his teachings again, he reassures his confused and concerned disciples that they’ll not be left on their own, they’ll not have to fend for themselves, they’ll not have to rely solely on their own resources. No doubt this was extremely good news to them! They probably couldn’t have coped any better than we could on our own! Once again we sense that the disciples are as lost as we would have been, if we were the ones with Jesus then. We sense that the disciples felt frightened – they had left everything to follow this radical Rabbi and now, because of their brave and God-orientated decision, they were now outsiders to the faith tradition that surrounded them and was once their home. They knew that they couldn't just simply walk back into their old ways and normal lives. They knew that nothing would ever be the same again. On top of this, they had no idea about how things were going to work out and what would become of them.

The theme of Jesus' calming and comforting speech to his disciples loops back round to the centrality of love (John 13.34). Firstly, we note that our love for Jesus becomes a reality when we obey his commandments, the central one of which is to love others as he has loved us. Then, as we look over this section of the speech, we note that all these words seem to speak directly to us just as they did to the first disciples - they speak to us today. The disciples needed to be reassured that God was, and would forever remain, very much present with them. The disciples needed to be reassured that they are, and would forever remain, very much enveloped by loved. So Jesus promises to send them the Spirit, their Advocate, Intercessor, Comforter. The Greek word 'paraclete' which is translated as 'advocate' literally means the one 'called by your side' and gives the sense of one who guides, counsels and comforts us and crucially, of one who will never abandon us in our time of need. Through the power of the Spirit, the first disciples and we, as his disciples today, are dynamically drawn into lives of love, which reveal our love for Jesus. Surrounded, strengthened, sustained and steered by the Spirit, may we be deeply assured and aware of the nearness of God as we walk through this 'strange old season' and into the presently unknown 'new'. Amen.

Hymn: Come down, O Love Divine

1 Come down, O Love divine!
 seek out this soul of mine
 and visit it with your own ardour glowing;
 O Comforter, draw near,
 within my heart appear,
 and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

2 There let it freely burn
 till earthly passions turn
 to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
 and let your glorious light
 shine ever on my sight,
 and clothe me round, while still my path illuming.

3 Let holy charity
 my outward vesture be,
 and lowliness become my inner clothing;
 true lowliness of heart
 which takes the humbler part,
 and for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

4 And so the yearning strong
 with which the soul will long
 shall far surpass the power of human telling;
 for none can guess its grace
 till we become the place
 in which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Bianco Da Siena (d 1434)
 Translated by R.F. Littledale (1833-90)

Our Prayers of Intercession

Dear Lord, we bring into your love
those who do not know you and your love;
those who have turned away from you;
those who struggle to accept you;
those who refuse to listen.

May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

Dear Lord, we bring into your love
those who need parental love;
those who are alone;
those who are abused;
those who are neglected.

May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

Dear Lord, we bring into your love
those who seek the truth;
those who work in the justice system;
those who campaign and advocate on behalf of the voiceless.

May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

Dear Lord, we pray for the vital work of Christian Aid
at the end of Christian Aid Week this year.
We thank you for all they do to share the love of Christ
with those in need all over the world
in real and life changing ways.
We ask that you will greatly bless their work
and the lives of the many people who receive their help.

May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

Dear Lord, we bring into your love all who are affected in any way by Covid-19
and especially for those unwell and those who have been bereaved.

We pray for your blessings upon all those who work in health and social care,
and upon all key workers across many sectors of employment.

May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

Dear Lord, we bring into your love one another today,
thinking especially of those close to us who are in need.
We pray especially for Jo Robertson as she recovers at home following surgery.

May Jo, and all the Robertsons, know your presence and peace at this time.

We pray also for Pat Smith who has a painful foot and we ask that she would know your healing.

A moment of quiet for your own thoughts and prayers for those in need.

May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

O God, may we show the power and presence of your love in our church,
our community and our world.

Amen

Trusting in the compassion of God,
we pray together as Jesus taught us....

The Lord's Prayer

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 Blessing

Go in peace to live in God's love and to show God's love. Amen

May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be upon us all,
and those we love,
today and always,
Amen.

The Grace

(As we do each week in this season, we say the words of The Grace imagining that we are saying them together, to one another, in our Sanctuary)

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all,
for evermore.
Amen.**

May God bless you all richly,
With our love and best wishes to you and your families,

Neil

*Resources taken and altered from ROOTS for Churches Limited
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