



Sunday 17th May 2020
Sixth Sunday of Easter

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, I am here to worship you. I join with Christians all around the world, and with all the company of heaven, to offer you my praise.

HYMN / STF 548 "Blessed Assurance"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDeiy9-t2GE>

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

*This is my story, this is my song, Praising
my Saviour all the day long.*

*This is my story, this is my song, Praising
my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
This is my story...

Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my
Saviour am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.
This is my story...

LET US PRAY TOGETHER

Loving God, we come, each of us just
as we are, with hopes and fears, joys
and sorrows, and lay them all before
you

Help me to know that you are with me
now. Grant me the assurance that, in
your love, you receive me, accept me
and forgive me.

Give me a thankful heart for all that
you have done for me through your
Son, Jesus Christ, and let your Holy
Spirit guide me as I worship you.

BIBLE READINGS & NOTES

Read Acts 17:22-31 and read the notes

Paul delivers a sermon about God the Creator, who should not be pictured as needing human care, or as made of gold, silver or stone, or as resembling any product of human imagination.

This is 'Monotheism 101' – a guide to the basics of Jewish, Christian and Islamic belief about the nature of God. What is surprising is that Paul explains this without any direct reference to the Scriptures. He begins with a polytheistic altar as a visual aid, and quotes two Greek poets, Epimenides and Aratus (v.28). This sermon shows us Paul's nimble mind; more than that, though, it shows his absolute confidence that the gospel he has to share is for everyone, not just those who share his culture and background. In many ways it is already everybody's story because God is 'not far from each one of us' (v.27). Paul shares the gospel side by

side with pagan people, not looking down on them from a great height of superior knowledge, but as a fellow human being. And the first fact about Jesus that he shares? God raised Jesus from the dead.

Read John 14:15-21 and read the notes

The theme in this speech by Jesus spirals back round to the centrality of love (see 13.34). Loving Jesus becomes evident when we obey his commandments, the central one of which is to love as he has loved us. To help us in this, Jesus will ask the Father to give us another 'Advocate' who will be with us for ever, who is also called the Spirit. The Greek word translated 'advocate' literally means the one 'called to your side' and could equally be translated 'intercessor', 'counsellor' or 'intermediary' – and probably by a number of other words too. It is the word used in the Greek version of the Old Testament for the comforters who came to Job, so one could add a positive version of 'comforter' to the list. When Jerome was translating the New Testament into Latin, he felt that the term was intentionally broad and inclusive, so instead of choosing just one word and therefore one meaning, he simply turned the sounds of the Greek word into Latin, giving the term '*Paraclete*'. The *Paraclete* is the one who guides, counsels and consoles us, and speaks up on our behalf. Crucially, the *Paraclete* will never desert us in our hour of need. This speech then flows on naturally from discussing our relationship with the *Paraclete* to discussing our relationship with Jesus and with the Father. The kind of mutual indwelling that Jesus describes (e.g. 'he abides with you and he will be in you', and 'I am in my Father,

and you in me, and I in you') makes it clear that our relationship with the *Paraclete* is not something distinct from our relationship with Jesus and the Father, but is all bound up in that oneness with God that ensures we are not left orphans.

The links between the readings:
These readings encourage us to remember that God is always with us. God is near us and beside us, by the very fact of being the creator who longs to have a relationship with us. Jesus has passed through death, and even those who have been held by death are liberated by him. Jesus promises the indwelling *Paraclete* – who will come to be beside them for ever – to his disciples.

HYMN / STF 395 "Spirit of the living God"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BagH-zTfnsQ>

Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me,
mould me, fill me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.

**Daniel Iverson (1890-1977)*

TIME TO REFLECT

Jesus and his disciples are at supper and Jesus has told them he is going to leave them. The disciples are, quite naturally, anxious and bewildered. Jesus speaks to them words of comfort and encouragement. He will ask the Father, who will give them another Helper, who will stay with them for ever.

The Greek word given as "Helper" in the Good News Bible is very hard to translate. Other versions use

“Comforter”, “Advocate” or “Counsellor”. The meaning behind the original Greek is of someone who is called in to help in time of need.

Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit, whom he calls “another Helper”, because the Spirit will work in a different way from himself. Jesus has been physically present with his disciples. They could see him at work, and listen to his teaching. As a human being, Jesus has been subject to the constraints of time and place. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, will be with Christ's followers all the time, wherever they may be.

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to all who love him and keep his commandments. They will not be left alone. Whether they are aware of it or not, the Spirit will be there to guide them and strengthen them.

Having told them the Father will send another Helper, who will be with them and in them, Jesus says that he himself will come back to his disciples. They will see him and he will be in them. After he was raised from the dead, he did indeed return for a while in a visible form, but when his appearances ceased, his followers knew they would never be alone, whatever befell them. God who had been present with them, incarnate, in Jesus Christ, would be present with them as Holy Spirit.

Wherever you may be now, be assured of the presence of the Spirit of the Living God. The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us.

Take a time to sit quietly

REFLECTIVE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

➤ Ask God, our heavenly Father, to make the presence of the Holy Spirit real to you now. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pray.

➤ Remember before God your local church and all its people.

➤ Give thanks that its mission continues even if it cannot meet for worship at present.

➤ Pray that the Holy Spirit may direct its work and strengthen all its members in the tasks to which they are called.

➤ Pray for the wider church that by word and action it may proclaim to the world God's love in Jesus Christ.

➤ Remember before God our world and its leaders.

➤ Pray for peace, for a just and sustainable use of its resources and for greater recognition of our responsibility to care for all creation.

➤ Give thanks for those who work to combat disease; for scientists, doctors, nurses and all who care for the sick, the aged and the vulnerable.

➤ Ask God to bless and strengthen them.

Remember before God people you know who particularly need your prayers at this time: family members, friends, neighbours, fellow church members, people you would normally meet regularly but from whom you are now separated.

➤ Think of those who are ill, or anxious, or grieving.

➤ Pray that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit may surround and sustain them.

➤ Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can be part of the answer to your prayers.

➤ Christian Aid Week has just ended, and the work of Christian Aid among the poor of the world is as important as ever at this time. Perhaps you could send a donation, bearing in mind that much of their usual fundraising may not be possible this year. Maybe

someone you have prayed for would love to receive a phone call from you.
➤As God blesses you, so may you be a blessing to others in Jesus' name.
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father

HYMN / STF 59 "Lord, the light of your love is shining"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rce9UHYZwl4>

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
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...

**Graham Kendrick*

A PRAYER OF BLESSING

May God the Father bless us;
May Christ take care of us;
May the Holy Spirit enlighten us all the days of our life. The Lord be our Defender and Keeper of body and soul, both now and for ever, to the ages of ages. **Amen.**

**The Book of Cerne, 9th century: Original Materials by John Barnett.*

Hymns for Children:

"Little life (for you Jesus)" / Hillsong Kids on *Can you believe it?*

"Lord I give you my heart"
[Until the whole world hears](#), Casting Crowns on *Until the whole world hears*

**Resources from the Methodist Church, the Roots & the Vine at Home.*

**Hymns from Singing the Faith.*

