

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020**



### **OPENING PRAYER**

Jesus, I come to you to celebrate your love and to receive your word. You taught that we must worship God in spirit. I long to worship with your people, but I know you are with me, in these difficult times. Amen.

### **HYMN / STF 503**

“Love divine, all loves excelling”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CNfpUrKzpm>

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven to earth come down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
never more thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation,  
perfectly restored in thee:  
changed from glory into glory,  
fill in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

*\*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

### **A TIME OF PRAYER**

I thank you Lord for the gift of your Son: for His life, His sufferings and death and for His Resurrection and Ascension, for the witness, salvation and hope He gives.

I thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit to those who have come to you, and especially for the gift of that Spirit in your Church.

I rejoice in the work and witness of your Church and pray that it may continue to strive to fulfil your work and proclaim your Love.

I pray for the needs of the world, thinking especially at this time of those affected by the Coronavirus, but remembering too all who suffer including those whose plight seemingly goes unnoticed. Be with all those suffering in any way.

Be with those whose lives impact others: leaders in government, or the workplace, health care workers, teachers, emergency workers and all those on whom people depend. Grant them the wisdom and the strength to know and to follow your way.

Lord, I commend all men, women and children to your unfailing love through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.  
Amen

### **EPISTLE READING**

Romans 7: 15-25a

\*NOTE:

Paul here personifies ‘sin’. Sin makes it impossible for humans to please God; people are in slavery to sin and tend to act according to their natural life, even if they wish to please God in everything. In Christ, however, they can know freedom from slavery to sin. This passage expresses some of the tension felt within Christian life.

### **GOSPEL READING**

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

\*NOTE:

These two Gospel portions are from the narrative following the teaching on mission. Jesus has just responded to the questions that John the Baptist sent by

way of his disciples; John had been wondering if Jesus was the expected Messiah, and Jesus answers by listing the acts of power he has been doing (11.4-5). Jesus speaks to the crowd about John's role as a prophet and then continues, with the first passage here (vv.16-19), to compare the responses of 'this generation' of Israel to both John and Jesus himself. Neither of them had satisfied popular expectations. John's ascetic lifestyle had led to accusations that he had a demon, while Jesus' non-ascetic habits of eating and drinking suggested he was self-indulgent (Proverbs 23.20), and his choice of social contacts was highly questionable! The people were difficult to please; neither Jesus nor John met their expectations. In a manner similar to his response to John's disciples, Jesus points to his deeds as evidence for his character (see the personified figure of God's Wisdom in Proverbs 8).

The second portion (vv.25-30) picks up the narrative where Jesus praises God for hiding the implications of his ministry from those who might be expected to understand things, and for revealing the importance of Jesus, and the appearance of the kingdom of heaven, to those who were not considered wise or sophisticated, namely infants. In that culture children were viewed as vulnerable, dependent and socially marginal; in other words, they were among the weakest and most insignificant in society. These were not those to whom one might think of sending an important message, such as the appearance of the kingdom of God. Verse 27 makes an important point concerning Christ; here, Jesus states clearly his place as a mediator between God and the people.

The last few verses use the metaphor of a yoke; this was a structure, usually made of wood, that could be worn over the neck and shoulders of animals or humans, and was used to make it easier to pull or carry heavy loads. It could be used as picture

language for being oppressed (e.g. Isaiah 58.6) or linked to another (e.g. Numbers 25.3). However, some Jewish writings used it to speak of putting oneself under instruction to God's instructions for life in the Torah (commonly translated 'Law') or God's wisdom; something similar would seem to be the meaning intended here, since Jesus speaks of people learning from him.

We can also see some possible echoes of the story of Moses. Moses was described as humble (Numbers 12.3); God knew him and promised him rest (Exodus 33.12-14). It has been suggested that throughout the Gospel, and not least in the presentation of Jesus as teacher of Israel, Matthew is presenting him as the second and greater Moses.

#### **HYMN / StF 247**

"Lord of the Dance"

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

I danced in the morning  
when the world was begun,  
and I danced in the moon  
and the stars and the sun;  
and I came down from heaven  
and I danced on the earth,  
at Bethlehem  
I had my birth.

*I Dance, then, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance.' said he,  
'and I'll lead you all wherever you may  
be,  
and I'll lead you all in the Dance,' said he.*

I danced for the scribe  
and the Pharisee,  
but they would not dance  
and they wouldn't follow me;  
I danced for the fishermen,  
for James and John;  
they came with me  
and the Dance went on.

I danced on the Sabbath  
and I cured the lame:  
the holy people

said it was a shame.  
They whipped and they stripped  
and they hung me on high,  
and they left me there  
on a Cross to die.

I danced on a Friday  
when the sky turned black;  
it's hard to dance  
with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body  
and they thought I'd gone;  
but I am the Dance  
and I still go on.

They cut me down  
and I leapt up high;  
I am the life  
that'll never, never die;  
I'll live in you  
if you'll live in me;  
I am the Lord  
of the Dance, said he.

*\*Sydney Carter (1915-2004)*

### **TIME TO REFLECT**

*'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'*

Jesus' says that he is offering a new way to God. Like the old way, it aims for salvation, but He offers us strength and comfort on our path to God. He calls us to accept the need for forgiveness, and the salvation He offers to us. Then we can receive the Spirit to follow God's way with the knowledge of His Love.

Jesus says people criticise him for not conforming to their expectations. Those who fear his message point to how he lives his life, as they had done regarding John the Baptist.

If, through our calling, we receive or fear such criticism, we must rise above it. Seeing others we should look to what their words and actions mean for us,

rather than judging their outward appearance.

It is reported that when Sydney Carter wrote the well-known hymn "Lord of the Dance" he expected the Church to dislike it because it was different. Happily it was accepted, perhaps not as quickly as it deserved, and is now a familiar celebration of Jesus' life.

Jesus speaks of the word of God being hidden from the wise, of those who allow wisdom or knowledge to hide the love of God, and who see the detail of the Law as overriding God's calling that we should love God and our neighbour.

In the tale of the 'Good Samaritan' it was a priest and a Levite (someone who would assist the priest in the Temple), who would know the Law, who walked by.

In writing to the Romans, Paul speaks of the conflict between following the Law and accepting the call of Jesus.

This does not mean that we can disregard the Law. Indeed often the Law shows us how to love our neighbour, but the love God shows us is not following a set of rules but a supreme act of love through suffering. Our call to respond should also be through Love.

All this is through God's love for us, shown in the grace we are offered when he sent His Son to die for our forgiveness and salvation.

Take a time to sit quietly.

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Living God, we come before you in this time of prayer.

We do not always understand the power of prayer, and feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task – the desire to speak to you openly and honestly about ourselves, our world, our faith.

As we pray Lord, we ask you to move us beyond our doubts and our uncertainties. Move us by your Spirit.

Lord, we believe. Help our unbelief.

In this time of prayer, O God, we bring you a world in need, a world in pain, a world seeking for hope, for joy, for peace. We hold up all those affected by the Coronavirus:

all working on the front-line to support  
those most in need;  
all those enabling our lives to continue to  
function;  
all those working in hospitals and health  
centres around the world;  
all those seeking a vaccine and at the  
fore-front of research.  
We bring to you all those whose lives  
have been made worse by this virus:  
those who have lost loved ones;  
those who are living with symptoms;  
those living in fear;  
those in situations, countries or  
environments that make it impossible to  
self-isolate or feel safe.  
We bring you all the concerns and fears  
in our world that have been ignored,  
overlooked or moved lower-down the  
priority list because of global attention on  
the pandemic:  
those without a home;  
those living in poverty;  
those living with other diseases or health  
conditions.  
We pray for all those seeking a better  
world.  
May we work together, in Jesus' name, to  
bring about a better world.  
May I find my place, my calling, and  
know the Spirit moving through me.  
By the power of the Father, the Son and  
the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father .....*

## HYMN / STF 94

"To God be the glory"

To God be the glory,  
great things He hath done!  
So loved He the world  
that He gave us His Son,  
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,  
And opened the life-gate that all may go in:

*Refrain:*

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the earth hear His voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!*

*Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father,  
through Jesus the Son;  
And give Him the glory –  
great things He hath done.*

O perfect redemption,  
the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God!  
And every offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus  
a pardon receives:

Great things He hath taught us,  
great things He hath done,  
And great our rejoicing  
through Jesus the Son;  
But purer, and higher,  
and greater will be  
Our wonder, our transport,  
when Jesus we see:

*\*Words: Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) (1820-1915)*

*\*Music: William H. Doane (1832-1906)*

## A PRAYER OF BLESSING

Jesus has called us to come to him  
and blessed us with his richness.  
Now he sends us out into his world,  
to make sure people see him,  
and listen to him, through us.  
What a responsibility, what a joy,  
what a privilege.  
We are yours, Lord. Use us as you will.

May the blessing of God the Father, Son  
and Holy Spirit rest and remain with each  
of us sharing His worship today and  
always.

*\*Original Materials by Ralph Frankland*

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**JESUS SAID  
COME TO ME, ALL YOU  
WHO ARE WEARY AND  
BURDENED, AND I WILL  
GIVE YOU REST.  
MATTHEW 11 28**