

Connecting with one another – Sunday 29th March (with Communion)

This is the second in our weekly liturgies to help us connect with each other. The aim is to give us all something to be able to do 'together' – wherever we might be and whoever we might be with. It consists of some things to do, prayers to say, music to sing or to listen to (if you have access to YouTube, or you can simply read the words together) a reflection that you can ponder or discuss and this week includes communion. It would be wonderful that if possible, we might be able to all try to do this at 10.30 on Sunday morning (but obviously it can be at any time). Feel free to use as you would like, pausing if you need to or adapting/enlarging if you feel so led.

If you are able, please have some bread and juice ready, a candle that you could light, maybe a bible to hand and then find a quiet place. (and of course you can also have coffee and biscuits for afterwards!!).

Sunday 29th March 2020

Today we continue to reflect on the Easter story, we will share communion as a mark of our unity in the Spirit and we are encouraged to pray for our borough in light of the current Coronavirus pandemic.

10.30: [Take a couple minutes just to be quiet and welcome the presence of the Lord.]

[Light the Candle]

Pray *Lord I/we welcome you here today in this place. Even though we may be far apart from others, we recognise our unity together as the body of Christ. Let us be aware of the presence of your Holy Spirit and we ask that you guide us, speak to us, and minister your grace to us.
In the precious name of Jesus. Amen.*

Read **Revelation 5:1-14**

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?' ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all

the earth. ⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:

'You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased for God
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.
¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our
God,
and they will reign on the earth.'

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they were saying:

'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honour and glory and praise!'

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honour and glory and power,
for ever and ever!'

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, 'Amen', and the elders fell down and worshipped.

Sing/Read Is He Worthy?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c6pl6CaiD0>

Do you feel the world is broken? (We do)

Do you feel the shadows deepen? (We do)

But do you know that all the dark won't stop the light from getting through?
(We do)

Do you wish that you could see it all made new? (We do)

Is all creation groaning? (It is)

Is a new creation coming? (It is)

Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst? (It is)

Is it good that we remind ourselves of this? (It is)

Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole?

Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll?

The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave
He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave
Is He worthy? Is He worthy
Of all blessing and honour and glory?
Is He worthy of this?
He is

Does the Father truly love us? (He does)
Does the Spirit move among us? (He does)
And does Jesus, our Messiah, hold forever those He loves? (He does)
Does our God intend to dwell again with us? (He does)

Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole?
Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll?
The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave
He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave
From every people and tribe (People and tribe)
Every nation and tongue (Every nation and tongue)
He has made us a kingdom and priests to God
To reign with the Son

Is He worthy? Is He worthy
Of all blessing and honour and glory?
Is He worthy? Is He worthy?
Is He worthy of this?
He is, He is
Is He worthy? Is He worthy?
He is, He is
He is worthy, He is worthy
He is

Songwriters: Andrew Peterson / Ben Shive
Is He Worthy? Lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, The Bicycle Music
Company, Music Services, Inc

Pray

[think & pray; specifically for our local people and communities]

Dear Lord,

- I pray for this virus to burn itself out quickly;
- I pray for all those who are working on the frontline – for their skill, continued health and protection
Specifically _____;
- I pray for all those who are feeling anxious or isolated in these times,
Specifically _____;

- I pray for all who are suffering with or who have lost loved ones through this virus,
Specifically _____;
- I pray for those for whom life has been disrupted by loss of work and purpose,
Specifically _____;
- I pray for the elderly, the vulnerable and those for whom being cooped up at home brings extra pressures,
Specifically _____;
- I pray for our leaders – political, educational, medical, church and community leaders, for wisdom as decisions are made,
Specifically _____;
- I pray for your Holy Spirit to bring peace and protection over all.
Amen
[Written by Ness. This is also a prayer that can be prayed daily]

Read

Matthew 21:7-11

⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,
‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’
‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’
‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’
¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’
¹¹ The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’

Reflection Never seen before? (Carl Hodges)

Watching all of the news broadcasts recently, it appears to me that there is a word that is being used with a rather unprecedented frequency. No, I am not talking about ‘Coronavirus’, but moreover the word that is being used to describe the unprecedented actions and measures being taken around the outbreak. Yes, that is right the word is: - ‘unprecedented’ – have you noticed that? The restrictions are ‘unprecedented’; the financial stimulus package (whatever that is) is ‘unprecedented’; the demand on the NHS is going to be ‘unprecedented’; the shutdown of shops and services are ‘unprecedented’; and even the call to stay at home is ‘unprecedented’.

When something is ‘unprecedented’ it is *“without previous instance; never before known or experienced; unexampled or unparalleled”*

(www.dictionary.com) Literally it means ‘not preceded’ by anything like it before. And, I guess if we were to think of a word that describes the situation that we are currently in then ‘unprecedented’ does very adequately describe it – we have not experienced anything like this before.

When we think about that first Palm Sunday, the week before Easter, and we think about the crowds of people lining the streets of Jerusalem, laying their cloaks and palm branches on the ground for the donkey that Jesus was riding to walk on, they too were experiencing something unprecedented. But I wonder if they actually knew that? You see they had probably seen something similar before; warriors returning after battle, conquering kings and Caesars with their armies marching into cities, parading their power and might. Sure this may be a little different (Jesus was on a donkey of course) but I think they believed that here was their king, here to rescue them, here to bring them to power, here to kick the bad guys out of town, here to exercise power and might – by violence and by force – just like all the other kings before him. I think that it is fair to surmise this, because we read later in the account, that just a few days later the crowd had then turned on Jesus and were then calling for him now to be executed (Matt 27:22).

Jesus, we know, did not ride into Jerusalem and confront the powers that be, causing a violent revolution through the use of power and might. No. Jesus went to his death ‘like a lamb led to the slaughter’ (Isaiah 53:7), surrendering his life not just to liberate his own tribe, but actually to liberate the whole of creation. In that way we can say that Jesus was truly ‘unprecedented’ as there never was, or is, anyone equal to him, anywhere, or at any other time.

So my point is this, in these ‘unprecedented’ times are we looking only to the ‘precedented’ ways that we have done before (in other words, looking to the ways in which we have dealt with crises before in order to save us)? Or, can we look to the truly ‘unprecedented’ one to see us through? Again, his way may not seem conventional to the ways that we have known; prayer may seem old-hat and ‘of the past’ to many around us. Worship in the face of suffering may seem alien and foolish. And faith may seem misplaced and hopeless when the ‘evidence’ is to the contrary. But the way of the Jesus is never the way of the crowd. So let us live out our faith in these ‘unprecedented’ times following the way of the ‘unprecedented’ one.

Jeremiah 6:16

*¹⁶ This is what the Lord says:
‘Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.*

Pray [Take a couple of minutes to reflect and pray silently]

Communion

Let us come now to the table.

Let us share this bread and juice together as a scattered people, but a people together as the body of Christ.

We come to the table not because we are worthy, but because Jesus is worthy.

We come because through his death upon the cross we can know forgiveness, freedom and love.

We come because we are invited to know him, to worship him and to rest in him, no matter where we come from, where we have been, or what we may have or have not done.

Let us come.

Thanksgiving

Father, today we thank you for the gift of your son Jesus.

We thank you for the sacrifice that he made on our behalf upon the cross at Calvary.

And we thank you that as we take this bread and this juice, that we can rest in the truth that he was worthy and he is worthy.

We thank you for this bread and this juice as representations of his broken body and his shed blood.

Minister to us your grace afresh right now.

Confession

[Pause for a few moments bringing any sins that you are aware of to God and trusting in the cross for your forgiveness.]

Lord, we thank you for the forgiveness of our sins in the cross of Christ.

1Corinthians 11:²³ *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'*

The body of Christ broken for us

[Take the bread, break it and share it among you. Pause as you eat and remember the love of God for you]

²⁵ *In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'*

The blood of Jesus shed for us.

[If you are with others, use individual cups, and drink at the same time. Pause as you drink and remember the promises of God]

²⁶ *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

[Take a few moments either to be silent or to pray extemporaneously as you feel led to do so]

Thank you Jesus for dying for me and for the hope that we have through your resurrection.

Amen

Sing/Read Thine be the glory

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

Thine Be the Glory

Thine be the glory,
Risen, conqu'ring Son;
Endless is the victory,
Thou o'er death hast won;
Angels in bright raiment
Rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave clothes
Where Thy body lay.

Thine be the glory,
Risen conquering Son,
Endless is the victory,
Thou o'er death hast won.

Lo! Jesus meets us,
Risen from the tomb;
Lovingly He greets us,
Scatters fear and gloom;
Let the church with gladness,
Hymns of triumph sing;
For her Lord now liveth,
Death hath lost its sting.

Thine be the glory,
Risen conquering Son,
Endless is the victory,
Thou o'er death hast won.

No more we doubt Thee,
Glorious Prince of life;
Life is naught without Thee;
Aid us in our strife;
Make us more than conquerors,
Through Thy deathless love:
Bring us safe through Jordan
To Thy home above.

Thine is the glory,
Risen conquering Son,
Endless is the victory,
Thou o'er death hast won.

Songwriters: Georg Frideric Handel

Benediction *Now, Brothers and sisters,*
May the Father's love
The Son's grace
And the Spirit's peace
Be upon us
Be within us
And go with us
As we walk the way before us
Amen