

Service of the Word 14 June 2020

Pentecost 2

Welcome

Good Morning and welcome to our service for this second Sunday after Pentecost. This is a time in the church's year usually referred to as Ordinary Time; but our time and our lives are still very far from ordinary just now. Back in March, just before Easter, when I started these podcasts life was dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The message was simple, STAY AT HOME, it is not safe to do anything else. Today as we begin cautiously to emerge from the restrictions of lockdown life seems very messy and confusing. Just yesterday morning I watched on breakfast television a rugby union match being played in front of a capacity crowd in New Zealand, several presenters trying to explain the concept of a *social bubble*, yet more new language to absorb and the mayor of London telling people to stay home from the various large gatherings taking place in that city today. I hope you will forgive me if I sound slightly confused and bewildered today, I certainly feel that way. The Black Lives Matter issues which are bringing people onto the streets, many for but some against, these are important issues which we need to bring out into the open and talk about. But, But the virus which caused this pandemic is still very much with us even if some countries like New Zealand have managed to eradicate it. We are not there yet so I am unsure about which way to turn. Except I know, even if I have to be reminded often, I know the only place to turn is to God. So we gather our prayers, our thoughts, our confusions, our fears as we come to God with words of praise and petition.

Gathering

We are gathered together as the family of God
to offer praise and thanksgiving
to ask forgiveness of our sins
to hear and receive God's holy Word
to pray for the needs of the world
and to seek God's grace
that through Jesus Christ our Lord
and in the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to God's service.

Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit.
Lord, have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart.
Christ, have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided.
Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, all we long for is before you;
and our deep sighing is not hidden from you.
But we acknowledge our wickedness;
we are filled with sorrow at our sin.
Be pleased O Lord, to deliver us;
O Lord, make haste to help us.
May the Lord forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are
and direct what we shall be,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Praise

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
with God the Son, Jesus Christ,
and God the Holy Spirit,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect of the Day

O Lord, you always guide your people
whom you build on the foundation of your love;
make us ever stand in awe of your Holy Name,
and love you in equal measure;

through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end. Amen

Our first reading is Psalm 100

First Reading

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
 come before him with joyful songs.
Know that the Lord is God.
 It is he who made us, and we are his;
 we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving
 and his courts with praise;
 give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever;
 his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Second Reading

Matthew 9:35-38 The Message (MSG)

Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. "What a huge harvest!" he said to his disciples. "How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!"

Reflection

There is an old saying that *honesty is the best policy*. In the interest of honesty I feel that I need to say that I am running out of words; or at least running low on the ability to find the right words to respond to how we are today, right now, in this moment - how we are with ourselves, with each other and with God. I start to prepare what I am going to say on any given Sunday on the Monday before. I start by looking at the readings, often in different translations of the Bible, I look, reflect and ponder the words of scripture. Throughout the week I come back to the words of the chosen readings in light of what I hear and see in the news, from folk I talk with and in my daily prayer. Usually, something will stand out, a word, a phrase or a

story. This week has been different not because nothing stood out but because my head and my heart were hearing different things. My head has seen nothing but mounting confusion, disarray and conflict all week. I have heard voices, lots of genuine voices clamouring for attention. Black Lives Matter, teachers, school children, shops, airlines, small family run businesses, charities, the list goes on and on; even zoos and safari parks. All these voices trying to get attention. All these voices crying out for help, pleading for their particular case to be heard. All these voices put me right in the middle of today's gospel reading. ***When Jesus looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. (repeat)***

I can identify with Jesus broken heart. Not just that so many voices crying out is confusing but that it feels like the voices are crying into a void. There is no one to listen, no shepherd to help them feel less confused. Worse that this the voices crying out are not listening to each other. It feels like everyone for themselves. Don't get me wrong each of these voices is important, each voice, each need has value and each should be listened to. But it is so hard to know where to start. There is no easy fix for any of this confusion. When the whole world, a whole way of life is turned upside down, thinking that you can simply turn it back around and make everything right is not possible.

Anyone who has lived through a disaster, natural or man made, and the people who accompany them in rebuilding know this all too well. There are stages in disaster recovery just as there are stages in grief. Having someone to walk with you on the road out of disaster is key to turning mere survival into real recovery. Having someone to accompany you on the journey out of disaster is key to finding a road that leads to a full but new and different kind of life. Jesus' understands that the needs, the voices crying out for help are many, but the people to walk with them are few.

He gives us the answer which is to PRAY, PRAY AGAIN AND THEN PRAY SOME MORE. Each of us, regardless of age or infirmity, are capable of listening to at least one of these voices crying out. Our mistake, my mistake this week, was to try and hear all of them, all at once. Only God can do that, but as Christians we are called to listen and respond; to fix the world one crying voice at a time. The difficulty is, of course, our voices are among the voices crying out. We have needs to be met, a road to recovery from disaster to walk as individuals and as a church. God promises that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus will make all things new. Not turn back the clock but make the world new for us.

This is where my heart took over with Psalm 100. I so want to *Shout for joy to the Lord, and to worship the Lord with gladness*. Yes we have experienced and still live with the aftermath of a disaster, the pandemic. But we are not sheep without a shepherd.

We know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. We are not walking the road out of disaster on our own, God walks alongside us every step of the way.

*For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

For a time this week I let the clamour of the voices crying out, the sense of confusion and aimlessness overcome the faith I have in God's continued presence. And actually that is OK. It doesn't mean that God is not longer walking this road with me it just means I am human and can get just as confused and aimless as any other sheep in the flock. So for someone who was struggling for words God seems to have put a few onto my heart today. Wherever you are, however you are - overwhelmed by confusion, disheartened by clamouring voices or walking hesitantly forward with God at your side please remember Jesus command to pray, pray again and then pray some more. Your prayer may be filled with words; your prayer may be only silence; your prayer may be a cry of anguish. Just know that the Lord, our God, hears your prayer and walks with you every step of the way. AMEN.

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Let us pray, for the church and the world, thanking God for the blessings in our lives

Intercessions

Blessing

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,
Forever and ever. Amen

Act of Dedication

Almighty God,
we thank you for the gift of your holy word:
may it be a lantern to our feet,
a light upon our paths,
and a strength to our lives.
Take us and use us to love and serve all people
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Praise

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; *
you renew the face of the earth.
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; *
you renew the face of the earth.
May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in all his
works.
You renew the face of the earth.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; * you renew the face of the earth.

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Be with you and all those for whom you have a care this day and evermore. Amen