

# Service of the Word 21 June 2020

## Pentecost 3

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### **Welcome**

Good Morning and welcome to our service for this third Sunday after Pentecost. It has been a funny old week, and that is saying something after all the strange weeks we have endured over these months of lockdown. On Thursday Scotland began a cautious re-entry to normal life as we began Phase 2 of our Route Map out of lockdown. That is a sentence I could not ever have imaged myself writing or saying. Before the pandemic these words would have been meaningless. Now they mean everything since our very future, our hope for some return to normality, hangs on every word. Despite all these new words, or old words with new meaning, being added to our vocabulary will still have the old and familiar words of scripture to speak to our hearts. Our focus this morning is very much on Psalm 86 because the Psalms are prayers of the heart which often help us to speak the words we otherwise find difficult. So for a moment on this mid-summer morning take a deep breath, still your anxiety, and join us as together we worship the Lord God Almighty.

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### **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.

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## **Collect of the Day**

O Lord, in your mercy hear our prayers;  
as as you give us the desire to pray,  
grant us your help and protection;  
through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, word without end. Amen

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## **First Reading**

Psalm 86

Hear me, Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy.

Guard my life, for I am faithful to you;  
save your servant who trusts in you.  
You are my God; have mercy on me, Lord,  
for I call to you all day long.  
Bring joy to your servant, Lord,  
for I put my trust in you.  
You, Lord, are forgiving and good,  
abounding in love to all who call to you.  
Hear my prayer, Lord;  
listen to my cry for mercy.  
When I am in distress, I call to you,  
because you answer me.  
Among the gods there is none like you, Lord;  
no deeds can compare with yours.  
All the nations you have made  
will come and worship before you, Lord;  
they will bring glory to your name.

For you are great and do marvellous deeds;  
you alone are God.  
Teach me your way, Lord,  
that I may rely on your faithfulness;  
give me an undivided heart,  
that I may fear your name.  
I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart;  
I will glorify your name for ever.  
For great is your love towards me;  
you have delivered me from the depths,  
from the realm of the dead.  
Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God;  
ruthless people are trying to kill me –  
they have no regard for you.  
But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,  
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.  
Turn to me and have mercy on me;  
show your strength on behalf of your servant;  
save me, because I serve you  
just as my mother did.  
Give me a sign of your goodness,  
that my enemies may see it and be put to shame,  
for you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

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## **Second Reading**

Matthew 10:24-39 New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)

‘A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

‘So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

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## Reflection

This morning on the BBC Breakfast show I listened while the owner of a large restaurant chain said that *going out to eat together in a restaurant is how we build family and community. That this going out to eat had replaced the family dining table for us.* She was of course arguing passionately for a reduction in the social distancing measurement from 2 meters to 1 meter. While I had compassion for her distress and desire to save the jobs of her employees I was also disturbed by her assumption that family and community life will be entirely rebuilt in restaurants and pubs. This week the Vestry at St Paul’s has given long and careful consideration to the guidance we have been given about reopening churches for private prayer as part of easing social isolation in Phase 2. In the end we decided regretfully that given the work required, the ongoing restrictions on travel distance and the vulnerability of many in our local congregation that we at least for now will not reopen for private prayer. St Paul’s has in recent years been open for passing tourists and visitors but it will be a good while before we see that level of visitors in this Strath. We did however begin to reflect on how our Church might look and function once we are given permission to once again meet together for worship.

And it did get me to thinking about what will rebuild our family, community and importantly for me our church life as we emerge into a Covid-19 world. I enjoy making these podcasts and connecting with all of you in a new way. For me some of this new way of connecting will need to continue for the foreseeable future even as we emerge further out of social isolation.

It is a new resource that we cannot afford to lose. Reflecting on our Psalm 86 this week I was heartened by the lovely mixture of confident praise in God's ongoing protection and equally confident petition to God's mercy. If we had been gathered in Church one of our hymns for sure would have been How Great Thou Art. The Psalm for me reflects where we are just now. Still in a scary Covid-19 world but needing to look hopefully to future rebuilding. For me the building blocks of praise and petition are pretty sound ones.

Over the months of social isolation, uncertainty and fear our cry has been more often one of *Lord, help us*. That cry is here too in this Psalm *When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me*. As we begin to lift up our eyes and hearts again to see beyond, maybe only a little bit beyond, but beyond the ongoing crisis - as we lift up our hearts we can begin to acknowledge God's care for us we can rediscover the language of praise and thanksgiving the Psalmist speaks so beautifully.

*I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart;  
I will glorify your name for ever.  
For great is your love towards me;  
you have delivered me from the depths,*

We are here, thank God, battered and bruised some in body and I imagine all battered and bruised in spirit. We are here and we can begin to relearn the words of praise and thanksgiving. It will be a slow process but I hope and pray a steady one towards rebuilding our church family, our church community. We need to be mindful of not leaving anyone behind, not expecting that we will all move forward at the same pace. But we do need to in the words of another Psalm *to lift up our eyes to hills*. We need to be clear about what is important for us over these last months. The Psalmist warns that *among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours*. This is time when other gods, economic, social and political have started to claim their prominence in the process of rebuilding. They are important but they are not God. We need to ensure that God's voice, the voice we are learning to hear in new ways - that God's voice underpins our rebuilding. We need to be careful that we don't just return to *normal*, get back to way things were because then we will have missed the new thing God is promising to us.

As we take these first, careful steps out of our isolation, we will do well to hold in our hearts the words of the Psalmist

*you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,  
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.  
Turn to me and have mercy on me;  
show your strength on behalf of your servant;*

*Amen*

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## **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*

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## **Intercessions**

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### **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