

# Service of the Word 19 July 2020

## Pentecost 7

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### **Welcome**

Good Morning and welcome to our Service. This week has seen a lot of changes for St Paul's as we began the work to reopen the church for worship together in August. This podcast service will continue each week alongside the gathering together in church as I know that many folk will be unable to join us for a whole variety of reasons. For me it has been a privilege to connect with the folk who live here in Strathnairn and a wider community during our months of social isolation. That connection is important and one which we will continue as our communities and the world move into a new kind of life in a pandemic which still rages around us. Most of us, as here in Scotland, have a map to guide us into the future but for many I know that path is still not clear or certain. What remains certain is our total dependance on God to walk with us into whatever the future may hold for us. So we join our voices, near and far, in praise and thanksgiving to God *because each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made; God's works are wonderful; we know full well.*

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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**

Lord God of power and might,  
all good things belong to you:  
sow in our hearts the love of your name,  
and make us grow in the life of faith;  
nurture the things that are good,  
and tend them with your loving care;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you,  
in the unit of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, world without end. Amen

*Our first reading is Psalm 139*

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## **First Reading**

### **Psalm 139**

1 You have searched me, Lord,  
and you know me.  
2 You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.  
3 You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.  
4 Before a word is on my tongue  
you, Lord, know it completely.  
5 You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me.  
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain.  
7 Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?  
8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.  
9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
10 even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.  
11 If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me  
and the light become night around me,'  
12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;  
the night will shine like the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.  
13 For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.  
15 My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.  
16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.  
How precious to me are your thoughts, God!  
How vast is the sum of them!

18 Were I to count them,  
they would outnumber the grains of sand –  
when I awake, I am still with you.  
19 If only you, God, would slay the wicked!  
Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!  
20 They speak of you with evil intent;  
your adversaries misuse your name.  
21 Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord,  
and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?  
22 I have nothing but hatred for them;  
I count them my enemies.  
23 Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
24 See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting

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## Second Reading

Matthew 13:24-30 MSG

24-26 He told another story. “God’s kingdom is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. That night, while his hired men were asleep, his enemy sowed thistles all through the wheat and slipped away before dawn. When the first green shoots appeared and the grain began to form, the thistles showed up, too.

27 “The farmhands came to the farmer and said, ‘Master, that was clean seed you planted, wasn’t it? Where did these thistles come from?’

28 “He answered, ‘Some enemy did this.’

“The farmhands asked, ‘Should we weed out the thistles?’

29-30 “He said, ‘No, if you weed the thistles, you’ll pull up the wheat, too. Let them grow together until harvest time. Then I’ll instruct the harvesters to pull up the thistles and tie them in bundles for the fire, then gather the wheat and put it in the barn.’”

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## Reflection

For the last few weeks our first reading has come from the Psalms, a book in the Old Testament that is full of prayer, all kinds of prayer; loving, laughing, weeping, yelling, hoping and despairing. All of human feeling can be found in the Psalms. They remind us, in the words of Eugene Peterson, that we are made by and for the voice of God - listening to and answering that voice is our most human action. We are most ourselves when we pray. Many of the psalms are reflections about God: they focus our attention on the works of the divine. Psalm 139 which we heard in our first reading is different it

addresses God directly from beginning to end in a dialogue. This psalm is personal. There are four sections of about six verses each. They move from the inside to the outside, back to the inside again and then out to the world. Psalm 139 is one I come back to again and again in my prayer. I am grateful to Bishop Stephen Croft for his insight into this Psalm which I would like to share with you today.

### **God knows me! ( verses 1-6)**

God knows me inside out, upside down and back to front. God know every thought, every word, every action, every journey, every resting place.

This psalm can be said by anyone. It is not a psalm for the special people. It's a psalm for the entire human race, for people of every kind of ability, people of every race and every tribe. God knows each of us.

This knowledge is not a burden or oppressive. This knowledge is “too wonderful for me” (6): something we work at remembering every day of our lives. This knowledge for me is grounded in God’s sure love for me.

We believe that each person is unique, special and to be loved because God has made us to be unique, special and loves us.

*Take a moment to reflect on the moments when you feel most unloved? The Psalm is a reminder that God is with you, even in these most difficult of times.*

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### **God is everywhere! (7-12)**

God is not only in me. God is not a private God. God is God of the entire universe. In every place and therefore in every person. The whole human race is made by God.

This part of the psalm explores and tests the places where it is hardest to find God. It is easy to find God in the heavens or in familiar places or in the morning light.

But God is even in the hardest places. Sheol is the place of the dead. The sea is the symbol of chaos and danger. Darkness is the place of fear and ignorance. God is even here.

When we are in those places, when life is challenging or difficult as it has been and continues to be in this pandemic, when we meet prejudice or

cruelty or exclusion, God is with us to bring strength and comfort and order and peace. There is nowhere where God is not.

*Take a moment to reflect on the places where you feel out of touch with God. God is there.*

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### **God made me! (13-18)**

**God** made me! God **made** me! God made **me!**

Put the accent in different places and say the words with awe and wonder. It was God! God was there in my mother's womb. God knit me together. God formed me in the secret places.

Again, these are words that everyone can say. As we say them we can also remember the words from Genesis 1: "God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good" (31).

You and I are part of God's creation. People with different abilities and disabilities, people with different skin colour, people with different languages are all part of God's good creation. Each is to be loved. Each has many gifts. All draw love from one another. All point to the grace of God individually and together.

It was God all along.

*Take a moment to reflect on the parts of you which you find most difficult to accept as wonderfully made?*

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### **Lead me Lord! (19-24)**

All is not well in this world you have made, Lord. There is cruelty and hatred, violence and despair. Some of that comes from wicked people.

Help me to pray your kingdom come. Help me to use my gifts to build a better world. Help me to pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

But help me to go even further than this beautiful psalm. Help me not to hate and to overcome evil with good and to forgive, because that is the way of your beautiful Son, Jesus.

When hatred or cruelty are too hard to understand, help me still to love. Help me to remember where we began: that you know me and love me. Help me to be honest with you and with others.

Search my heart, O God, and lead me in the way everlasting. 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