

Sunday 10th May 2020

Come, worship God who is our refuge and our strength.
We come, trusting God to lead and guide us always.
We come, confident to commit our spirit into your hands, O God.
We come, knowing you deliver us from our enemies.
Let your face shine upon us, O God,
and your steadfast love surround us.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

God our refuge and strength, you bless our lives with eternal loving kindness, holding us, guiding us, delivering us from evil. As we gather as your people although not physically with each other, we pray that our worship will reflect your divine love. We offer this time of worship with the remembrance of Easter still filling us with joy and with the anticipation of Pentecost firing our devotion. Let our praise and thanksgiving for all you have done truly resound within our hearts and our homes. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

A Prayer of confession

Lord Jesus Christ, you show us the way - the risky way that you took. The way which challenges all that is evil and destructive. We confess that too often we choose the easy and non-threatening way which allows evil to triumph and denies people the opportunity to live an abundant life.

Forgive us when we lose direction and so fail to follow your way.

Lord Jesus Christ, you speak the word of truth which brings good news to the poor, freedom to those who are oppressed and enslaved, and healing to those whose lives lack wholeness. We confess that too often our minds are swayed by the media's 'truth' that can be often so contrary to the gospel.

Forgive us when our lives deny the truth of your words and your deeds.

Lord Jesus Christ, you give us the gift of life - emptying yourself of all self-serving power in order to empower others with your beautiful life and selfless love. We confess that we like to use power to further our own purposes, even if – sadly - it contributes to the powerlessness of others.

Forgive us, Lord, when our desire for power and status is stronger than our desire to make your life visible through us.

Lord Jesus Christ, remind us that...

- the landscape of God's grace becomes clearer when we follow your way,
- the sound of God's voice is easier to hear when our lives speak your truth,
- the heartbeat of God's love throbs within us when our lives bear witness to your life. Amen

Reading: John 14:1-14

This reading begins with the words “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me.” In these days I know that there are many with troubled hearts so take a moment to listen to this beautiful song if you can by Renae and Mark Haas.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRBzk2nsl4>

Thoughts

It all feels so up in the air. When have so many people, everywhere, felt so uncertain, had so many unanswered and unanswerable questions all at the same time? When have so many plans been upended, suspended? When have so many guidelines been provisional, temporary, subject to revision? How long will this last? When will we get to go out/gather/travel/work normally/work at all/hug/feel safe again? Grief, illness, this unseen virus with its terrible tentacles that reach into our homes, churches, schools, hospitals, economy all leave us feeling unmoored, untethered, adrift, even more than we often do as humans. We may feel suspended, floating (not in a good way), unable to get a foothold on something solid and dependable, concrete and unshakeable. It's all up in the air.

Here is the message of our lessons for today. Yes, the feeling of uncertainty is real. Yes, the feeling of being off course without our regular patterns and way-markers is real. Yes, the longing for something unmovable yet lifegiving, solid yet sustaining, concrete yet creative is real. And yes, God gives us a way that is steadfast when all feels like sinking sand, a truth that is certain when all feels slippery, a life that is assured when all is shifting. God gives us precisely what we need for this moment and for all time because God gives us a person and makes us into a people. All of our lessons today bear witness to this assurance, this place to get a foothold, this pledge of security no matter what.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” says Jesus. With Jesus, we have sure footing. With Jesus, there is a way forward. We may not see the next step, but he does, and if we stay close, follow him, and depend on him, we can move forward undergirded by the unmovable, unshakeable, unshifting ground that supports us, the guide that won't leave us, the God who won't lose us.

Jesus assures us that if we know him, we know the one he calls Father, also. God is not aloof, or aloft beyond the troubles of this world. God is knowable because Jesus is knowable. What does this tell us about God? The God we know in Jesus Christ became flesh and dwelt among us, made a home among the poor, cared for the sick, lived humbly, fed the hungry, blessed children, washed the feet of his disciples, wept at the death of his friend, promised that death will not be victorious, met his disciples even when they had isolated themselves in an upper room, went ahead to prepare a place for us, and will come and take us to himself, that where he is, we may be also. God is with us, even in our vulnerability, our uncertainty, our flailing and failing and fear. Reach out, here is God. Take a step forward on the way. Our footing is sure. The path holds. The way leads to life.

The Lord's Prayer

Christian Aid Week – 10th to 16th May 2020

Love never fails. Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all.

This coming week is Christian Aid Week. Usually in our churches we would be seeking to support the work of this Christian organization by using special collection envelopes or holding some fund raising event.

Obviously we cannot do this at this time but this does not mean that Christian Aid does not still need our support, possibly even more so in these times. If you are able to then look at the Christian Aid website which gives details of how you can donate to their ongoing work.

A Prayer :

God of grace and light,
found within and out with the
structures of humanity.
You cannot be contained,
you choose to dwell in hearts and
homes, in people and places.

Build up our homes:
Where the happy may find peace;
the sad may find comfort;
the hungry may find food;
the weary may find rest,
the anxious may find peace.

Build up the places where we work
and would like to be working now:
where the honest may find reward;
the dedicated may find delight;
the imaginative may find new horizons.

Build up our community:
so the isolated may find friendship;
the marginalised may find welcome;
the unloved may find acceptance.

Build up our nation, loving Lord,
and bless those entrusted with the
care of our society's fabric and people.

May they use their skills, their calling,
their hard graft
to fashion communities of grace and
understanding,
where generosity of heart and mind
and soul
may be not only the gilding of our daily
life but its very core.

Build up the Church, redeeming Lord,
so that all Your children may find their
place, unique and special,
chosen and essential to the living
edifice of grace,
where by Your grace
each one might know their value in
your economy,
and their significance in Your eyes.

Help us all, this day, to be living
stones, and not dead weights,
dreaming dreams, and living gloriously
the joy and kindness
of a faith that edifies everything that
life should be.

In the Name of our Saviour, our
cornerstone, we pray. Amen

Benediction

BENEDICTION

Know the blessing of God's strength within you,
the life of Jesus Christ directing you
the inspiration of the Holy Spirit empowering you. AMEN