

Sunday 17th May 2020

Opening prayer

In your love we trust, creator God:

your love for your world;

your love for each one of us;

your love that invites us

to love others, to love ourselves, and to love you.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, receive our love now, and our thanks. Amen.

Gospel reading: John 14: 15 -21

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

Jesus describes the power of love abiding in those who love God. Spend a few moments going round your house looking for evidence of the outworking of God's love – anywhere, locally or the other side of the world. You could be inspired by books, pictures, photos or posters; or by objects and possession. I'm sure you will find something in your home that reminds you that God loves you.

What is the spirit of the age? Or, to put it another way, what do you feel is the overwhelming spirit of the people or the community around you at this time? In many ways we are seeing the best of people in terms of neighbourliness, being exhibited in a spirit of caring within the communities in which we live. Despite social distancing, many are communicating and caring for those around them in ways they might never have done before. Last week's 75th anniversary celebrations for VE Day might have included much reminiscing about 'wartime spirit', but they also prompted reflections on the spirit of people in the UK in this current moment, battling the coronavirus situation we find ourselves in, as well as being hopeful that it will come to an end at some point.

This week's Gospel reading, John 14.15-21, invites us to make a connection between loving Jesus and keeping his commandments.

Jesus promises his disciples that he will ask God to give them a 'helper' – or 'advocate' or 'comforter' – who will be with them always once he himself has physically left them. This Spirit of God will live (abide) beside them and inside them. This is the Spirit that will create a spirit within each person to carry them through the scary trials and challenges of the times that lay ahead of them.

Jesus' opening words in verse 15 create a sense of an endless round:

- if you love Jesus you will keep his commandments to love;
- and in doing so you will be loved by his Father;
- and you will continue to enter into ever deeper and more loving relationships through living out his commandments.

Jesus is beginning to excite the unwitting disciples by teasing them with clues about the gift he is going to leave them, a farewell present for when he is gone.

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It might help to think of it like this. Jesus is peeling back the corners of the wrapping paper on his gift to tantalise the disciples with a glimpse because, at this point in John's Gospel, he hasn't really wrapped the gift yet, let alone labelled it and put a bow around it –that is still to come. Nevertheless, the promised gift of the Spirit, when it arrives, will give them and us all we need to model the love of Jesus for others.

How can we model the love of Jesus for others today? Whether his gift, for us when we unwrap it, bursts out with joy like a toy jack-in-the-box or comforts like a soothing skin balm it will be whatever God needs it to be for us to be enabled to lovingly care for others in this present moment.

This Spirit is the one who Jesus promises will always be alongside us and within us – the one who will never desert us in our hour of need. For so many, this is that hour – receive, then, the Spirit of this age...

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

God of truth,

as we give thanks for all we know of your love,
we praise you for all we are yet to learn.

As we give thanks for all you reveal in Scripture,
we praise you for all we are yet to discover.

As we give thanks for the presence of Christ within us,
we praise you for all the ways we have yet to grow.

As we give thanks for the gift of prayer,
we praise you for all the ways in which we are yet to be changed.

For all we know, and for all we do not yet know,
we praise you, in the name of Jesus,
and in the power of the Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Here are a couple of links, one to a familiar hymn and another to a newer song. I hope you enjoy. (Apologies if there is a bit of advertising before the main item but I'm not sure how I can edit this out!)

Come Down O love divine

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLQu6_Tjk9M&list=RD6HPKL1wOVXk&index=4

You are mine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GReBL0Qnfyg&list=RD6HPKL1wOVXk&index=9>

Benediction

Go into this week with...

The blessing of God upon you

The presence of Christ upholding you

The Spirit of truth within you. AMEN