

Morning Worship for 5th July 2020

As you begin this act of worship in your own home remember that there are many friends who are doing the same and are joining with you in worship. If you have you-tube then please find an appropriate version of the hymns and join in the singing. As you go through this time of worship try to remember this reality; you are in the presence of God who holds us all in His care and keeping.

The Greeting:

We come in this service to God,
In our need, and bringing with us the needs of the world.
We come to God, who has come to us in Jesus,
And who walks with us the road of our worlds suffering.
We come with our faith and with our doubts;
We come with our hopes and with our fears.
We come as we are, because it is God who invites us to come,
And God has promised never to turn us away.

The Iona Community Worship Book 1991

Collect for the day:

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
Without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
Increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
That with you as our ruler and guide
We may pass through things temporal
That we lose not our hold on things eternal;
Grant this, heavenly Father,
For our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
Who is alive and reigns with you,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Our Declaration of faith

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
The whole earth is full of his glory.
Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
Ascribe to the Lord, the honour due to his name.
The whole earth is full of his glory.
The Lord shall give strength to his people;
The Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
The whole earth is full of his glory.

Hymn: Alleluia sing to Jesus.

Readings: Zechariah 9:9-12, Romans 7:15-25a, Matthew 11:16-19, 25-end.

Reflection:

In the Gospel message we hear a combination of responses from Jesus toward those who have heard his Word, those who have benefited from his miraculous power and yet not repented but stayed living the life which they had beforehand. We also hear words of consolation toward those who hear who are not full of the wisdom of the world and yet are fully able to respond to the call from Jesus to be His Disciples.

The sentence which reveals in the words of the Gospel that God's message has been directed to the infants amongst us, reflects beautifully what Jesus asks from us in being one of his followers.

I have often heard it preached that to be a follower of Jesus is not easy, that it demands a great deal from us, especially as it appears to set us apart from others. But is that really what Jesus intended?

Did he come preaching words of great wisdom, eloquent thought and complicated liturgy with academic prowess in order to chastise us for our sinful ways or did he come to show and reveal to us an alternative response to that of the world?

For me he came to do the later, not that I am saying that he was not gifted in the way in which he engaged with others, for he undoubtedly was, and yet there is something about today's reading which sets a very different tone both to those who heard him then and to us today.

The Gospel reminds us that Jesus did not come to over-burden us with his message but rather to release us from the complications of the world which had over taken us.

When Jesus says my yoke is easy and my burden is light he really means it.

This is why the Gospel text speaks of God's Word being delivered to those who are infants. Not that it is primarily addressed to children, for that is not what is meant; instead it reflects those who are just beginning to explore the depths of the world in which they live. There are today millions of people who live fairly simple and straight forward lives and there is a lot to be said for the beauty which is implicit within that way of life. This is the kind of life that Jesus came to guide us toward. It is a natural response to human happiness. So many of the complications of life which at times seem to overpower us are distractions from the reality of a life lived simply yet well.

Jesus reaches out to those who have the capacity to accept and to respond to the call to live life simply loving God and our neighbours. This central thrust of the message of Jesus is exactly what is meant by him when he speaks to us of how light the burden of response is to live out our lives following his example.

To live simply and humbly before God and in the simplicity of life to find inner peace and eternal happiness is the yoke which is placed upon us.

This is not to say that academic brilliance is something to be rejected, or that some aspects of life simply because of the world in which we live may well place upon us greater demands depending on how we engage with it. But what is does say is that the priority of life which should be dominant is not the desire to succeed in the world but to succeed in our response to the Father. If we like Jesus put love first and accept his Word and let it wash over us and guide us then we release ourselves from the constraints of this world and learn to live joyously in the promise of the kingdom which awaits us.

So that is why the Word is often rejected by those who swallow it up as some new teaching and then park it at the back of their minds like so much other knowledge which once assimilated is then never put into practice.

This is why Jesus castigates the wise and the worldly for that is exactly what they do. Yet those who hear, those who accept, those who on hearing respond to the Word fully in the way they live their lives, are truly welcomed as Disciples of Jesus.

So think carefully about your faith, seek to understand it as fully as you can, but remember what Jesus wants you to do is not to deepen your knowledge and then not to use it, but rather to learn from the simplicity of it how to put it into practice, for in so doing you will grow immeasurably before Jesus and be a living testimony to His Word His Actions and His Love.

Reverend Clive

Hymn: How sweet the name of Jesus sounds.

Prayers for others: This morning let us pause for prayer for so many people and for so many situations. Use these headings for your silent prayers to God or use words and address them to Him who hears every word we utter.

We come boldly to the throne of grace,

Praying to the almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit for mercy and grace.

Heavenly Father, we pray today for your Church as it seeks to respond afresh to your call in the world. For those Churches who have opened once more for worship, we pray for their Leaders, their Congregations and the Communities for whom they pray. As they rejoice being together in your name in a safe and secure way, may the power of your Holy Spirit rest upon them, wherever they may be in your world.

For all those Churches and places of worship which have remained closed today, we pray for the community of the faithful finding new ways to support and encourage one another and to continue to hold all those around them in the mantle of your love. As we seek to respond as best as we are able to all that is expected of us. Let us remember those words from the Gospel which declare to us, that the Lord's yoke is easy and his burden is light.

Let us respond fully to the Word of Life, and live out our lives giving you the honour and the glory which you are due.

Father hear us as we continue to pray for the NHS with all the pressures and strains still upon it, that they would receive all the protection and supplies they need, that they would experience God's protection in their work, courage for each day and stamina to care for all those who are so dependent upon them. For the sick and vulnerable that they would receive the care they need in their hour of weakness. For the lonely in our parishes, that they would know God's presence in their solitude and receive a friendly call from their neighbours. We also give thanks for new bubbles of care now opened up to them, rejoicing in the bringing together of some part of family life.

For those in authority charged with leading the fight against the virus: for our Prime Minister and his Ministers, for Scientists working on vaccines and other means of fighting the infection.

We pray especially at this time for the people of Leicester returning to a position of lock down, and for all communities where the prevalence of Covid 19 is rising once more bringing anxiety to all caught up within it. May you give them the strength they need to persevere and may your blessing rest upon them and bring them peace.

And so we pray

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN,
HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME,
YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE,
ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN.
GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD.
FORGIVE US OUR SINS
AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US.
LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.
FOR THE KINGDOM, THE POWER,
AND THE GLORY ARE YOURS
NOW AND FOR EVER.
AMEN.

Hymn: What a friend we have in Jesus.

Blessing:

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,
Defend you on every side,
And guide you in truth and peace;
And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you and
remain with you always.

Amen.