**SUNDAY SERVICE JUNE 28th 2020**

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**THE GREATNESS OF JESUS**

***‘And now a greater than Solomon is here’*** *Matthew 12: v 42.*

**Welcome to our Sunday Service. It’s a virtual service today but next Sunday 5th July –WONDERFUL NEWS -THE SERVICE WILL BE IN CHURCH 5th JULY**

**WE ARE PLANNING TO HOLD SERVICES AT 9.00am and 10.30**

**HYMN:** Our first hymn praises God for His love, his generosity and His salvation: Praise to the Lord

https://youtu.be/lXhxbEjfxxc

1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!
Come, all who hear; now to his temple draw near,
join me in glad adoration.

2 Praise to the Lord, above all things so wondrously reigning;
sheltering you under his wings, and so gently sustaining!
Have you not seen all that is needful has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?

3 Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
if with his love he befriends you.

4 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.
Let the Amen sound from his people again;
gladly forever adore him.

**A time now to say sorry to God:**

 Jesus says, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.’

 *A short time of silence*

**All:** **Heavenly Father, have mercy upon us, forgive us where we have gone wrong and sinned, and help us to walk from now on in your way. Amen.**

 May our Father God, the God of love and power, bring you back to Himself, forgive you through the death of His Son Jesus, free you from your sins, and restore you to newness of life by His Spirit

**PRAYER OF THE WEEK:**

**God our Saviour, look on this wounded world in pity and in power;**

**hold us fast to your promises of peace won for us by your Son,**

**our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**BIBLE READING: Matthew 12: v38-42.**

Greater than Jonah and Solomon

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, ‘Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.’

He answered, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

**SONG**: A modern worship song about the Greatness of Jesus: Blessed be your name

 https://youtu.be/-nnJCNjHeOg

Blessed Be Your Name
In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your name

Blessed Be Your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed Be Your name

Every blessing You pour out, I'll
Turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name
When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's 'all as it should be'
Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be Your name

Every blessing You pour out I'll
Turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will…

**SERMON**

Let us pray: Dear Lord, as we acknowledge you as the true Wisdom, we ask for the wisdom of your Holy Spirit to help us to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the glorious truth that you reveal. For Your Name’s Sake. Amen.

We look today at just five verses in Matthew 12, but five verses that tell us so much about Jesus. The background is that Jesus has Judgment very much in mind, and particularly the final Day of Judgment. So in the chapter before, chapter 11, Jesus berates the towns of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, places where He had performed miracles and healed many people, for not believing in Him, saying that on the Day of Judgment the evil Old Testament cities of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom would be more receptive than Jesus’ contemporaries. Jesus will carry on the theme in our verses.

Jesus has of course done many miracles before this, which His listeners knew full well. And then , at the beginning of our chapter , chapter 12, Jesus heals a deaf and dumb man who is demon-possessed, to the amazement of all watching. And yet still the religious leaders, verse 38, insist on Jesus performing a miracle for them. So Jesus says to them, look, there have been quite enough miracles. Anyway, just look at the prophet Jonah – he is sign enough for you. As he was 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of a great fish, so will Jesus be, between His death and resurrection. You want a sign, says Jesus, that’s your sign. And now a Greater than Jonah is here. The same with Solomon, with all that wisdom, and now a Greater than Solomon is here.

Now actually, both Jonah and Solomon were walking miracles. Jonah was thrown overboard from a ship and spent, as we have seen, 72 hours in the stomach of a fish. There is a theory that Jonah died , when thrown into the sea. If you look at the detail in Jonah 2, it looks very much as if he sank down to the floor of the ocean, with seaweed on the ocean bed trapping him. And there are fish who feed by trawling along the ocean floor, scooping up whatever is there. But it doesn’t really matter – either way, for Jonah to be regurgitated on to dry land after 72 hours, and carry on as if nothing had happened, was nothing short of a complete miracle. A life-giving miracle.

The same is true of Solomon. At the start of Solomon’s reign, God speaks to him in a dream, telling him to ask for whatever he wants. Solomon could have asked for long life, or riches, but he asks for wisdom. And God gives Solomon wisdom that has not been seen in a political leader for three thousand years. Imagine Donald Trump or Boris Johnson with this kind of wisdom! The gift of wisdom given by God to Solomon is a miraculous provision – like Jonah, Solomon is a walking miracle.

But now ask yourselves – what is the link between Jonah and the people of Nineveh on the one hand, and Solomon and the Queen of Sheba on the other? And the answer is rather wonderful. In both instances, a response is produced from what is HEARD, rather than from any miracle they saw. We know that Jonah was a walking miracle. But the people of Nineveh didn’t. As far as they were concerned, any foreign crackpot could have come along, claiming to have been 72 hours in the stomach of a fish. But what happened? Jonah gave them God’s message that they needed to repent, and from the king downwards, they responded. They asked for forgiveness, they mended their ways. They called on God to be compassionate with them. And Jesus emphasises His point by referring to the Day of Judgment. Jesus knows that there will be plenty of people trying to make excuses before God, on that Day.

“Lord, if you had had to listen to the vicar we had, you’d never have believed!”

“Lord, if you had had to listen to the archaic language of our church Bible, you’d never have understood!” And Jesus says to these religious teachers, Look, you will still be demanding signs from Me, even on the Day of Judgment. Whereas the people of Nineveh will say Well, we just needed one sentence from Jonah, telling us to repent, and that was enough for us. We just listened to one sermon, and that was enough to convince us. The people of Nineveh responded to what they HEARD. No miracle was needed, as far as they were concerned.

And the same goes for the Queen of Sheba. Forgive me for using my imagination again, but picture the Queen as a guest of honour at her Lord Mayor’s Banquet. She is sitting next to her foreign minister. “How was your trip to the Middle East, Foreign Minister?” she asks. Well, he says, it was very productive. We did some excellent trade deals with the Jordanians and the Lebanese. But the remarkable thing was meeting king Solomon of Israel. He is remarkably wise – no, more than that, he is wise beyond all measure. A month later, the Queen of Sheba meets her ambassador to the Arabs. How is your job going, Ambassador, she asks. Very well, Your Majesty, he replies, there is amazing peace and harmony on the diplomatic front, largely because of King Solomon of Israel. He really is a remarkable man.

So the Queen of Sheba resolves that she must investigate this – she must meet this king that everyone is talking about. And the point of Jesus mentioning the Queen of Sheba, as well as the people of Nineveh is that she also acted on what she had HEARD. She also did not need a miracle to be persuaded. She also heard the message and responded.

We could say a lot more about the Queen of Sheba. How she came from the then known ends of the earth to meet the source of this wisdom. How she humbled herself – she knew that she did not know everything. How she was honest in her enquiry – she opened up her heart and mind to Solomon. And how she discovered that the half had not been told her. But suffice it for us to see today the greatness of Jesus – a Greater than Jonah is here. One who did not just come through death, as Jonah did, but who conquered death, who opened up the kingdom of Heaven to all who believe. One who is THE Resurrection and the Life.

And a Greater than Solomon is here. One who is not just wise, but the Way, the Truth and the Life – the source of all wisdom. We worship a great Saviour and a great Lord, and this is huge encouragement as we approach the new normal, the next stage in fighting the coronavirus, as we know that our times are in His Hands.

Let us pray

Lord, we thank you that you are greater than Jonah, greater than Solomon. We ask that we too may respond to the wonderful message that we hear and that we read from your Word, and in responding, may find life. For Your Name’s Sake. Amen

Our next song continues the great theme of the unique power and authority of Jesus : you’re the Word of God the Father https://youtu.be/C8PXP4OTr5o

**HYMN**: You’re the Word of God the Father,
From before the world began;
Every star and every planet
Has been fashioned by Your hand.
All creation holds together
By the power of Your voice:
Let the skies declare Your glory,
Let the land and seas rejoice!

You’re the Author of creation,
You’re the Lord of every man;
And Your cry of love rings out
Across the lands.

Yet You left the gaze of angels,
Came to seek and save the lost,
And exchanged the joy of heaven
For the anguish of a cross.
With a prayer You fed the hungry,
With a word You stilled the sea.
Yet how silently You suffered
That the guilty may go free.

With a shout You rose victorious,
Wresting victory from the grave,
And ascended into heaven
Leading captives in Your wake.
Now You stand before the Father
Interceding for Your own.
From each tribe and tongue and nation
You are leading sinners home.

**PRAYERS:**

**We thank you Lord for your love Keep us under the shadow of your mercy**

**in this time of uncertainty and distress.**

**Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are low;**

**that we may rejoice in your comfort**

**knowing that nothing can separate us from your love**

**in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**Lord in your mercy         hear our prayer**

In these unprecedented times Lord, we thank you, for the miracle of your love and the greatness of your Son, Jesus

We pray for all those affected by Covid 19, either directly or indirectly. Lord help us to be strong and sure in our faith and to put our trust in You.

We ask you to help us to follow our government’s advice and to help everyone realise that doing so, will also protect our loved ones, keep everyone safe and avoid a second wave.

Please guide our scientists and may their research into a vaccine be successful

We thank you Lord for the bravery of the volunteers who are risking their own health to be test subjects

Please watch over them

Lord in your mercy     Hear our prayer

We thank you Lord for our Bishops and our ministers, for their reassurance and their ability to adapt, to ensure we can continue with our services in alternative methods at this difficult time.

We thank them for moving toward to a future of collective worship that we can all take part in.

Lord in your mercy      Hear our prayer

Oh Lord, please help us to bring an end to racism and prejudice of any form.

May all your peoples realise that every life matters

Lord in your mercy     Hear our prayer

We thank you Lord for the ability to spend time with our families and friends: either online or at a safe social distance

May the family values and community spirit that have been realised as a lockdown bonus, continue in the future

Please watch over our teachers and pupils as they try to return to school life.

We pray for those that are growing up, may they grow in wisdom and love; for those facing changes, that they meet them with hope; for those who feel weak, that they may find strength; for those with heavy burdens, that they may carry them lightly.

Lord in your mercy     Hear our prayer

We thank you Lord for our National Health Service and its staff who show such dedication to care and let us pray for all who are unwell, infirm or disabled in any way that they may experience healing comfort and compassionate care.

A moment of silence as we bring to God any known to us who need our prayers

We again thank you for the lives of Pearl Read, Bernice Hesketh and Austin Spencer and the gifts that you gave them and they have given us. We ask for your love and comfort for their families and friends in their grief.

All these prayers we offer to you Heavenly Father through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

We join now in the Family prayer Jesus taught His followers to pray:

**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, for ever and ever. Amen**

**NOTICES**

**The main news is that on next Sunday 5th July we are planning got hold our 2 morning services in church at 9.00am and 10.30am. We hope that both services will be similar to usual though a little shorter. Both services next week will be Holy Communion; the Church of England have laid down clear guidelines as to how that is to be administered which we will be following.**

**We are hoping to be able to hold Sunday School as usual during the 10.30am service**

**We will have music at the 10.30 service but at the moment we can’t sing inside the church. We are able now to broadcast the service outside the church so if the church is full (the congregation inside will be socially distanced as required) or if you prefer to be outside, you will still be able to join in worship.**

**We hope we will be able to produce an audio recording of the 10.30 service which we will put on the website early afternoon on Sunday.**

**HYMN;** Our final hymn focuses on Jesus’ Resurrection ( the sign of Jonah) and Jesus’ victory over death.

**Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son** **https://youtu.be/RbBOOmkMLmI**

**Thine be the glory, risen, conqu’ring Son;
Endless is the victory, Thou o’er death hast won;
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave clothes where Thy body lay.

Refrain

Thine is the glory, risen conqu’ring Son,
Endless is the vict’ry, Thou o’er death hast won.

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
Let the church with gladness, hymns of triumph sing;
For her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting.

Refrain

No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life;
Life is naught without Thee; aid us in our strife;
Make us more than conqu’rors, through Thy deathless love:
Bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above.

Refrain**

**BLESSING**

May the Love of the Lord Jesus draw you to Himself

May the Power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you to serve Him

And may the Joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts

And so may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those whom you love, now and for ever more. Amen

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