

## **Morning Service – Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020 St Michael's Blundellsands**

*You may wish to light a candle and have some reflective music playing in the background. Or you can start by listening to (and joining in with). Don't forget to skip the ads.*

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9wIP9Ahykc> And can it be*

This week you can follow the whole service on YOUTUBE. Print off this service sheet then click on the next link and join in with the responses. <https://youtu.be/w1lclBOBWQ>

Today's service is on the theme of FREEDOM

### **Opening Responses**

The world belongs to the Lord,  
**the earth and all its people.**

How good and lovely it is  
**to live together in unity.**

Love and faith come together,  
**justice and peace join hands.**

If the Lord's disciples keep silent,  
**these stones would shout aloud.**

Lord open our lips,  
**and our mouths shall proclaim your praise.**

### **Confession**

Holy God, maker of us all,  
**have mercy on us.**

Jesus Christ, Son of Mary  
**have mercy on us.**

Holy Spirit, breath of life,  
**have mercy on us.**

**In the community of Christ's Church  
and in the presence of all God's people  
I confess to God that I have sinned  
in thought, word and deed.  
I have not loved God, cared for God's world,  
or respected God's people as I should.  
I own my responsibility and pray for God's pardon.**

## **Psalm 118:1-7**

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel say:  
“His love endures forever.”

<sup>3</sup> Let the house of Aaron say:  
“His love endures forever.”

<sup>4</sup> Let those who fear the LORD say:  
“His love endures forever.”

<sup>5</sup> When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD;  
and he answered by setting me free.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.  
What can mere mortals do to me?

<sup>7</sup> The LORD is with me; he is my helper.  
I look in triumph on my enemies.

## **Affirmation of Faith**

Let us declare our faith in God.

***We believe in God the Father, from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.***

***We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his  
love.***

***We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us  
with power from on high.***

***We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.***

**Reading:** Galatians 3v 22-29 - Read by Hugh Hollinghurst

<sup>22</sup> But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

<sup>23</sup> Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

<sup>26</sup> So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

This is the word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God.**



## Talk by Helen

When you're playing Monopoly the card that you really don't want to get is "Go to Jail. go directly to jail, do not pass go, do not collect £200". - that is unless you own a whole suite of hotels on Park Lane or Mayfair and can rake in the money while you're safely inside.

Of course, it's fine –if you just land on it or a "Get out of Jail free" card. Do you have that card???

The last 4 months have felt a little like a visit to prison. We have- been locked in, we have to be socially distanced and there have been no hugs. We have been under the law of the land to stay in our homes (There's been trouble if you went where you went supposed to go) and to stay 2m apart. We've not been allowed to mix with others and so on.

So, in a funny sort of way the processes of imprisonment have become familiar to us all; visiting has become almost a thing of the past, and we have needed to make an appointment to visit. We have only met up in the garden or when out for a walk. We have not been able to eat or drink together or enjoyed social meals. We have become accustomed to being socially distanced and it looks like wearing masks will be the new norm.

And as for physical contact, hugs are things we have perhaps missed more than anything else: – In church on our open days there were several times when people were visibly upset and I couldn't just give them that very human display of comfort - a hug.

In the Bible there are many situations where people were imprisoned, but in every case something good came out of it.

You will remember the story when Joseph, of Technicolour Dream-coat fame, was in prison for sleeping with Pharaoh's wife. While he was there he interpreted the dreams of the royal cup bearer and baker. When the cupbearer was reinstated, he remembered Joseph's talent of interpretation, so when Pharaoh needed his dreams decoding he recommended Joseph. The dreams were shown to be signs of the forthcoming seven years of good harvest, followed by seven years of shortages. Joseph was released from prison and put in charge of preparing for the famine and the rest is history.

The point is that even in prison God's hand was on Joseph. While he was in "lockdown", suffering for his sins, he was being prepared to do something better, not only to dream but to interpret dreams. Then God graciously gave him his freedom so he was able to ensure the survival of his people who were saved from starvation in Canaan by bringing them to the better provisioned land of Egypt where there was food. Joseph was rightly imprisoned for his sin but was to become a saviour of his people. His deep trust in God bore witness to the faithfulness of God even when he seemed distant.

What has God been preparing us to do while we have been locked up, I wonder?

For us in these difficult times, when we seem to be living in a world which is far from God, when we feel as if we are in exile, when we are still not allowed to worship in our churches, and when it's as if we are imprisoned by systems which are beyond our control and all that is out of kilter with our Christian ethics, it will only be by God's grace that we are saved and protected. But, what will God do, what miracle will he bring about, what change of heart will happen when we are released?

Paul, the author of today's reading knew something about physical imprisonment. He had several spells in jail, in Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae and eventually in Rome. In our passage today he likens being in the grasp of sin to being in jail. In verse 22 we are told that all things are imprisoned under the power of sin, that's you and me and all creation.

So how do we get out of Jail? Where is our "Get out of Jail free card"?

Answer is of course Jesus. Right at the start of his ministry he reworked words from the prophet Isaiah. He, Jesus, said of himself he had come to bring "Good news to the poor and release to the prisoners". If you are a prisoner of sin, today, the good news that 'Jesus is our saviour' is for you. Whether you, like Joseph, have brought your imprisonment upon yourself or are victims of the sinfulness of systems: true freedom is only to be found in Jesus.

God seeks to set prisoners free—He wants to set each one of us free from the imprisonment of sin ignorance, rebellion, unjust legal systems, jealousy, and foolish choices untrammelled growth, environmental collapse, ..... Jesus wants our freedom, he wills us to become co-heirs with him, his brothers and sisters and he desires us to fully use our gifts, to find and become what we were meant to be, to be faithful to him and to know his presence even when we are in lockdown.

God's activity will not be kept down by chains. He proved it by sending his sinless son Jesus to be taken prisoner, tortured and put to death without a proper trial, and then to raise him to new life. He offers that new life of freedom to us. As we start to emerge from lockdown, we need to remember that it's only by God's grace that we have been saved from the worst ravages of Covid 19.

We hold that "Get out of jail free card in our own hands".

### **Prayers by Joan Hollinghurst**

May God forgive us, Christ befriend us, and the Spirit renew and change our lives.

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord,  
in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom:  
Defend us, thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies;  
that we, surely trusting in thy defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries;  
through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

God of all creation, you have made all people in your image and you call us to worship you.

We come to you in all our diversity: young and old, black and white,  
rich and poor, male and female – because we know we are all invited to take part in your family.  
Thank you for your unconditional love to us,  
revealed in Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

## **Lord's Prayer**

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**

## **The Blessing**

The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;  
the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.  
And the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you for evermore. Amen.



## **On-line Bible Tips**

Each Wednesday, I am uploading two-minute talks about 'how to read the Bible'. Many people find reading the Bible difficult, so in these videos I give a few bits of advice. To access the fourth video, click the link below.  
<https://youtu.be/pVDrZIXMVn8>