

Beaufort Cluster
10 May 2020
Easter 5

SCRIPTURE READING:

A reading from John's Gospel: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" says the Lord. "No one comes to the Father except through me."

WELCOME:

The Lord be with you! Welcome to our service today, this is the first time I have hosted a Zoom service and I pray that it goes well. Today is Mother's Day and even though it is not a religious observance I would like us all to take time during today to reflect on our mothers. Let us continue with our Call to Worship.

CALL TO WORSHIP

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.

TIS 96 *"Sing praise to the Lord"*

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

God of refuge and strength, you bless our lives with eternal loving kindness, holding us, guiding us, delivering us from evil. As we gather here as your people, 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, within these walls and beyond. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

WE SAY SORRY:

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

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you might proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” Be assured that you are forgiven. **Thanks be to God!**

Song “*The blessing*”

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

RESPONSE TO THE WORD:

Let us pray: O God for whom there are no barriers, no stones too big to remove, roll away our resistance to you. Let your words fill us with new life and bring us out from the tomb of indifference, alive again in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

In today's reading from 1 Peter, Peter is saying is that we have to yearn for faith in Christ with as much determination as a baby yearns for food. When we do that there is every possibility that our faith will grow strong and stable - in the same way that a building is made strong when it is anchored at each corner with the right shaped corner-stone - the stone that binds the walls together securely.

But we are not to be inanimate objects like bricks or stones, we are to be living stones that together form a faith community.

Together, we are all called to echo God's praise and to form a place where God's presence is experienced, living stones, and holy priests, all of us. Together, we form the church, living breathing stones surrounded by manufactured stones, the ones which go together to form the material structure of our own particular church - a building which is visible and recognisable as a place of worship.

Whatever a church building is made from, it holds many memories. Memories of people, events, experiences which cover a whole range of human emotions.

Experiences of joy, happiness - welcoming people, weddings, baptisms; experiences of sadness, funerals - the moving on of people to other places; experiences of people, experiences of God.

It's no wonder then, that people identify strongly with church buildings, because so many intimate, personal, life-shaping things happen within these walls.

The same good news that motivated people in the past is the same good news we hear today 'See, I am laying in Zion a chosen and precious corner-stone and whoever believes in him will never have their hope disappointed.'

The people of the early church to whom Peter was writing were being hounded and persecuted for their faith and Peter no doubt wanted to reassure them that they could stand firm and strong, that they could face the fearful challenges being thrust at them

- because they were held together, supported and strengthened by the Living Cornerstone, Jesus Christ.

The sure and certain and precious stone that Peter wrote about is the evidence of God's unfailing relationship with people - with us - the evidence of how much we are valued and loved by God. Jesus is the one who gives us direction and support. Just as we are dependent upon Christ for our spiritual strength, so we are dependent on one another as integral parts of our community. More and more we need to demonstrate that the 'super-glue' that binds us together is the same love that Jesus evidences for us simply by being the cornerstone.

Our gospel reading takes us a bit further - different metaphors this time - Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. These verses spell out for us the nature of the super glue that binds us together and the way to go about the binding process.

I don't know how you manage when you're in a strange town and ask for directions - but when someone says to me "Take the first on the right, then the second on the left, cross the square, go past the church, take the third on the right, and the road you want is fourth on the left" - I'm lost before I've even begun. But suppose the person says "Come, I'll take you where you want to go". In that situation, the person to us is the way and we cannot miss it. By being human and experiencing life with all its joy and pain, Jesus identifies himself with all of our experiences of life. He not only told us to love one another, he demonstrated that love with his life and his death. He didn't just give us directions to read and follow as best as we can. He gives us a lasting relationship which reaches even beyond life.

Look at the promises he gives in the last verses of the gospel reading - "Anyone who has faith in me, says Jesus, will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" and "I will do whatever you ask in my name"

It is interesting at that point to turn back to the previous chapter to see what Jesus had been doing just before he spoke these words. We read - 'He wrapped a towel around his waist and began to wash the disciples' feet' and he goes on to say in the next chapter that "greater love has no one than this - that one lay down one's life for one's friends."

He didn't just say things, he did them, he revealed the truth that God loves us - in and through all the experiences of life - the joyful ones and the pain - filled ones.

It is when we invite him into our lives that we discover that he is life - the cornerstone, the foundation, the source of an inner confidence that no matter what life throws at us, nothing can shake or take away that knowledge that we are loved and accepted by God.

I think that the combination of these two readings today is a reassurance that the strength and energising power and love of God are always there to hold us together. The challenge is to share these assurances in such a way that it is evident that we are bound together with love - that same love revealed by Jesus for us.

He surely is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I believe that is true but what about you, do you believe it? I pray you do. Amen

TIS 738: *"My Jesus, my Saviour"*

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

For our prayers for others I acknowledge that everyone has particular people or subjects that they pray for and I encourage you to keep praying for those. I do not know what they are that is between you and God so please accept these prayers as overarching prayers for all of us. Let us pray:

God's holy Word nourishes us by its teaching. Filled with Easter joy, we turn to our God for what we need in the church and in our communities.

We pray we a spirit of service to others.

The first Christians shared all they possessed; they chose special people for the ministry of service as a sign of love for one another. May service be the mark of all our Christian lives in the church and in the community.

We pray for a spirit of openness to God.

Jesus is the stone rejected by others yet chosen by God to be the key stone of God's reign. May we recognise that we are God's consecrated people; and may we be open to God's choices for the church and for the world.

We pray for a spirit of trust in God's promises.

Jesus commands us not to be troubled. May our confidence in God be strengthened and our hope confirmed in the promises God has made for those who follow he way of Jesus.

We pray for a spirit of truth in our lives.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. May we be people dedicated to the truth about god, about the Christ, and about God's purposes for all people of the world.

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray as our Saviour taught us:

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

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.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

TIS 376: *"I know that my Redeemer lives"*

BENEDICTION:

Know the blessing of God's strength within you, the life of Jesus Christ directing you and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit empowering you. and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.