

Sunday 15th November 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use this coming Sunday. I invite you to share in a few moments with God at 10.30 this Sunday, knowing that other people within Paulton, Trinity and Chew Stoke Methodist Churches are sharing this act of worship with you.

Revd Martin



Psalm 123

- ¹ To you I lift up my eyes,
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
- ² As the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maid
to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,
until he has mercy upon us.

Hymn – 608 – All praise to our redeeming Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYa3bJ9GtL4>

- 1 All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.
- 2 He bids us build each other up ;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.
- 3 The gift which he on one bestows,
we all delight to prove ;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.
- 4 E'en now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree ;

concentred all, through Jesu's name,
in perfect harmony.

- 5 We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel,
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.
- 6 And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
what heights of rapture shall we know
when round his throne we meet !

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayer

A prayer for God to break through in the life of our churches:

God of love, God for all,
your purposes are more beautiful than we can
possibly imagine.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit.
Help us let go of all that holds us back.
Open our lives and our churches to new seasons
of humility and faith, of change and growth.
Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and
show us the way.

Amen

Eternal Father, we bring to you this morning our
praise and thanks for your continuing love in our
lives. In the midst of the pressures and pace of life
we can find your peace, in a life that brings
challenge, we can find your strength. May we
know you as Lord and Saviour.

Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, a voice to
speak, a heart to love, hands to touch, feet to run,
a mind to think.

All these gifts come from you Lord; inspire us
through your Holy Spirit to use them in your service
for the benefit of those around us, and to the
glory of your name.

Amen

Readings

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

5 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Matthew 25: 14-30

The Parable of the Talents

14 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents."²¹His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents."²³His master said to him, "Well done, good and

trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed;²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."²⁶But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?"²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Hymn – 706 – Longing for light, we wait in darkness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJq3bhdgQoc>

- 1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.
*Christ, be our light !
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light !
Shine in your Church gathered today.*
- 2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.
- 3 Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.
- 4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.
- 5 Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Bernadette Farrell (b.1957)

Reflection – Darkness or light?

Do you feel that you are living in darkness at the moment? For all of us in lockdown, the joys of everyday life are restricted again as we cannot go out and do the things we want to do, or socialise with family or friends. Many people are feeling despondent, and there is an air of “I can’t see an end to it”. I feel the same some times. We all worked so hard to reopen our churches, and it was wonderful to see each other, but after just a few weeks our churches are closed again.

Darkness is frightening, things can creep up on us unseen. Paul, in his letter to the church in Thessalonica reminds them of the dangers of “falling asleep on the job” as it were. But despite the evidence around us, we are not living in darkness, for we have the hope of the gospel, the assurance that God is with us despite everything, and that we will overcome. Yes, things are difficult at the moment, but in the words of Julian of Norwich, “All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.”

As is my usual practice, I sat down on Monday morning to read the Bible passages for this Sunday. The message that came loud and clear to me from the words we have read this morning is one of hope, due to the assurance of God’s love and presence with us, and the need for us to act positively as Christians to bring the light of Christ into the present darkness of this world.

And then my phone “pinged” with an alert from BBC News to say that a vaccine for the coronavirus had been found and could be available within a matter of weeks. In the midst of the darkness, there is the light of hope that “all shall be well”.

That is good news, but it will take time to take effect, and in the meantime, we have to continue to live our Christian lives, even though it will be difficult, and planning anything into the future seems almost impossible. So what are we going to do?

Are we going to be like the first two slaves who took the talents that were entrusted to them and invested them, acknowledging the chance that they might lose them, but also giving them the chance to grow? Or are we like the third slave

who, for fear of losing that with which he had been entrusted, dug a hole in the ground and buried it? He didn’t lose it, but neither had he used it or encouraged it to grow, and eventually his actions brought about his own worst fear.

Last week we were planning a service at Paulton for families who have been bereaved in the last 12 months. It was due to take place on Wednesday evening before the lockdown began on Thursday. I was tempted to cancel it because of the risk to those coming for a service that wasn’t essential. But I decided that would have been wrong, and it went ahead as planned. Perhaps this year there is even more need to remember those we have lost, and to be reminded of the hope we have in Christ. More than 50 people came, and from the comments I received afterwards, it was really appreciated. Are we in the business of burying our faith, or of allowing it to shine in the darkness of the difficult days we are in?

We have started talking about Christmas. Planning seems almost impossible as we have no idea what sort of restrictions we will be living with by then. The easy solution would be not to bother. To bury Christmas and hope we can dig it up in time for next year. This is not the right attitude. We must plan for sharing the good news this Christmas, however challenging that might seem right now.

Are we displaying our faith as something of light, or have we hunkered down for fear of the darkness? Perhaps more than ever we need to recognise the need that is in the community for some good news, the light of hope. Paul’s letter challenges us to be ready, not to go to sleep because darkness is upon us, but to be the light of Christ shining in the midst of that darkness. No matter how grim things seem at present, we will come through it, with God at our side.

We live with the hope of Jesus, and the assurance that “All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.”

Jesus said, “For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance”. May it be so. **Amen.**

Intercessions & Lords Prayer

We pray to God, who is always ready when we turn to Him.

For those overtaken with demands.

Give rest, O Lord.

For those overburdened with anxieties.

Give rest, O Lord.

For those overcome with debt.

Give relief, O Lord.

For those oppressed by powers that despise them.

Give salvation, O Lord.

For those in situations they cannot see a way out of.

Give freedom, O Lord.

For those in need of hope.

Give hope, O Lord. Amen.

We pray for our families and friends, and for all those in need at this present time:-

June Battle; Gordon Hunt; Terry Bridgeman; Jackie Tovey; Thelma Doughty

May your Holy Spirit descend upon them, enfold them in love and give them peace of mind and healing of body.

We pray for the churches in our Circuit, this week for our friends in Timsbury, and for their minister, David; and for the residents at Stratton House in Bath.

God of readiness, you are always ready to show care, especially to those who are feeling unwell or alone. Give us readiness, so that when we see someone who is in need we can be quick to kindness, and happy to help. Because you are always quick to kindness. **Amen.**

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

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.

Hymn – Give me the faith which can remove

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RI9_D_9x1n0

- 1 Give me the faith which can remove
and sink the mountain to a plain ;
give me the childlike praying love,
which longs to build thy house again ;
thy love, let it my heart o'erpower,
and all my simple soul devour.
- 2 I would the precious time redeem,
and longer live for this alone :
to spend, and to be spent, for them
who have not yet my Saviour known ;
fully on these my mission prove,
and only breathe, to breathe thy love.
- 3 My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord,
into thy blessèd hands receive ;
and let me live to preach thy word,
and let me to thy glory live ;
my every sacred moment spend
in publishing the sinners' friend.
- 4 Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart
with boundless charity divine :
so shall I all my strength exert,
and love them with a zeal like thine ;
and lead them to thy open side,
the sheep for whom their Shepherd died.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Blessing

May God bathe you in the light of his presence,
that you may shine with his love and illuminate this
dark world.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy
Spirit, be with you, now and forever more. **Amen**

Fathers Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSbKSNymwks>