

Sunday Worship for 17th May 2020

Call to worship: ‘They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them’ (John 14:21)

Hymn 443 (StF) [Come let us sing of a wonderful love](#)

Prayers of approach: Loving God, you have promised, by your Holy Spirit, to come alongside us, to help us, to comfort us – and more than that, to abide within us. Bless us and awaken us today as you move within us and bridge the gaps between us – that we will know we are one with each other as we are one with you – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You fill us, gracious God, with wonder and thankfulness when we pause – attentive to your beauty and power in creation – aware of all the blessings we enjoy – and remembering your love and mercy towards us shown in Jesus Christ.

[you may like to add your own prayers here]

You are patient with us when we forget you, when we fail to listen for your voice and when we suppress or ignore the tug of your Spirit.

Forgive us and increase our awareness of our constant dependence on you.

As you forgive us, make us also ready and willing to be changed.

For we ask this in Jesus name. **Amen.**

Gospel Reading: [John 14: 15-21](#)

Song: [Jesus Culture](#)

Reflections:

When Paul found himself trying to preach good news to the Athenians (Acts 17), he acknowledged that every human being has within them a longing for God. He says we search for God and feel our way towards God and even find God – though indeed God is not far from each one of us. For “In him we live and move and have our being”...

Is that how you would describe your relationship with God? How much active searching do you do for the presence of God in your life and the lives of others? Many find God cannot be comprehended by our intellects – but somehow, amazingly, surprisingly, God is revealed and seen and known as the One who fills us with love and with life.

In last week’s gospel reading Jesus told us he is ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life’ (John 14:6) and ‘whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ (14:9). Have you sometimes thought how much easier things would be if only Jesus was here with us? Jesus to sit with us and help us to pray. Jesus to smile and encourage us when we are downhearted. Jesus to tap us on the shoulder when we are about to do something wrong. Jesus to walk alongside us on the road and explain the scriptures to us? But Jesus is telling us that we are actually much better off than the disciples who travelled with him in Galilee. Not only has Jesus ‘suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring us to God’ (1 Peter 3:18), not only has Jesus gone ahead to prepare a place for us (John 14:2) – but he has promised us the Holy Spirit, the helper, the Advocate who abides with us and in us. This is the promise for NOW – the Spirit of discernment (the WAY), the Spirit of TRUTH, and the Spirit that brings us LIFE in all its fullness. So that ‘you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.’

Take some time to ponder that promise – and let the wider implications of that promise sink in. Does this really mean that the Holy Spirit not only helps us to see more of God – but also plants Jesus so firmly in our hearts that others might see Jesus living in us?

The Greek name Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit is ‘*parakletos*’ and is translated as ‘Advocate’. In John’s gospel Jesus promises the Advocate 4 times – (John 14:16&26; 15:26; 16:7). We can grasp a bit more of the meaning of this word, and the activity of the Spirit, by tracing the way it is used throughout the New Testament as a verb – a ‘doing word’- *parakaleo*.

- 1) The simple meaning is to call someone to your side to help you e.g. the Ethiopian called Phillip alongside him (Acts 8:31); and the man from Macedonia called to Paul to come over and help (Acts 16:9).
- 2) It can also be translated as beseech e.g. the centurion beseeching Jesus to heal his servant (Matt 8:5) or Paul begging the Lord to take away the thorn in his flesh (2 Cor 12:8)
- 3) *Parakaleo* can also mean to ‘exhort’ or ‘admonish’ e.g. 2 Tim 4:2, preach the word reprove, rebuke and exhort.
- 4) Lastly there is the meaning of encouraging and comforting e.g. 2 Cor 7:6 ‘But God, the one who encourages the downcast, comforted us by the arrival of Titus.’ 2 Cor 1:3-4 ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction ...

Who doesn’t need this sort of helper? Who among us doesn’t need the consoling presence of God to help us in these distressing and traumatic days? When we feel isolated from loved ones, and when grief or desolation threatens to overwhelm us, we need to claim this supreme promise of Jesus Christ. We call upon God to send the Holy Spirit alongside us to help us – with God’s consolation, God’s challenge and God’s strengthening. We claim this promise through prayer – and by waiting upon God with expectancy – and perhaps also with awe and trepidation as we have no idea where the Spirit of God might lead us.

A hymn which you might like to sing – or to say as a prayer:

Gracious Spirit, dwell with me: I myself would gracious be
and with words that help and heal - would thy life in mine reveal;
and with actions bold and meek - would for Christ my Saviour speak.

Truthful Spirit, dwell with me: I myself would truthful be;
and with wisdom kind and clear - let thy life in mine appear;
and with all integrity - speak my Lord’s sincerity.

Tender Spirit, dwell with me! I myself would tender be:
Shut my heart up like a flower - At temptation’s darksome hour;
Open it when shines the sun, And God’s love by fragrance own.

Mighty Spirit, dwell with me: I myself would mighty be;
mighty so as to prevail - where unaided flesh must fail;
ever by a mighty hope - pressing on and bearing up.

Holy Spirit, dwell with me: I myself would holy be;
separate from sin, I would - choose and cherish all things good,
and whatever I can be, give to God who gave me thee!

A resource for prayer: In the time of the Inquisition, the church persecuted those who suggested God can speak directly to every person’s heart by the Holy Spirit (without the mediation of a Priest). One such man was Ignatius of Loyola. He loved to help servants, labourers, students and missionaries, to recognise the Holy Spirit moving within them, revealing Christ to them, and helping them discern God’s will. Included with the service sheet today is a way of praying that Ignatius saw as central to finding God in all things.

Prayers of intercession: (from Anglican Communion)

Let us pray to the Lord, who is our refuge and stronghold.

For the health and well-being of our nation, that all who are fearful and anxious may be at peace and free from worry:

Lord, hear us, **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the isolated and housebound, that we may be alert to their needs,
and care for them in their vulnerability:

Lord, hear us, **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our homes and families, our schools and young people,
and all in any kind of need or distress:

Lord, hear us, **Lord, graciously hear us.**

For a blessing on our local community,
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,
where all are known and cared for:

Lord, hear us, **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God. Merciful Father,
accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymns 397 - [The Spirit lives to set us free](#)
or 564 - [O Thou who camest from above](#)

Blessing:

The Spirit of truth lead us into all truth, give us grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and to proclaim
the word and works of God; and the blessing of God, Spirit, Son and Father, remain with us always. **Amen.**