

## Traditional Home service

### Sunday 4th October Trinity 17

#### OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

#### PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**All: O King enthroned on high,  
filling the earth with your glory:  
holy is your name, Lord God almighty.  
In our sinfulness we cry to you to take  
our guilt away, and to cleanse our lips  
to speak your word, through Jesus  
Christ our Lord. Amen.**

#### PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.  
Open our lips, Lord:  
**and we shall praise your name.**

#### HYMN 1 (see page 2)

READINGS - Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20  
Philippians 3:4b-14  
Matthew 21:33-46

#### TALK

#### CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

#### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.*

#### 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

#### HYMN 2 (see page 2)

#### CONCLUSION

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

## HYMNS TO USE

42 Tr. Mary E. Byrne & Eleanor H. Hull.

**BE THOU MY VISION**, O Lord of my heart,  
Be all else but naught to me, save that Thou art;  
Be Thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
Both waking and sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true word,  
Be Thou ever with me, and I with Thee, Lord;  
Be Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son;  
Be Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
Be Thou my whole armour, be Thou my true might;  
Be Thou my soul's shelter, be Thou my strong tower:  
O raise Thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I need not, nor man's empty praise:  
Be Thou mine inheritance now and always;  
Be Thou and Thou only the first in my heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, Thou heaven's bright Sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is won;  
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be Thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

596 Isaac Watts.

### **WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS**

On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God:  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of Nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

## **Paul's one thing**

I felt a bit embarrassed when I first read through today's reading that was written by St Paul from prison.

There he was in what amounted to a hole in the ground expecting to be executed for preaching about Jesus when he wrote to the Philippian church saying rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.

I was embarrassed because the day before reading this I had managed to meet up with friends for a wonderful lunch in a really beautiful restaurant and as usual these days we talked about Covid and the possibilities of further restrictions – perhaps even a second knockdown. The conclusion was that we were all fed up with the pandemic. Feeling a bit sorry for myself I had complained that the restrictions caused by this pandemic had already gone on long enough – so when I read Paul's letter I wondered what Paul would make of our privations. His lockdowns were quite different from what we have experienced - or anything we might be faced with in the future.

In addition to his physical sufferings Paul was worried about what might be happening to the churches he had planted. Clearly he was aware that false teachers had been telling both the Philippians and the Galatians that they needed to follow a number of rituals contained in the Old Testament, including being circumcised in order to be saved and this is what Paul is addressing in the Philippians passage.

As Paul says elsewhere there would be no need for Jesus to come and die for our sins if people could have saved themselves by following the rules of the old covenant. The false teachers who were telling the Philippians that they needed to follow the rules of Judaism in order to be saved were in effect saying that faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not enough which was certainly contrary to what Paul taught.

In this passage he uses himself to show that it was only by faith in what Jesus achieved by His death and resurrection that we could get right with God. He spells out his own

impressive human pedigree explaining that both his parents and himself were true Jews who had followed to the letter all the requirements of the Law.

Paul's family must have been quite wealthy because not only had they been able to afford to purchase Roman citizenship, which was very expensive, but they had the status of being Pharisees, who were the top rank of Jewish society at the time. Elsewhere Paul admits that he had been a disciple of Gamaliel who was the most prestigious Rabbi of the day. This meant of course that Paul probably wasn't earning a living whilst he was studying – so was presumably supported by his father.

Paul goes to some lengths to demonstrate that before becoming a Christian he was extremely zealous for the Jewish traditions even to the extent of persecuting the church following Pentecost. He then says **"I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done."**

All the traditions and status that it meant so much to Paul he now considered as garbage. Paul had come to see that all the things that his parents had done for him and that he had done for himself by trying to obey the law amounted to useless self-righteousness.

Paul taught that the only true righteousness was through faith in Jesus Christ.

The whole purpose of the Law was to demonstrate that humanity could not save itself and needed a saviour. Before His crucifixion Jesus said that He had come not to abolish the law but to fulfil it. He also said that He had kept all his Father's commandments.

The Pharisees, however, had introduced all sorts of rules and regulations that watered down the law that Moses had given them so that they could appear to be right with God.

Much of Jesus teaching during the Sermon on the Mount showed what the original standard of the law was and it was clear from His teaching that no one, other than Himself, had ever kept the law. This is what caused most of His clashes with the Pharisees, who He accused of playacting and

doing everything for show. This is why the Pharisees wanted Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus accused the Pharisees of memorising the Scriptures but not understanding their true meaning. He also said that they could not read the signs of the times. If they had perhaps they would not have pressed for Jesus' crucifixion which fulfilled a number of the Old Testament Scriptures regarding the Messiah.

Paul summed this up beautifully in Romans 8:3 which says **"The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins."**

Alone in his dungeon, expecting to be killed, St Paul was probably thinking back to his conversion when he met the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. He clearly wanted to share the experience of the mighty power that had raised Jesus from the dead. The outcome of his reminiscing is the statement **"I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me... I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."**

Of course when he wrote this Paul was facing imminent death but as the writer to the Hebrews said in chapter 9 verse 27 **"Every human being is appointed to die once, and then to face God's judgment."**

This is something we all know but don't like to talk about. I was once advised "never talk about death or politics". My children hate it when I talk about my coming death and funny enough it doesn't seem to help when I point out that they too will have to die one day.

The world has coined the phrase that the only certainties in life are death and taxes

but when you are born-again into Jesus' family the prospect of life after death is something to look forward to.

Early in his letter to the Philippians Paul prepared his friends for the possibility of his imminent demise by saying: **"I trust that my life will bring honour to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better."**

Perhaps we too should take a leaf out of Paul's book. Perhaps we should be forgetting some of our past and focusing on just one thing – what lies ahead, the prize of knowing Jesus better.