

## WORSHIP AT HOME – EASTER 5 – 10<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020

Dear friends,

I hope that you are all keeping as well as you can. It seems such a long time since we were able to gather together to worship – but the time will come once more and we shall rejoice in that – so wonderful to see one another again.

Until then I am sure that we shall continue to talk to one another frequently.

Remember that God loves each one of us and will always do so – nothing can separate us from his love and compassion. He holds us close.

Take care and keep yourselves safe,

Margaret.

---

---

**Call to worship:**            **Jesus said: 'I am the Way – come.'**

**Jesus said: 'I am the Way and the Truth – come and receive.'**

**Jesus said: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life – come, receive, and respond.'**

**Dear Lord, listen to us and bring us peace; be our rock and our refuge, that we may be made strong; let your face shine upon us, that we may show your love. Amen**

**'All I once held dear' written by Graham Kendrick [b. 1950] Singing the Faith no 489**

1 All I once held dear, built my life upon  
all this world reveres, and wars to own,  
all I once thought gain I have counted loss,  
spent and worthless now, compared to this.

*Chorus: Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,  
                  there is no greater thing.  
                  You're my all, you're the best,  
                  you're my joy, my righteousness,  
                  and I love you, Lord.*

2 Now my heart's desire is to know you more,  
to be found in you, and known as yours.  
To possess by faith what I could not earn,  
all-surpassing gift of righteousness.

*Chorus.*

3 Oh, to know the power of your risen life,  
and to know you in your sufferings.  
To become like you in your death, my Lord,  
so with you to live and never die.

*Chorus.*

**Thought for the Day:** Show me your way; help me to know your truth, and to live your life, Lord.

**Prayer:** *a reflective way into prayer. Can you find a stone or a pebble to hold?*

Feel the rock on the palm of your hand; it is solid and strong – God gives us strength; his love is solid and steadfast.

Press the rock between your hands – following Jesus is not always comfortable.

Move the stone from palm to palm – wherever we are – whatever we do – God is with us.

His love never fails. *Pause a moment and reflect.*

Gracious God, you are the rock of our lives. Your strength sustains us – your power delivers us – your mercy brings forgiveness to us. We come to you in adoration, praising you and thanking you that our whole life is in your hands – we are held, sustained, protected.

Glory be to you, merciful Lord, glory, honour, majesty and worship, in the name of your Son, our Redeemer. Amen  
And now a prayer of confession: - We are sorry, Lord, for the times when we have hurt others through our words or by our actions, for we know that in hurting others we are hurting you. Help us to follow your way, your truth and your life so that we may live as you would have us live. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

**Verses from 'Be still my soul':**

Be still, my soul, the Lord is on thy side.  
Bear patiently the cross of grief and pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
in every change he faithful will remain.  
Be still my soul - thy best, thy heavenly friend,  
through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul; thy God doth undertake  
to guide the future, as he has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;  
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know  
His voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

**Readings: both of these are taken from the Translation of New Testament made by William Barclay.**

**1 Peter 2: 2-10:** As newly-born children want nothing but their mother's milk, so you must set your heart on the pure milk that flows from the word of God, for it is by it that you will grow up in a steady progress towards salvation. Surely, in the psalmist's words, you have experienced the kindness of the Lord. He is the living stone, rejected as worthless by men, yet chosen and precious to God. So, then, you must come to him, as if you yourselves were living stones, and you must let yourselves be built into a living temple, in which you will become a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices which God will be pleased to accept through Jesus Christ. For, as scripture has it: 'See! I am laying in Sion a chosen and precious cornerstone, and whoever believes in him will never have his hope disappointed.' -His preciousness is you who believe in him - but to those who refuse to believe: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the corner-stone.' And he becomes: 'A stone over which men will stumble and a rock which will trip them up.' They stumble because they refuse to obey the word – a fate for which they were destined. But you are a chosen race – a royal priesthood ..... a people designed by God to be his own, and it is your task to proclaim the noble deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 'Once you were not a people at all – now you are the people of God. Once there was no mercy for you – now you have received mercy.'

**John 14: 1-14:** 'Don't let your heart be distressed. Keep on believing in God, and keep on believing in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house. If there weren't, would I have told you that I am going to get ready a place for you? If I go and get ready a place for you, I will come back again, and I will take you with me, so that you too may be where I am. You know the way where I am going.'  
'Master,' Thomas said to him, 'when we don't know where you are going, how can we possibly know the way?' Jesus said to him; 'I am the true and living way. The only way for anyone to come to the Father is through me. To know me is to know the Father. From now on you do know him and you have seen him.'  
'Master,' Philip said to him, 'show us the Father, and we will be content.'

‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip,’ Jesus said to him, ‘and have you still not realised who I am? To have seen me is to have seen the Father. How can you say: “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me? I myself am not the source and origin of what I say to you. The Father lives in me and acts through me. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me. If you do not believe me because of what I say, you must believe me because of what I do. I tell you, and it is true, if anyone believes in me he will not only do what I am doing, , he will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. I will do anything you ask me in my name.’ *Thanks be to God for his Word. Amen.*

**Reflection:** *using my reading of words by Susan Sayers, an ordained Anglican priest and an author of many Christian works, to then reflect on our passages myself.*

Rocks are solid things and that makes them very sturdy as foundations but also very painful and obstinate to kick. They don’t give. So this rocky image given to us by Peter – who was himself nicknamed ‘the rock’ – is a good one for helping us to visualise the utter faithfulness and solid assurance of Jesus. This idea of being together, built up on such a foundation is such an exciting prospect. Such a building depends on every one of us to be added to the living stones of past generations – to be part of a great living temple of worship and praise.

It can, of course, sometimes be difficult when we see and hear of some people of great faith – like Stephen who was stoned to death for his faith - and we know that we are trying to muddle along and we are woefully aware of not witnessing to Christ as we should. Perhaps we feel more like Philip. In our reading he tried so hard to understand what Jesus was saying – but he was thinking on a totally different plane and he couldn’t manage to put the signs and clues together to come up with something meaningful. It took the death and resurrection of Jesus for things to suddenly begin to make sense – and that is true for us today.

As Susan Sayers writes: ‘In the light of Jesus’ death and resurrection we can grasp that he really is the Way, the Truth and the Life and it is through believing in this Jesus, who gave up his life in total self-giving love for us - and who lived out for us, in human terms, the loving nature of almighty God, that we too, can die to sin and be brought into a new and valid life relationship with God.’

It is a living, personal relationship which Jesus offers us and it is one which he longs for us to accept. The relationship we have with him will never end, but will become deeper and deeper and more satisfying – and it will go on doing this, developing and strengthening our faith, throughout our entire life.

We are never truly alone – yes, we may be self-isolating just now and that can be lonely – but if we walk with Jesus, we are never alone for nothing can separate us from his love.

**Illustration:** Often when we are feeling lost it is because we have wandered from him who is the Way. More than having any book of directions, we need to know God is with us on our journey.

*[From ‘Desert’ by Minnie Louise Haskins {1908} and quoted by King George VI in his Christmas broadcast, 25 December 1939]*

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.

And he replied:

Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way.

**Prayer:** In a world where there is warfare and violence, many people live in fear of the bullet and the bomb; many have had their lives destroyed; many grieve for loved ones who have been killed. That they may know your strength and peace, loving God, **be for them a rock and a stronghold.**

In a world where harvests have failed; where there have been droughts and floods; where many do not have enough money to pay for food and power and where many are reaching the end of their tether; that they may know your strength and peace, loving God, **be for them a rock and a stronghold.**

In a world where many people are alone and so not know where to look for comfort and encouragement – where many see no purpose or future, maybe can no longer see the point of anything; that they might know your strength and peace, loving God, **be for them a rock and a stronghold.**

This is Christian Aid Week and we pray that, in this world where we all now face a virus which brings with it the very great fear of illness and death, that the work of Christian Aid, aiming to help those in need find their feet, may be able to continue, bringing the love of God in practical ways to others. We pray that they might know your strength and your compassion, Loving God; **be for them a rock and a stronghold**

In our lives when we struggle and doubt – when we don't know what to say or do; when life overwhelms us and we turn to you may we feel your strength and your compassion, Lord. At this time when all our normal ways of living are gone, Loving God, may know your strength and peace, **be for us a rock and a stronghold.**

We will all have different concerns just now, and in the silence of our hearts we bring them to God and place them in his loving care. We pray in the name of the living Lord Jesus, our Saviour and companion. 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 forever and ever Amen.

### **Meditation of the Apostle, Philip:**

'Show us the Father,' I asked. Can you believe that!

After three years of following Jesus – three years of walking by his side – still I could come up with a daft line like that! It makes me cringe to think of it, but at the time, despite all he'd said, it seemed perfectly sensible – the most natural request in the world.

I was coming at things the wrong way, you see – wanting all my questions answered – as though I could understand everything about God, all there is to know down to the very last detail.

And I'd no need – that's the stupid thing – for I'd seen him already, there by my side in Jesus.

In his words, his deeds, his love, his mercy, God was present – like Father, like Son, the word made flesh – but I couldn't see for looking, the wood obscured by the trees.

Learn from my mistake, or you may watch eagerly for God yet never find. We'll never understand *everything*, not in this life – not until we see him face to face, but in Jesus we've seen enough and more than enough; all we need to know.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank you that, for all your splendour, all your majesty, power and glory, we can not only know *about* you but know you *personally*, your greatness having been revealed in Christ – your purpose fulfilled through him.

Thank you for, through him, bringing the divine down to earth, making it real for us in such a way that we can see and understand it, relating who and what you are to our daily lives.

Help us, if we would know you better, to focus our thoughts on Jesus – one with us yet also one with you – in his holy and precious name we pray. Amen.

**Nick Fawcett: 'A Most Amazing Man' [Year A].**

### **Travel Directions? [taken from a piece written by Revd Canon Roger Spiller]**

Thomas says they do not know where Jesus is going, so how can they know the way. He's thinking about travel directions and maps and destinations. But Jesus answers, 'I am the way.' [*He is saying*] You don't need directions to find me because I am your destination. I am the truth. I don't have truths to share, because I embody truth. I am the life. I don't make provision for you to have life. Knowing me brings life, because I and the Father are one.

Now, what Jesus offers is not a physical place but a relational state. Not a house or a mansion but a household – a community of people.

Heaven is not a place but a relationship. We are not left alone because the spirit of Jesus is with us. He is not preparing a place – the place is prepared and we are invited to enter. And that is why St Peter can describe all God's dazzling blessings to his people: 'You are a chosen race, a holy nation, God's own people.'

So what is the reason for this relationship to Jesus – this incorporation into the Christian family?  
It is ‘in order that you might proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.’

**‘Love divine, all loves excelling’ words by Charles Wesley [1707 – 1788] Singing the Faith 503**

1 Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;  
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

2 Come, almighty, to deliver, let us all thy life receive  
suddenly return and never, never more thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

3 Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee;  
changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and praise!

**Prayer:**

[this is the verse sung after each Thursday Fellowship meeting from Mission England Praise no. 156. The words were written by Cliff Burrows in 1982]

May God’s blessing surround you each day as you trust him and walk in his way,  
May his presence within guard and keep you from sin.  
Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.

**Blessing:** May the blessing of God – the Father who created us – the Son who found us and saved us – and the Holy Spirit who lives and works within us – be with us and all whom we love this day and for all eternity. Amen.



Revd Stephen Mosedale, a supernumerary minister from Exeter, is leading a Bible study on the lectionary for local preachers at the moment. He always ends with prompts for reflection for us to think about during the week. I have chosen a couple which you may – or may not - find useful to consider during the week. [*I have added the bits in italics*].

1] When you are contemplating a journey is it the destination or the route which most interests you? Do you think Thomas is correct that without detailed knowledge of the destination there is no point in having a clear way? [*or is it that if the way forward is clear, we can go ahead in faith that we don’t need to know every detail of the destination but can trust?*]

2] *Jesus says:* ‘Just believe it – that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or else believe it because of the mighty miracles you have seen me do.’ Or to paraphrase it: ‘If you don’t believe what I say, then believe on the basis of what I do.’ When you read the gospels, do you find your belief to be prompted more by what Jesus says or what he does?

3] In what way do you consider that the works of believers can be ‘greater’ than those of Jesus himself? [*maybe it could be that when he was on earth disciples would stand back, but when he was no longer there in physical form, and they had received the Holy Spirit, they were able to get on with it? Is it the same now? Is it that Jesus was in just one place while those who believe in him can cover the whole world in his name?*]