

Circuit Service for August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 offered by Marie Armitage

*Thought for the Day:* The Church is the Body of Christ, built on strong rock of faith and energised by the living Breath of God.

### Opening Prayer

Lord do we *really* believe that we are in the presence of the Son of the Living God? Still our hearts now, so that we may truly appreciate who you are. As we hear these words of power, we bow down before you and praise you. **Amen**

### **StF 152 This is the Day, this is the Day**

- 1 This is the day,  
this is the day that the Lord has made,  
that the Lord has made.  
We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it,  
and be glad in it.  
This is the day that the Lord has made ;  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.  
This is the day,  
this is the day that the Lord has made.
  
- 2 This is the day,  
this is the day when he rose again,  
when he rose again.  
We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it,  
and be glad in it.  
This is the day when he rose again ;  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.  
This is the day,  
this is the day when he rose again.
  
- 3 This is the day,  
this is the day when the Spirit came,  
when the Spirit came.  
We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it,  
and be glad in it.  
This is the day when the Spirit came ;  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.  
This is the day,  
this is the day when the Spirit came.

Anonymous

### Prayers of Thanksgiving and Confession

Lord God, we come before you in humble adoration. How blessed are we that the one who holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven is the one who has the key to our hearts. Thank you, God for

the privilege of being part of the amazing story of faith that sustained our ancestors. Thank you, God that we know our future is safe with you. **Amen**

Lord, thank you that you are always ready to forgive me when I trust you enough to confess my sins to you, even when I don't deserve it.

**Be merciful to me, O God.**

Forgive me for the times when just because someone else's story is different from mine I don't always want to believe it. Forgive me for the times I only love my story, not seeing the bigger picture.

**Be merciful to me, O God.**

Forgive me for the times I see you as less than the Son of God, and my whole outlook on life needs a good dose of your love and understanding.

**Be merciful to me, O God. Amen**

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Traditional

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

Contemporary

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 for ever.  
Amen

**READING from the Epistle for today Romans 12.** (Paul turns to look at what living the life of Christ consists of in practical terms. What does it actually mean to live as a Christian? He concludes that the demand of Christ is total.) **Paul writes.....**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we, who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold to that which is good; love one another with mutual affection.....

**StF 671 What shall we offer our good Lord (Tune Duke Street 634 Fight the good fight)**

- 1 What shall we offer our good Lord,  
poor nothings, for his boundless grace ?  
Fain would we his great name record  
and worthily set forth his praise.
- 2 Great object of our growing love,  
to whom our more than all we owe,  
open the fountain from above,  
and let it our full souls o'erflow.
- 3 Open a door which earth and hell  
may strive to shut, but strive in vain ;  
let thy word richly in us dwell,  
and let our gracious fruit remain.
- 4 O multiply the sower's seed !  
And fruit we every hour shall bear,  
throughout the world thy gospel spread,  
thy everlasting truth declare.
- 5 So shall our lives thy power proclaim,  
thy grace for every sinner free ;  
till all the world shall learn thy name,  
shall all stretch out their hands to thee.

August Gottlieb Spangenberg (1704–1792)

*translated by John Wesley (1703–1791)*

**Gospel Reading from Matthew 16**

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and what ever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

**Reflection**

Who do you think you are? A parent, friend, teenager, young at heart, European, shy, old, disabled? Which category do you fit into? How would you describe yourself honestly? Do we live up to the expectations of how others see us? Do we mask our true identity? What words might God use to describe us? Questions which we as humans consider at various times as was discovered in the TV programmes based on that initial question.

In today's Gospel Jesus knew that people had all sorts of ideas about who he was. He of course knew but he wanted to be sure that the right message was coming across. So it is that we find Him

and his disciples in the far north, the seat of Roman rule through Herod's son Philip who had built the city and naming it after himself. Jesus had chosen this destination to ask pointedly political questions about His identity because to the Jews this was the headquarters of foreign rulers and a place where Caesar was worshipped as 'Saviour', 'Son of God'. Jesus knew that some of His listeners were close to the truth but others way off the mark. Those on the answer list were known as troublemakers in their time.

The crucial question came when He confronted the disciples eye to eye (as He wanted them to discover the truth for themselves) it is impetuous Peter who gets the answer right. We need to remember that the disciples had said something very similar when Jesus calmed the storm when they were scared in the boat, but it is more significant that Peter declares the answer in this place and also will proclaim it again in Rome when he had been recommissioned by Jesus. It is interesting that Peter proclaims the truth even if he is aware that he is in need of loosing – or forgiving and rather than being 'the Rock', he may appear 'rocky' like the stony ground on which seed is sown, springing up quickly and then falling when things get tough because he isn't rooted enough.

Empires today, like that of Rome demand our allegiance and may require our worship in some way, not just nations but multinational businesses, media organisations and the like. Paul in his letter to the new converts in Rome (which we read) reminds his friends that there is no empire building with the household of faith, no false humility, or boasting, but a loving harmony of people with a commonly held life and purpose. A living, working body, the Church. This is the first time that anyone has said it to Jesus and the lives of the disciples were never the same again. It is on Peter's confession that Jesus says He will build His Church rather than the person and all those who likewise confess that Jesus is the Messiah will also be given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. It may still seem strange to us that Jesus tells the disciples not to broadcast what they have shared but that time will come but not yet.

**A personal prayer by Nick Fawcett** ---You ask us, Jesus, as you asked your disciples long ago and have asked generations since, to decide for ourselves who you are. Help us to answer that question, not hedging our bets, as we are inclined to do, not sidestepping the issue, not hiding behind the conclusions of others, or taking refuge in clichés and jargon, but honestly coming to our own conclusions about what You have done and what you mean to us. And having made our response, help us to recommit to I each day, so that our faith may be ever fresh, ever real. **Amen**

Points to consider. How would you respond to the question, 'Who is Jesus?'

Would it depend who was asking!

Perhaps reread the reflection and answer the questions raised.

**StF 665 Make us your prophets Lord (Tune Down Ampney Come down O love divine)**

- 1 Make us your prophets, Lord,  
who truly hear your word,  
which fires us with your Spirit's inspiration.  
In all we say and do  
prove that your love is true,  
the hope and source of peace for every nation.

- 2 And when we fail to love  
or set ourselves above  
our neighbours with their different ways of seeing,  
bring us with all our pride  
where Jesus, crucified,  
for love of all committed his whole being.
- 3 Give us his love that shares  
our neighbours' pain, and dares  
to suffer enmity and condemnation.  
Whether we live or die  
help us to prophesy,  
proclaiming peace and reconciliation.
- 4 Though we live quietly,  
with no authority,  
yet feeble faith in us may show your goodness ;  
and though we may not see  
how crucial it may be,  
our faltering love may show your loving kindness.
- 5 In faith and hope we pray,  
use us to serve that day  
when bigotry and hatred are defeated,  
when perfect peace is won  
and lasting justice done,  
with love's eternal promises completed.

Alan Gaunt (*b.* 1935)

### **Prayers of Intercession.**

As members of the body of Christ, let us pray together.

Fill your world, Lord with wonder at creation, recognition of our human responsibility, desire for reforming what is at fault, and hope in the possibilities of living at peace with God and one another. Continue to fill our homes and neighbourhoods with the generosity and trust which allows space but is always ready to encourage and support. May we honour one another as people of your making.

**In you Lord is all meaning and truth.**

We pray for our Circuit as with trepidation we seek to know how to witness in the future.

Especially this week we think of our friends at Wollaston, an elderly congregation still enjoying fellowship together and their love of music to enhance worship. May traditions be the foundation for us all but openness inspire us to witness in the future.

**In you Lord is all meaning and truth.**

We pray for all who are struggling with their faith through self-doubt, difficult circumstances, locked in a situation where there seems to be no answer. We pray for all those we know who are ill and those who care for them at home, in hospital, and those who are dying or have died and those who love them.

**In you Lord is all meaning and truth.**

## StF 748 Glorious things of Thee are spoken

- 1 Glorious things of thee are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God ;  
he whose word cannot be broken  
formed thee for his own abode.  
On the Rock of Ages founded,  
what can shake thy sure repose ?  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
thou may'st smile at all thy foes.
- 2 See ! The streams of living waters,  
springing from eternal love,  
well supply thy sons and daughters,  
and all fear of want remove ;  
who can faint, while such a river  
ever flows their thirst to assuage —  
grace which, like the Lord, the giver,  
never fails from age to age ?
- 3 Saviour, if of Zion's city  
I, through grace, a member am,  
let the world deride or pity,  
I will glory in thy name.  
Fading are our worldly pleasures,  
all their boasted pomp and show ;  
solid joys and lasting treasures  
none but Zion's children know.

John Newton (1725–1807)

### Prayer

Jesus told His disciples not to tell anyone He was the Messiah. We go out now, hearts so full of amazement and joy, that we can't help but share the good news. Go with us, good Lord, and help us to tell everyone who will listen **Amen**

**Teach us good Lord to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do your will.**

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and for evermore. Amen**

Please be assured that we are still here if you need anything at all during this time.

The circuit staff can be contacted by calling 01933 312778 or 01933 622137.

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