

07-06-2020 - Worship At Home

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Song: Your love is alive

(CCLI Song # 7070731)

The whole earth is filled the whole earth is filled
Filled with Your glory filled with Your glory

My whole life is filled my whole life is filled
Filled with Your glory filled with Your glory

Your love is alive

Your love is alive

Your love is beating inside of my heart

And my soul and my mind

Your love is alive

Your love is alive

Your love is leading me into

The Way and the Truth and the Life

When blinded by darkness or lost out at sea

Even in death You're always with me

When I am fearful I won't be afraid

O Spirit remind me Your presence remains

Confession

**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.

Reading

Philippians 1:18-30

Reflection

Well, we are all certainly going to have a story to tell at the end of this pandemic! And from what I'm hearing it seems like we are each having rather different experiences. I wonder what it is like for you? My experience has largely been defined by "home-schooling" my two young girls. This has been a mixed experience! One day we were looking at the topic of space and we were making planets and stars – we were having a great time, but then my 5 year old asked me a rather tricky question, she said "mummy, is Heaven in space?". Errrr I didn't know how to answer that! Maybe one of you can help me with an answer!

But, I wonder what you think of when you hear the word heaven. What images does it conjure up? I think of verses in the Bible about God's kingdom where we hear there will be peace, and no more tears or sickness, which sounds pretty good right now.

This is something that seems to be on Paul's mind in the first half of today's passage. So, let's just remember the context of this letter. We've heard in this series that Paul is in prison for sharing the good news about Jesus as king, and he's having a pretty rough time and I don't think he could take it for granted that he was going to survive his situation.

It would certainly be very understandable if Paul had got to a point where he was frankly fed up and dreamt about being somewhere a whole lot better, like heaven perhaps. However, that's not what we see in this letter. Paul isn't writing like someone who has given up. No, he seems totally alive in trying to continue his mission in spreading the word about Jesus. Imprisoned or not he seems determined to get the gospel message out and encourage his fellow Christians in Philippi. Paul actually seemed rather excited! Since his life got turned upside down by Jesus he has dedicated all that he is and everything that he does to Him.

But beyond his mission here on earth, Paul is longing for the day when he can be fully united with Jesus. He says in verse 23, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far".

He is longing for the time when he can run into Jesus' arms, when he can fully be with the person he has been serving with such passion.

BUT, after a bit of wrestling Paul recognises he has a job to do first. He has a role that he is uniquely placed to do, in helping spread the Good News about Jesus. Who he is and what he has been through makes him uniquely able to share the gospel in the way that he is. He has been called to be an apostle to the gentiles and there were still plenty more parts of the world that hadn't yet heard about Jesus. He still had a mission to do. Heaven with Jesus would just have to wait!

And the same is true for us, we have a mission to do. As Dan helped us to remember last week, through His Holy Spirit, God has given each one of us a purpose, a mission on this earth. Each one of us is unique and that purpose we are given from God is specific for each one of us. And that applies very much as we negotiate this pandemic.

I don't know whether you can relate to Paul in his longing to meet Jesus, maybe you can, but I'm sure you can empathise with how he feels if you imagine the time when you'll be able to run into the arms of loved ones when social distancing restrictions are fully lifted. But right now, as Paul did, we have a mission to complete. Whatever your story, or your experience is in this pandemic, God has a mission for you - to share who He is, what He has done in your life, and His love, whether that is through praying, caring, working, bringing hope, recovering, schooling, all of the above. Who you are and what you have been through will make you uniquely placed to do it in the way that only you can. There is work to be done. And Paul gives us an instruction on how we should do it in the second half of today's passage.

In verse 27 Paul says, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel." When I first read this phrase I immediately remembered an emergency school assembly we were called in to where some older children had behaved badly in their school uniforms, and the headteacher called us all into the hall and said "When you wear your uniform you must behave in a manner worthy of this school!". Perhaps there is a slight hint of teacher-ness here as Paul reminds the Philippians that they are representing the Christian church/Jesus and therefore should behave well! As should we, no matter how many times your toddler draws on the walls in my case!!

But if we go back to the Greek translation, there is something rather deeper going on. Paul uses a word (which I won't try to pronounce) which basically means "behave as if you're a citizen of the

kingdom”. The word citizen conjures up all sorts of thoughts – if you’re a citizen you belong, you’re secure, you have a home, and you have all the rights and responsibilities that go with that.

In verses 27 and 28, Paul spells out 3 ways that we can live as citizens of God’s kingdom. Firstly, we are to “stand firm in the one Spirit”. We remembered last week how at Pentecost God sent His Holy Spirit to be with all believers. Dan reminded us that the Holy Spirit allows us to be connected with God and to be transformed to be more like Jesus, which is so important as we remember we are representatives and very much need His help to be able to do that well. And His Holy Spirit gives us that new purpose, that mission to share God’s love and a Boldness to do so. The early disciples were sent out to do their job equipped by God. He didn’t ask them to do anything without His help through His Spirit. As citizens of the kingdom, like the disciples in those early days, we too can know that God is with us through His Holy Spirit, transforming us and equipping us, helping us to stand firm.

Secondly, Paul says he expects to see the Philippians “striving together as one for the faith of the gospel”. As we’ve thought about before at Holy Trinity, we were never meant to do any of this on our own. And in this world where the church has been physically scattered into homes, it’s even more important that we remember we are one church, working together, side by side, virtually and spiritually if not physically at the moment. Whatever our unique and individual callings and purpose are in this time of pandemic and beyond, we are in it together.

And thirdly, Paul reminds us we should do this “without being frightened in any way by those who oppose [us]”. The church now, as it did then, faces opposition for its loyalty to Jesus. But Paul reminds us that as citizens of the kingdom of God we do not need to be frightened. Just a few weeks ago we remembered Jesus’ victory at Easter. One day the whole world will acknowledge Jesus as king, and that is a truth we need to hold on to when things get difficult. In Psalm 27, David says “The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid?”.

So, as we enter this new week, as citizens of the Kingdom of God, let’s stand firm, let’s remember we are not alone – God sent His Holy Spirit to equip us, and we are standing side by side with each other. One day we will be fully united with Jesus, and as Paul writes it will indeed be “better by far”, but until then let’s each of us go and do the mission that God has called us to, in faith, in hope and in trust. Amen!

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven
and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Song: Raise a hallelujah

(CCLI Song # 7119315)

I raise a hallelujah in the presence of my enemies
I raise a hallelujah louder than the unbelief
I raise a hallelujah, my weapon is a melody
I raise a hallelujah, Heaven comes to fight for me

***I'm gonna sing in the middle of the storm
Louder and louder you're gonna hear my praises roar
Up from the ashes hope will arise
Death is defeated, the King is alive***

I raise a hallelujah with everything inside of me
I raise a hallelujah, I will watch the darkness flee
I raise a hallelujah in the middle of the mystery
I raise a hallelujah, fear you lost your hold on me

*Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder)
Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder)
Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder)
Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder)*

*Sing a little louder in the presence of my enemies
Sing a little louder, louder than the unbelief
Sing a little louder, my weapon is a melody
Sing a little louder, Heaven comes to fight for me*

Gift Day 2020

Today we hear from the last of our fabulous four charities that we are focusing on for our Gift Day this year. This Sunday it is the turn of Riverbank Trust, and here is Michelle Rutter to give us an update:

Riverbank is 10 years old this year and we are yet again amazed at His grace and provision so far which has enabled us to continue loving and supporting some of those most at need here in Richmond. Through being in community, we want to see long term change and lives transformed through relationship with a God who never gives up, never judges but always walks alongside. During lockdown, we have maintained strong, positive connections with all our families and successfully worked in partnership with other agencies. We have sent cards, school packs and hand delivered Easter packages to all our families as well as calling, texting and emailing. We have launched a weekly newsletter to enable us all to stay in touch with each other and of course regularly pray for each and every family. Your financial donations will allow Riverbank to continue being the hands and feet of Jesus and help to keep us viable during lockdown and beyond. Thank you.

Any money given to Gift Day this year will be split evenly among our fabulous four charities. You can give now by bank transfer, by cheque, and online. You can find all the details of this on the leaflet that you were sent if you get our church emails, or on our website at htrichmond.org.uk/giftday2020

Prayers

As today is Trinity Sunday, our prayer will be focussed on praying to each person of the Trinity.

- **Pray out loud:**
“We bind to ourselves this day, the strong name of the Trinity, the three in one and one in three, wrapping ourselves in God’s presence. Amen.”
- **God, the Father:**
Look out your window and try to spot some trees or plants or flowers. Say a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father for the wonderful world that He has created, and for being a loving and protective Father.
- **Jesus, the Son:**
Make the sign of the cross on your forehead, and say a prayer of confession to Jesus, saying sorry for the things that you’ve done wrong and thanking Him for His forgiveness.
- **God, the Holy Spirit:**
Holy your hands out in front of you, palms facing up - thank God for His Spirit living inside of you, and ask Him to come fill you again. Say a prayer of supplication as you bring to mind anyone who needs God’s help and transformation.

**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.**

Song: Take my life and let it be

(CCLI Song # 2873921)

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.
Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only, for my King;
Always, only, for my King.

Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my moments and my days,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart; it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne;
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my heart; it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne;
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Blessing

Holy God, faithful and unchanging:
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

And may God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,
defend you on every side,
and guide you in truth and peace;

and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.