



Worship at Home – Seventh Sunday of Easter – 16th May

Father God help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Hymn 573: Praise to the Lord

Welcome

The Lord be with you,
and also with you

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

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.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our lord. **Amen**

Collect

O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

New Testament Reading: Acts 1: 15 – 17, 21 - 26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred and twenty people) and said, 'Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus— for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.' So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us— one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.' So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.' And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Hymn 104: Christ triumphant

Gospel Reading:

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Glory to you, O Lord

'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your

word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Rosey Feuell

Do you enjoy eavesdropping? What might you hear if you dropped in on the Holy Trinity talking among themselves – about Covid, about Boris, about Scottish independence? There are things where we think we know God's reaction, and others where His dialogue in heaven will never filter to us down here. St Paul tells us he was caught up into paradise and overheard words no mortal is permitted to repeat. Yes, we may be curious, and not learn more – **or** our desire to know Jesus better in this life may push us to wonder what He may be saying about ourselves and our standing in His love. I don't say "what He would say", for this is hypothetical; sometimes it is already evident Jesus offers us reassurances and certainty if we note the Scripture and listen up.

In today's readings Jesus is assuring us of His followers' immense value to Him, to the Father: hidden things it's easy to miss. In the first reading from Acts, we see the apostles assembling: already a body of 120 odd people, the quorum for forming a council to lead a movement. The gap left by Judas is very noticeable, Judas who betrayed Jesus and his own ministry with them. Like them all, he was chosen and taught by Jesus after long nights of prayer to the Father – yet sadly these things are no guarantee of a faithful, perfect disciple; persevering is crucial. Each follower and their response is clearly valued, a witness to Jesus' amazing service among them. So valued is this that someone must replace the missing person, share the witness: "it is necessary", the Greek says.

And so they propose two men and pray, not seeking whether another apostle is needed, but who of the two the Lord has chosen. Every follower is vital, every witness called and chosen by the loving Father. They want to identify God's design. So Matthias joins the Eleven, and the whole group is on course to receive Jesus' promised power from on high. We learn no more of Matthias, though he was clearly accepted by prayerful methods, of which Acts gives many different examples. Likewise we hear no more of Andrew, Matthew etc. after Pentecost. Ongoing story suggests all had their witness in small encounters and greater, and were guarded by the powers of heaven, greatly esteemed, widely sought for their teaching, as Jesus intended.

Now in our Gospel we look differently into the disciples' story, privileged to eavesdrop and even to share what Jesus is saying, not to them this time, but *intimately to His Father*, about the very special position of those with whom Jesus shared secrets of Who He was, how He cherished them, and how thoroughly, even shortly before His death, they were included in loving plans and revelation: "the words you gave to me I have given to them.. they have received them and know in truth that I came from you.."(17:8). Jesus seems to delight in their faith and understanding: "they have believed that you sent me"(17: 8). His prayer for them takes the form of telling His Father about them, where they are, what they have to face. It reveals at least three key things, which apply to us also as His followers:

They have been chosen, though also given to Jesus by His Father; they are protected, and continue in the Father's protection; they are sanctified or, we might say, confirmed in this special calling. It's not just so that Jesus might feel satisfied or peaceful in Himself as He prepares to leave them. It's an enfolding and an accepting process, for their sakes: "I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete *in themselves*."(17:13).

That last phrase can mean “among themselves” too, so Jesus probably has the group morale and resilience in mind. No wonder they need a full complement of genuine witnesses. Jesus reveals His awareness that they have been at times hated for who they are: “the world hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.”(17:14)



Yet His protection, His Father’s protection, is assured, and their togetherness is part of it, as they have been sent into the world, to face, like Jesus at this very moment, truth, difficulties, dangers few can appreciate. Incredibly, Jesus, already perfect Son of God, talks of sanctifying **Himself**, for their sake, their becoming holy too: “sanctified in truth”.(17:19) It’s as if He overwrites, emphasises once again Who He is, as He prepares to let them go.

The prayer continues to draw in all whom these vulnerable disciples will, “through their word”, lead to faith in Jesus. Jesus opened this discourse by claiming His true glory from the Father before the world existed. He finishes this and later parts by reminding them, who presumably overheard every word, they are freely included in all that Jesus is and has .

And they are still with Him as He sets out across Kidron Valley to betrayal and, as John, writing decades later knew, to demonstrate the reality of all He had prayed, all He could offer beyond this world’s threats.

He chose them, He protected them, made them different and holy – and, in this last long priestly prayer, He tells His Father so much that they need to know. They hear reassurances located in His love, and in *His ongoing life*, though they can’t pick up on this yet..

Yes, even nowadays it may be good to listen to what the Divine Persons appear to be saying before we pray for help, consider the world’s plight, or allow ourselves to panic and falter in following the Lord Who became Man for us. Let’s learn to understand how we matter as we follow: chosen, protected, sanctified in truth.

Pilate asks: “What is truth?”(18: 38) and washes his hands. Here we don’t need to shrug the discourse off; we have the privilege of listening to the One Who is the Truth, deals in it and speaks it, and gathers in His followers, perhaps overloaded and fearful, into truth extending far beyond this world’s order.

Let us pray:

Jesus welcomes us and promises to drink the fruit of the vine new with us in His Father’s kingdom. Lord, open our eyes and ears to the joy You have set before us as we follow You under Your protection. **Amen**

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers

The Peace

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn 67: Be Still in the presence of the Lord

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.

Remembering the Lord's Supper

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities, and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 12: Alleluia, sing to Jesus

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen