

The Fifth Sunday of Easter – 10th May 2020



This has been VE day anniversary weekend and there have been many celebrations around our villages. Maybe not what was originally planned but, helped by the beautiful weather and a strong British spirit, of making the most of a situation, there was a sense of occasion. Gary will have more to say on this later in our worship.

Once again I have included the 2nd reading this morning. In Peter's letter he says, "Let your selves be built into a spiritual house". Many of us see our spiritual house as being our little church but over the past 7 weeks it has not been possible to go there. Throughout the doors being closed I have been going in at least weekly to say a prayer and check all is well, for the first time this week there felt a real sadness in the building, probably not helped by the central heating having broken down and the altar still stuck in a Lenten time warp, but non the less it felt like it was missing the people, the people who week in week out bring the building to life. Through our online worship we have truly shown that a 'church' is not about the building but about the people in the church having a relationship with God. Our spiritual presence as a church continues without the walls, but it is our actions, our commitment to worship and our love of God that we build ourselves into a spiritual house.

Let us continue to celebrate the joy of the resurrection

Collect for the day

Almighty God, who through your only begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

⁵⁵ But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" ⁵⁷ But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸ Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

A reading from the 1st letter of Peter

² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones, let yourselves be built^[a] into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in scripture:

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him^[b] will not be put to shame."

⁷ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,"

⁸ and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,^[c] in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

A reading from the Gospel according to John

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe^[a] in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^[b] ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going."^[c] ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know^[d] my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

⁸Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me^[e] for anything, I will do it.

Words from Fr Rodney

Many of you will remember the television series about the wartime Home Guard called "Dad's Army". In that series Corporal Jones was to be heard in every crisis saying "Don't panic"and usually he was the one who did ! This came to mind not particularly because of the 75th Anniversary commemoration of the end of the Second World War in Europe, but of the words of Jesus to his disciples in the Gospel for today. He says " Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." These are words spoken to disciples of every generation assuring us that even in the most difficult and worrying times in our lives, He will always be there for us, even if sometimes we can't see it until afterwards. In the old days Christians were encouraged to memorise the words and sayings of Jesus so that they would always have them in their hearts and minds as they faced the challenges of daily life. So I encourage you to learn these words today so that you will always have them to hand in whatever situation you may find yourselves.

Inspiration from Gary Laird

The sound of church bells pealing highlights a time of celebration and reflection. This weekend the community came together to remember events that took place 75 years ago. We all sang as a community “we will meet again” and shared fellowship.

Between the years 1939 and 1945 the whole country lived through very difficult times with limitations on people’s lives, fear was never far away, but they got through by their own endeavours

It is important that we reflect and remember the challenges and fears of the 1940s. Both my parents and in-laws lived through those awful times, we can’t imagine what it was like. However we are aware through our parents and their generation’s reminiscence of the highs and the lows of wartime culminating in the jubilation of VE Day.

Presently, globally, we are dealing with Coronavirus and all its implications, fear of contracting the virus or suffering the consequences. These are extremely anxious times and we need to support each other.

At the end of the war on VE Day there was jubilation thanksgiving and anticipation of greater things to come. The sound of church bells ringing was very emotional for men women and children. The feeling of expressed relief at the end of such a terrible period in history will happen again I am sure when Coronavirus is behind us. Our parents generation were indefatigable in their resolve to get back to normal and we will too.

On a personal basis throughout the most challenging times in my life I have reflected on the road to Emmaus when Jesus walked along side others and reassured the travellers that they were supported. We need to remind ourselves as Christians that we are never alone.

By the Autumn we will look back and remember this period in time. Take care and stay safe.



Intercessions

Let us pray

Loving father as we come together today with our brothers and sisters across the world we once again give thanks for the opportunity to be living stones united in our common love for you. Help us and our leaders to offer the love for others, the cornerstone of our faith, from which springs compassion, comfort and hope as we face the challenges of the difficult times we find ourselves in at the moment. Amen.

Loving father we bring before you our world and its many problems. We ask wisdom for all those in authority making such difficult decisions in the current situation and all those who are advising them. We especially ask for guidance for our own government as it takes us into the next stage of response to the coronavirus. We pray that they find away to do this safely. We also pray for all those areas of the world that are facing the pandemic alongside many other problems without food, medicine and stability as well as all the voluntary agencies trying to help them. We pray that the international community finds the will and the compassion to increase access to support for those in need. Amen

Loving father as we think of our communities we are reminded once again of the living stones working within the community bringing friendship, comfort and practical support into our daily lives. We thank you for all these many acts of kindness that make the current situation more bearable. We also pray for all our front line workers and their families who inspire us with their compassion and sacrifice. We pray for their safety and for the strength to cope with the emotional toil that they experience every day. We also continue to pray for all those who are vulnerable, lonely and finding life particularly difficult at this time. Amen

Loving father we bring before you our hopes and concerns for our families, friends and neighbours and although our hearts are troubled we are reminded that there is the light of hope shining in the darkness and that we will be together again. We thank you for all the imaginative ways we have found to communicate with one another and for all the love and friendship that we are lucky enough to share when we need it the most. Amen

Loving father we pray for all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit especially all those suffering because of the pandemic, those who care for them and their loved ones. We pray for those living and working in care homes, so vulnerable in this crisis and we also pray for anyone known to us today in need of courage, faith and strength to see them through....We also ask your blessings on all those working to find successful treatments and vaccines for the coronavirus, that they do so in the spirit of collaboration and that their efforts may soon be rewarded. Amen

Finally loving father we remember all those who have gone before us ... particularly all those who have died in the current pandemic and for all those who lost their lives in the second war. Today we also pray especially for Kathleen Newton to be laid to rest on Tuesday, with only Father Rodney present. We pray for all those who grieve and ask that they be comforted by the memories of the love and friendship they shared with us. And as we continue to celebrate the hope of the resurrection let us be sustained by of the words of Saint Peter that we are called 'out of darkness into his marvellous light.'

May they rest in peace, and rise in glory

In a moment of silence bring your own prayers to God

The Lords 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, for ever and ever.
Amen