

The Sixth Sunday of Easter – 17th May 2020



Our worship this week is very much related to keeping rules. In these weeks following Easter I have very much followed the churches lectionary rule, which instructs us to use the readings from Acts, but for me it has been Peter who has this virus situation sussed and seems quite in tune with what we are all going through at the moment. Last weekend the government started to relax the lockdown rules a little, maybe just to test the waters and see how small changes would affect the spread but stressed that we all must take care. Peter gives us examples of what can go wrong when we do not obey Gods rules, he reminds us of how God waited patiently as Noah built the ark just to save eight people. He talks about keeping a clear conscience in our actions and being certain in our hope; Maybe we need to exercise some patience now to keep us all safe, if by our actions we can all save at least 8 people, our conscience will be clear and we can be certain of a hope that this will come to an end. Later in our worship we will hear one ladies heartfelt warning about keeping the government rules today.

Our Gospel then goes on to remind us about keeping God's commandments, another set of rules to guide us through life, we are reminded that when we keep the commandments we are showing the greatest love for God and he in turn will give us the greatest love of all.

Collect for the day

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;
Through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reign with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

²⁶ From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

²⁹ Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰ While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

A reading from the 1st letter of Peter

¹³ Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵ but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

A reading from the Gospel according to John

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

This is a poem written by a Grandma of a nurse – it is very fitting with our theme of keeping rules for the good of all

We're not in a good place right now, We are waiting for the Prime Minister's speech,
He won't be able to please us all, That place he'll never reach.

We're all fed up with lockdown, But I'm sure you can see,
From the figures on the death list, That's how it's got to be.

We've now been in about 2 months, And the experts are still trying,
To find us a solution, And stop all these people dying.

We've got to help to fight this fight, And in our homes must stay,
At least it's not like other wars, When they were sent away.

I know that we're all fed up, And isolation isn't fun,
But if they let us out too soon, We'll undo all we've done.

We're seeing people taken from us, It's a situation very rare,
But please keep sticking to the rules, There's a killer still out there.

So let's all dream of better times, And keep up the endeavour,
We know that we can get there, If we all stick together.



Words from Fr Rodney

This Sunday used to be known as 'Rogation Sunday' and it is followed by Rogation Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday' this week. 'Rogation' comes from the Latin 'rogare' which means to ask. At what was seen as the beginning of the sowing season people were asked to pray that God would bless the crops that were being planted, so that later in the year at harvest people would be able to gather together to give thanks for the food God had provided. Here in the 21st Century most of us are at arms length from the production of our food, but that should not take anything away from our need to pray for the harvest to come, and to give thanks at the harvest that God has again provided for us and brought us safely through.

We remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:7 - 8 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you.' But this does not just apply at harvest, it applies to every aspect of our lives. So on this Sunday as we give thanks to God for his love and faithfulness to us, we continue to pray for our world in the midst of our hopes and fears that He will again bring us safely through.

Intercessions

Let us pray

Loving father today we are joined with our brothers and sisters in faith across the world to give thanks for the fellowship we share today as well as the all the many ways our lives have been touched by your spirit and love in the past week. We also ask that wisdom and strength be given to us and our church leaders as we respond to the demands of current situation remembering your command to love one another. Amen

Loving father we bring before you our world and thank you for the many beautiful ways your love for us is manifested in nature at this time of the year, we ask that the world will emerge from the last few months with a greater consideration of the environment and concern for those who share the planet with us. We also pray for all those areas of the world suffering from poverty, disease and violence and ask you to grant wisdom and strength to our leaders and all those working for peace and justice throughout the world. Amen

Loving father we pray for our communities facing many difficult decisions at the moment, particularly our government and local authorities as they attempt to move us forward, help them to do so safely. We particularly think of all those who are returning to work and many within our local area who are fearful and anxious about the changes being made. We also continue to give thanks for all those key workers who have made such a difference to our lives in recent weeks and pray for their protection. Amen

Loving father, we thank you for the love and kindness of our families, friends and neighbours, we especially thank you for all the new chances we have had to connect with those around us and ask that we continue to support one another in the future. We think of all those we are separated from at the moment and ask that we may soon be united and we pray for the safety of all those we hold dear. Amen

Loving father we bring before you all those who are sick, especially those we wish to pray for today... We pray also for those suffering in the pandemic, those caring for them and their loved ones and all those working on treatments and vaccines. We pray for courage, faith and strength to all those suffering from loneliness, domestic violence, anxiety and difficulties in receiving treatment and ask that they are soon able to access the support they need. Amen

Finally loving father, we remember those who have died, particularly Kathleen Newton laid to rest this past week and all those known to us... We thank you for their lives, their love and our memories as we continue to rejoice in the hope of the Easter message. 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.

