**Sunday 23rd August 2020** WORSHIP AT HOME: **Matthew 16.13-20: Peter’s declaration of faith**

Welcome to our act of Worship

Call to worship

Let us give thanks to the Lord with our whole hearts, bowing down to sing God’s praise.

**Let us give thanks to God’s name for steadfast love and faithfulness.**

We have called, and God has answered, increasing the strength of our souls.

**Let all of us sing the ways of the Lord who is great in glory.**

Though God is high above all, he looks with care upon the lowly.

**God’s outstretched hand will save us and complete God’s purpose for us.  God’s steadfast love endures forever.**  *(adapted from Psalm 138)*

HYMN: Let all the world in every corner sing…

HP10, MP404, RS114, STF57

(Some of the hymn books widely used in the Wiltshire United Area)

*Prayers of Praise*

Lord our God, whose power in proclaimed in the glory of the skies above us and in the wonders of the world about us; draw near to us in this act of worship and open our eyes to you in your holiness, and our ears to hear the words of your heavenly wisdom: open our minds to comprehend the truth that sets us free and our hearts to embrace the love which passes all understanding; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Prayer of Confession*

Living God, we confess that our lives too often are bounded by conditions of our own making about how far we will go to live out our faith.  
**Forgive us for our lack of boldness.**

We confess that we do not always mirror your hopes of what your church will be, that we do not accept difference easily, that we only want to recognise each other’s gifts if they are ones we want to receive.  
**Forgive us for our lack of openness.**

We confess that our world could be a much better place and that we could play our part in making it so. We do not challenge assumptions that injustice is inevitable and do not value the small things we can do to make a difference.  
**Forgive us for our lack of urgency.**

God, the giver of life,  
we offer our lives back to you.  
Forgive us, change us renew us.  
In the name of Christ, **Amen.**

HYMN Go tell it o’er the mountain

HP135, MP179, RS164 , STF-

Ministry of the Word of God

Lectionary Bible readings Isaiah 51.1-6; Psalm 138; Romans 12.1-8 **GOSPEL** **Matthew 16.13-20** With special emphasis on:**16Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ 17And 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.**

This is the Gospel of Christ.

**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

Reflection

Last Sunday (August 9th) I attended a Service of Thanksgiving to mark the 75th anniversary since the end of the Second World War. Tragically we still live in an era where war and violence take place: Darfur, South Sudan, Angola, the list goes on! Last Sunday’s service was about giving thanks for all those who strived for global peace then and those who do so now.

Today’s reflection focuses on thanksgiving - Peter’s declaration of faith:**16Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’** We realise this is Peter who will go on to completely misunderstand what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah, he will later resist Jesus’ intention to turn himself over the authorities, and he will eventually deny and desert his Lord. But for now… this is his moment as he confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. That is something for which to give thanks!

As for all the times he gets things wrong – think of the post-resurrection passage where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him (John21v15). I think God is more focussed on personal positives – what we get right, than even on our pivotal failings. Too often we beat ourselves up over and over again for times when we have got it wrong and often fail to give thanks for the times when we have done the right thing!

One of the key lines for me in the reading Jesus’ declaration about Peter’s confession: *“Flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven”* (v. 17). God was at work in Peter. Yes, he would mightily mess up, but in this moment, God was at work – and God would be at work later, despite all of Peter’s failings! The faithfulness of God should be celebrated and given thanks for.

In today’s world, in today’s church, with everything being so different because of the global Pandemic let us not forget to notice and name where God is at work. Lift up, celebrate, and give thanks for those things where we sense the presence of the living God. Big or small, obvious, or easy to overlook, there are places where God’s presence is manifest, and we should give thanks.

This is not for one moment to overlook all that still needs to be done or the important issues of the day. But it is to assert that the living God is at work in each of our communities and in each of our lives, and if we cannot sense and celebrate and give thanks for God being present in small things, how are we ever going to claim God’s power and providence in larger things?

Gratitude is a powerful thing. Or, perhaps more accurately, gratitude is an empowering thing. And this reading gives us a chance to give thanks that we might be open to what God will do with us and for us and through us!

Like Peter we are not perfect, not fully understanding, not fully absent of fear when it comes to living out our faith. But confessing nonetheless, speaking and acting in ways that are only possible because we “are empowered not by flesh and blood but by God.”

Prayer of Response, *a hymn by Joseph Hart*

*THIS, this is the God we adore,  
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;  
Whose love is as great as his power,  
And neither knows measure nor end.  
  
'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,  
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;  
We'll praise him for all that is past,  
And trust him for all that's to come.*

*Amen!* HP277

HYMN Give thanks with a grateful heart…

HP-, MP170, RS-, STF78

Our Prayers

Holy God we give you thanks for so many things, a thousand miracles we take for granted every day. Train our hearts that we may live daily out of a deep sense of gratitude and humility for all the ways Your grace and mercy fill our lives.

We know our world is both wonderful and flawed. Bless we pray those parts which are especially damaged, markedly as a result of the Pandemic.

We pray for all suffering from violence or war and pray for all refugees and those seeking asylum. Help us to remember that where people are hurting, you too are wounded.

We think of young people who have received exam results. We pray for them in the decisions they must make, and we remember all involved in education.

We pray for all unwell, whether in body, mind or spirit. We think of all affected by Covid in whatever way. In our hearts we name those we have special concern for....

We remember those who are dying and their loved ones, those who have died and those who are bereaved.

We pray for the Church. Keep us one in faith and service, so that Your Good News might be proclaimed, and Your love and light might be a beacons of hope and purpose in the darkest places.

You, Lord, came to give us life and to do so you had to lay down your own life to bring us back to God. Help us this day to live our lives in gratitude and with hope.

The Lord hears our prayer **Thanks be to God.**

The Lord’s 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.**

HYMN Now thank we all our God

HP566, MP486, RS72, STF81

Blessing

Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

May God give you the grace never to sell yourself short. Grace to do something big for something good. Grace to remember that the world is too dangerous now for anything but truth, and too small for anything but love. **Amen.**

*William Sloane Coffin*

Rev David Coppard MTh Superintendent @ Wiltshire United Area

Bank Chaplain @ Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton

***Our churches may not all be open,***

***but the Church is active and alive.***

*This is service is offered to any and all, with love and prayers.*

**Matthew 16.13-20: Peter’s Declaration about Jesus**

**13 Now when Jesus came into** **the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ 14And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ 15He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’****16Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ 17And 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. 18And 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. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ 20Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.**

**Storytelling The Gospel**

Tell the story encouraging little people to join in the actions as indicated in italics.

Jesus and his friends were walking along. (*walk on the spot*)  
Jesus said, ‘Who do you think I am?’ (*turn both hands upwards*)  
Simon Peter was the first to answer. (*point one finger up*)  
He said, ‘You are the Son of God.’ (*point a finger on the other hand up*)  
Jesus said, ‘You will be called Peter – the rock. (*clench one fist to make a ‘rock’*)  
I will build my Church on you and I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.’ (*clench both fists together and ‘build’*)

**Praying Together with Little People**

Give each child a small stone. Say together, *‘Jesus, help us to build our lives on you’.* Then ask everyone to place their stones, one at a time, in a pile to make a prayer cairn. As they do, say, ‘May (*insert name*) build their life on you.’

Reflection for the Week

*Anselm of Canterbury c.1033-1109*

O Lord my God,  
teach my heart where and how to seek you,  
where and how to find you.  
Lord, if you are not here but absent,  
where shall I seek you?  
But you are everywhere, so you must be here,  
why then do I not seek you?...  
  
Lord, I am not trying to make my way to your height,  
for my understanding is in no way equal to that,  
but I do desire to understand a little of your truth  
which my heart already believes and loves.  
I do not seek to understand so that I may believe,  
but I believe so that I may understand;  
and what is more,  
I believe that unless I do believe I shall not understand.  
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HYMNS AND WORSHIP SONGS

**Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing, *T Luckington***  
"My God and King!"  
The heav'ns are not too high,  
God's praise may thither fly;  
the earth is not too low,  
God's praises there may grow.  
Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,  
"My God and King!"

Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,  
"My God and King!"  
The church with psalms must shout:  
no door can keep them out.  
But, more than all, the heart  
must bear the longest part.  
Let all the world in ev'ery corner sing,  
"My God and King!"

***Go tell it on the mountain, T Go Tell it*** *Over the hills and everywhere;  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus is his name.*

He possessed no riches,  
no home to lay his head;  
He fasted in the desert,  
he gave to others bread:  
  
He reached out and touched them,  
the blind, the deaf, the lame;  
He spoke and listened gladly  
to anyone who came:  
  
Some turned away in anger,  
with hatred in the eye;  
they tried him and condemned him,  
then led him out to die:  
  
‘Father, now forgive them’,  
up on the cross he said;  
In three more days he was alive  
and risen from the dead.

He still comes to people,  
his life moves through the lands;  
He uses us for speaking,  
he touches with our hands:

**Give thanks with a grateful heart *T Give Thanks***  
Give thanks to the Holy One  
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son  
Give thanks with a grateful heart  
Give thanks to the Holy One  
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son  
And now let the weak say, "I am strong"  
Let the poor say, "I am rich  
Because of what the Lord has done for us"  
And now let the weak say, "I am strong"  
Let the poor say, "I am rich  
Because of what the Lord has done for us"  
Give thanks.

**Now thank we all our God,*****T Nun Danket***  
with heart and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things has done,  
in whom this world rejoices;  
who from our mothers' arms  
has blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.  
  
O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us still in grace,  
and guide us when perplexed;  
and free us from all ills,  
in this world and the next.  
  
All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given;  
the Son, and him who reigns  
with them in highest heaven;  
the one eternal God,  
whom earth and heaven adore;  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.  
  
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