



The Sunday Supplement

Issue 9: 16th May 2020

Call to Worship

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;
lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;
lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed" –
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

We come to you O Lord,
seeking answers to our questions.

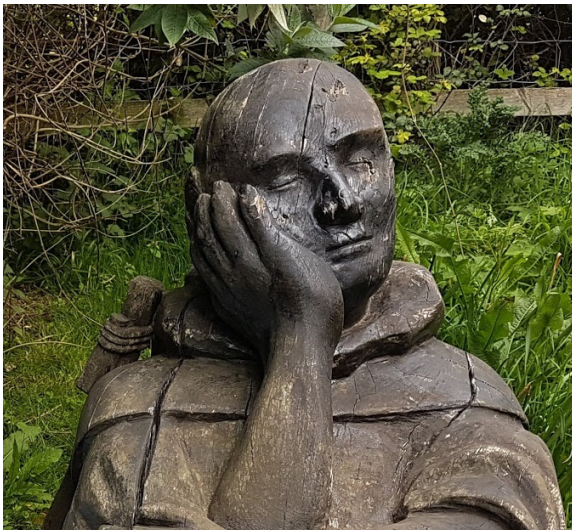
We come to you O God,
because you are the Creator.

But I have trusted your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

We come looking for a song to sing;

We wait for your voice
to call us from beyond our fear.



Meet Brother Percival.

He sits on a bench on the Pilgrims Way above the village of Harrietsham in Kent where Rosemary and Ray have their home.

They have missed going to see him in the last few weeks, but look forward to the time when they will be able to.



Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me: Psalm 23:4

As the global pandemic continues, the shadow of death is a reality for most of us. Many in our church family and local community have experienced the loss of a family member, a friend, or a work colleague. Whether the death is related to Covid-19 or not the current restrictions create complications for those arranging and conducting funerals. For working in health or social care the loss of patients or care home residents is a great sadness. Our losses, like those of others across Britain, are a daily reminder of the reason for the social isolation measures we are all asked to observe.

In our sadness and loss we continue to bring our prayers to God, who comforts the grieving and promises never to leave us struggling alone. These two prayers are part of a service of committal that I will lead for my mother next week.

Loving God, we come to you in our need. You have given us birth and now we face the mystery of death.

Help us to find you in the whole of life, its beginning and its ending.

Help us to discover you in our pain as well as our joy, and in our doubts as well as our believing,

that we might find comfort in your word and light for our darkness.

In the name of Jesus.

Amen.

God of peace, you brought back from the dead our Lord

Jesus,

the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant.

Show us the peace we should seek; show us the peace we should try to give;

show us the peace we may keep;

show us the peace you have given;

and make us what you want us to be;

through Jesus Christ,

to whom be glory for ever. Amen.



Reading

Acts 1:1-8

Thought for the week



Change was in the air. After almost six weeks of meeting behind closed doors the small group of women and men who had been closest to Jesus knew the coming weeks would be different. Some were restless, desperate to know what would happen next. Others were growing weary of Jerusalem, keen to return to their families. The Jewish Harvest festival was approaching. The city would soon be busy with visitors. Complying with the instruction not to leave Jerusalem was proving a challenge for this faithful group.

Change has been in the air in Britain this week. Government advice and policy is beginning to shift. After two months of staying indoors as much as possible people in England are being encouraged to venture out a little more. For some the change is welcome, others find it worrying. Without any clear sense of what will happen next, our present predicament parallels that of the faithful few gathered in Jerusalem two weeks before Pentecost.

Those waiting in Jerusalem found strength and comfort as they met together to pray each day. Huddled together behind closed doors they grew to be a community of believers that would change the world. This small, committed group of ordinary people from diverse backgrounds became the core of the early church. From these small beginnings a worldwide move of God began.

We live in different times. Our long-established patterns of being church have been disrupted. We cannot gather in our church buildings. We are dispersed and often alone. But something is happening. Christians are finding ways to gather to worship and pray at home. In common with the first Christians we find strength and comfort as we connect with each other online, on our doorsteps or through letters, cards, and emails. On a personal note, I have been grateful for the friendship, and support of our church family following the recent death of my mother. I find myself strengthened to face all that must be done, comforted in my bereavement and loss.

As we prepare to celebrate Pentecost at the end of May we have little idea of what might come next in our world. We long to know when we might once again meet to worship together. We grow weary of restrictions on our lives. Today's reading reminds us that we do not need to concern ourselves about the timing of future events. God is in control.

God is at work in and through each of us right now. When the time is right the Spirit will be our guide as we face whatever comes next. All that we have learnt and all that we have experienced will be the foundation for a new way of being church. Change is in the air. God is in control of the past, present, and future. Our part is simply to wait and to be ready for whatever comes next.

Blessing

As the journey continues, remember this:
Our God reigns!
He is robed with majesty and armed with strength.
His kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting.
He holds our world and our lives securely.

So do not be afraid,
but go from here with confidence,
knowing that the God who goes with you
is greater and more powerful
than anything else you will face this week.

Blessed Assurance

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

Refrain:

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

