

## Easter 5 / 6 2020

What we would have had!	8.00 Holy Communion	James 1 vv 22-27 John 16 vv 23-33	
17 <sup>th</sup> May Easter 5 / Easter 6	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 8 v20 – 9 v17 p10 Acts 17 vv 22-31 p1113 I Peter 3 vv 13-22 p1219 John 14 vv 15-21 p1082	SoF 551 Thine Be the Glory 261 I Want to Walk 10 All Heaven Declares 285 Jesus Christ is Risen 357 Living Lord 61 Christ the Lord is Risen
17 <sup>th</sup> May Easter 5 / Easter 6	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 8 v20 – 9 v17 p10 Acts 17 vv 22-31 p1113 I Peter 3 vv 13-22 p1219 John 14 vv 15-21 p1082	MP 180 One Day When Heaven 171 O Love that Wilt Not Psalm 66 9 Alleluia! Alleluia! 94 I Serve a Risen Saviour 268 When the Trumpet of the

**Romans 12:** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Change was last week's theme – changes in our own lives, changes in the world. Some of these changes are for the good and we thank God for them. Some are for the worse and we seek God's guidance and strength as we have to face them. Some change we long for; some, perhaps, we fear; but, as Christians our confidence is in God, Who makes all things new. The final change in our own lives comes when we go to be with Him for ever, to know Him as He knows us and to be made like Him, like God Who is pure love. The final change for this planet, the universe, the whole created order is when Jesus returns, when there will be new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Ultimately, there is nothing whatever to fear because God is in charge. As was revealed to Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth century, "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well." We can trust God.

In that light, the light of eternity, I want this week to think about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in our own lives. The Old Testament lesson today speaks of us human beings made in the image of God. This is what we are meant to be, the image of perfect love. Adam is described as the son of God. We children of Adam are made to be the children of God. But, like Adam, we are rebellious children. We fall far short of our calling to live lives which are a credit to the family to which we belong as children of the Heavenly Father. Much, if not all, of the trouble in the world has its origin in our human rejection of our Heavenly Father's commandment that we should love one another.

And yet God does not give up on us. God saved Noah and his family in the Ark and all the animals, the whole created order. God always provides the means of salvation. All we have to do is to turn to Him in order to come into our inheritance as His children, made in His image, to live as He would have us live.

Speaking to the Athenians in today's New Testament lesson, S Paul rejects the false gods which people worship (the things we imagine our lives are worth living for) and reminds us that God has made us all. He has made all the people of all the nations and provides for their needs. If only we would lift up our eyes and see what God has created and consider what He has done for us, we would reach out to Him. He is not far away. *In Him we live and move and have our being.*

And yet humanity rejects God and there is so much sorrow and sin on earth. There will be judgment. God is just.

In Jesus, God reaches out to us. He reaches out in love and calls us to repent, to turn to Him, to turn from evil, to be transformed in body, mind and spirit, to become, like Jesus, people of unconditional love. Jesus is the standard. Jesus is the judge. And Jesus is the advocate Who pleads successfully in the divine court

for the forgiveness of our offending human race. Jesus is the One Who stands with us and for us before the Throne of Grace. S Paul says that God has confirmed all this by raising Jesus from the dead.

The Greek word for advocate is Paraclete (Παρακλητος). Jesus is our Paraclete. He does not leave us comfortless when He departs this earth in body to go the Father. He sends another Paraclete – the Holy Spirit. The Paraclete is our advocate at the Throne of Grace, representing us, praying for us, inspiring our prayers, inspiring our lives. Paraclete is also translated comforter. He brings comfort. He helps us to bear whatever life might throw at us. He consoles us. But never lose sight of the fact that to comfort primarily means to give strength. It's the same *fort* as in *fortress* or *fortification*. The Holy Spirit consoles us and gives us strength. In his piece on Monday's diocesan digest, the Dean, Philip Hesketh (quoting Archbishop William Temple), says that this is true comfort – both to console and to give us the strength to deal with whatever it is that we have to deal with.

A bit of Trinitarian Theology here. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are both called Paraclete. They are one in all eternity - creating, redeeming and sanctifying all that is (including us). The Son and the Spirit are one with the Father in this perfect unity of love which makes the world, which restores the world and which makes the world holy. Through faith and Baptism, we are included in that perfect unity of love. We dwell in God the Holy Trinity. God dwells in us, just as God is in Christ.

Our Christian calling then is to live up to this great truth, to be transformed into the likeness of the God in Whom we dwell, the God Who dwells in us. In other words, through God's grace, to grow in Christlikeness, to be people of love.

That all sounds very theoretical and theological, but really it is very simple, as S James says in the Epistle we should have had at 8.00: *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* It is obvious how we should live if we are to live as the people of God.

S Peter brings out the same thoughts in the epistle for 9.30 & 11.00. We are redeemed by Jesus. We are called to follow His example. He supplies us with the strength to do so.

It ought to be that the faithfulness of our Christian lives is such that other people ask the reason for the hope which is in us. When we tell them, they too may come to share this hope. Vv 19&20 of this chapter are hard to understand. They probably mean that, between Good Friday and Easter Day, while His body was in the tomb, in spirit Jesus preached the Gospel to those already dead. They remind me too of verses from Psalm 139 which we thought about last week: *Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit : or whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there : if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning : and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there also shall thy hand lead me : and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me : then shall my night be turned to day. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day : the darkness and light to thee are both alike.*

So God is with us always and everywhere and we can trust Him for our lives. Through His grace, we seek to grow more like Him here on earth and to do the things that He would do in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.

**O** LORD, from whom all good things do come; Grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*