

**Sunday 1st June –
First Sunday After Trinity**
Led by Sue Nelms, LLM



Opening Words

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the life-giver.
The peace of the triune God be always with you
and also with you.

Gathering Prayer

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.
The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Hymn – Tell Out My Soul

1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness
of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my
spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his
word –
in God my Saviour shall my heart
rejoice.

2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness
of his name!
Make known his might, the deeds
his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age
the same –
his holy name: the Lord, the
Mighty One.

3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness
of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their
glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills
are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted
high.

4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of
his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy
sure:
tell out, my soul, the greatness of
the Lord
to children's children and for
evermore!

Meditation

Take up a comfortable posture. Close your eyes.

And first, we begin to centre ourselves.

Focus on your breathing.

Notice your breathing in... and breathing out.

Do not try and control it, but just focus on this breathing. In and out.

If you get distracted, do not worry.

But just bring your attention back.

Notice breathing in and out. In and out.

Confession

If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,

Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness,

so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

cf Psalm 130.3-4

Father, you come to meet us when we return to you:

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Jesus, you died on the cross for our sins:

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Spirit, you give us life and peace:

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Readings by Joshua Vanneck

Ephesians 3.-14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Mark 1.9-18

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵ and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

¹⁶ As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake - for they were fishermen.

¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Reflection by Jane McLarty (LLM in Training)

I live in Cherry Hinton, and in those dim and far-off days before lockdown, occasionally in the middle of the village you would see a lone figure (sometimes accompanied by a friend), standing with a Bible in his hand and declaiming the gospel. It was as though he had an invisible forcefield around him, because no-one went within ten feet of him. They were I think from the Brethren church up the hill. You couldn't help admiring them for their sheer doggedness in the face of utter indifference, if nothing else.

Many of us when considering the first mark of mission, our subject today, 'To proclaim the good news of the kingdom', if we're honest, get a bit of a sinking feeling. Perhaps because we imagine proclaiming the good news as standing on a street corner like our friend from the Brethren and think that is the last thing on earth anyone could possibly persuade us to do.

Perhaps because we feel we have not shared our faith as we could have done and so we feel guilty. Perhaps we feel embarrassment at the prospect of talking of something so personal to our friends or family – a very British reaction.

I have felt all those emotions myself. In fact when I was training as an LLM the module on mission was the one I looked forward to least – but actually ended up enjoying the most, and I think it was the one that changed me the most. Why? Because it helped me see the task of 'proclaiming the good news' very differently.

Our God is a God of mission: we see that in our reading from Mark today – here is Jesus, whom John tells us is the eternal Word, with God from the beginning, now sent into the world to announce the next great act in God's dealings with humanity: 'the time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God has come near; repent – change your way of life – and believe in the good news.'

Luke's gospel makes it clear what that good news is:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

Freedom, healing, the message that God loves us – good news indeed! Our God is a God of mission, who has already taken the initiative to bring the good news to us and continues to be work in the world to draw people to Godself – we are joining in the work of God. We do not have to do it all ourselves.

Now, the ‘good news of the kingdom’ is wonderful but when we think of it in terms of freedom, healing, and so on, it might sound a little abstract or impersonal. So let me ask you this question: what for you is the good thing about being a Christian?

Some of the responses from a discussion group in my own church were: being part of a community; giving meaning or a sense of purpose to life; for some of us, being rescued from a way of life that was not doing us any good.

Why wouldn’t other people want this too? Why wouldn’t we want this for our friends and neighbours? So there is our motivation for trying to share something of the good news: it is rooted and grounded in love, to steal a phrase from our other reading from Ephesians, rooted and grounded in having tasted God’s love for ourselves and wanting to pass it on to others that we love.

Our Ephesians reading is a wonderful prayer, which we could take as a prayer for us as we contemplate sharing the news of the treasure we have found, or rather, that has searched for and found us.

It’s a marvellously Trinitarian prayer: prayed consciously in the presence of the Father - ‘I bow my knees before the Father’ - the creator of all, who loves all that he has made and works endlessly to redeem it, to rescue it, to make everything come right.

Paul prays that we may be strengthened with power through God’s Spirit within, in our inner self, our true self. A reminder that this is not just about human plans and human endeavours – we have a supernatural source of power on our side.

But most of all Paul prays about love, that Christ may live in our hearts as we are rooted and grounded in love. Gardening metaphors that

many of us may take to! The love of God nourishes us, feeds us, helps us to grow – partly we grow by taking risks, and we have the courage to take the risks because we know that God’s love for us is absolute, we can’t lose it by getting things wrong.

My mother is a great craftswoman – spinning, weaving, embroidery, pottery, any of these things she turns her hand to she does wonderfully – my father says they’ll be banning her from entering the competitions in the village shows soon. Once she showed me a piece of tapestry she had been working on and she said, ‘There’s a mistake there, but I wove it in, I made it part of the pattern.’

God is the great creator, and he can redeem even our mistakes and make them part of the pattern – so let us not worry about our inadequacies, but think of the Spirit’s power, and indeed the reach of God’s love.

Returning to Ephesians, Paul talks of this, God’s love, in a slightly disjointed sentence - he prays that we may have the power to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth – I think he must mean of Christ’s love – and prays that we may be filled with all the fullness of God – and again, I think he means the fullness of God’s character of love, abundant, overflowing love.

If we could open ourselves up to this gift, what difference would it make in our life?

But to me the key phrase that jumps out at me is the last one: ‘to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine’.

This takes me back to an occasion when I was fresh out of university and training to be a computer programmer. I absolutely hated it. If you had studied Classics, Latin and Greek, and weren’t sure what you wanted to do, this was something they often recommended in the Careers Service. Logical mind, good at languages – computing is obviously what you should do. I got a job with a company in London that put me on an 8-week course to learn about programming, and it was sheer purgatory. The misery led me to party as hard as I could in non-work hours as an escape from the unhappiness – I was not leading a very Christian life at that time. During the working day, often the only thing that kept me going was occasionally attending a lunchtime

communion service in one of the City churches. My colleagues knew I did this, and one day one of them, Jackie, asked, 'You go to church, don't you? Why do you go?'

There was the classic evangelism opportunity! Someone pretty much inviting me to tell them the gospel! Did I elegantly sum up the message of God's love for humanity, Jesus' self-giving, our welcome into the joyful community of the church, free of guilt?

Well, I'm afraid not. All I managed to say was, 'It helps me.'

Let's fast forward a few months; Jackie and I are having a coffee together and she tells me, 'By the way – I've decided to become a Christian. They told me I should tell someone and I thought I'd tell you.'

It turned out that, undeterred by my less than full response, she had become curious as to why going to church might be helpful, and had started investigating for herself. And little did she know, but her telling me about her conversion made me realise how far I had drifted away from God myself and was the start of my journey back to a fuller faith too.

He is able to accomplish far more than we ask or imagine. Jackie's story sticks in my mind because, unusually I think, I saw how things turned out, how God used my feeble comment to spark a journey that led to faith. I find it very encouraging to have seen how the Spirit weaves our inadequacies into the tapestry of God's purposes.

I see also that what has an impact on people is the personal and authentic – not the 'party line' as it were but what faith really means to us at that moment. But I also see that it might be a good idea to give some thought beforehand as to what you might say if someone asks you 'Why do you go to church?' or 'Why do you believe in God?'

So may I invite you to commit to a bit of homework this week: to think further about what the good thing is about being a Christian for you, so that we may when asked give an account of the hope we have within us.

And let us trust in the loving power of God, Father, Son and Spirit, to accomplish abundantly far more with our feeble words than all we can ask or imagine.

Affirmation of faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

cf Ephesians 3

Prayers of Intercession led by Michaela McNeill

Let us pray for the Church and for the world and let us thank God for his goodness.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in faith.

We pray for your Church today, gathering all around the world in tiny churches, great cathedrals and online, to praise you and to hear your holy word. Give us a sense of expectation as we come, and inspiration as we go. Help us to put our differences behind us and to unite instead behind the great commission of Jesus, to make disciples of all nations.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for a world which struggles to live justly and in peace. We pray for those who have to search for daily food or walk long distances

for clean water. We remember with sadness those whose lives are cut short by disease or violence, and those who have fled their homes in fear. We pray for those who meet persecution and torture with courage and dignity. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in the heavenly places.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We thank you for those people who sustain us by their love and forgiveness. Thank you for the network of people with whom our lives are inextricably linked and who make the fabric of our family and community life. Make us alert to each other's needs and quick to serve and encourage one another. May our gentleness with each other reflect your gentleness with us.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are laid low by suffering and those who are experiencing the outrageous assault of pain. We trust your love for us and for all people, and your deep desire for our well-being. As we name in our hearts those who are in the grip of suffering, help us so to pray and to act that they may know your comfort and healing, both now and in the coming days.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We thank you for those people who have given us the examples and models by which we try to live. We thank you for those who have lived and died in quiet holiness and whose prayers have helped to sustain the world. Help us to live in the light by which they lived, and to worship the source of that light, Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and all people to your unfailing love.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Collect for the First Sunday after Trinity

O God,
the strength of all those who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in the keeping of your commandments
we may please you both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

Blessing

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,
defend you on every side,
and guide you in truth and peace;

And the blessing of God almighty
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ.