

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May –  
The Seventh Sunday of Easter**  
Led by Sue Nelms, LLM



**Opening Words**

Welcome in the name of Christ.  
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you  
**and also with you.**

**Gathering Prayer**

We stand before the throne of God  
with countless crowds  
from every nation and race, tribe and language.

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

*cf Revelation 7.9,12*

**Hymn – The Head That Once Was Crowned With Thorns**

1 The head that once was  
crowned with thorns  
is crowned with glory now;  
a royal diadem adorns  
the mighty Victor's brow.

2 The highest place that heaven  
affords  
is his, is his by right,  
the King of kings and Lord of  
lords,  
and heaven's eternal Light:

4 To them the cross, with all its  
shame,  
with all its grace, is given;  
their name an everlasting name,  
their joy the joy of heaven.

5 They suffer with the Lord  
below,  
they reign with him above;  
their profit and their joy to know  
the mystery of his love.

3 The joy of all who dwell above,  
the joy of all below,  
to whom he manifests his love,  
and grants his name to know.

6 The cross he bore is life and  
health,  
though shame and death to him;  
his people's hope, his people's  
wealth,  
their everlasting theme.

## **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.

We reflect on some words from today's gospel reading.

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

<sup>18</sup> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

<sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

## **Confession**

What God has prepared for those who love him,

he has revealed to us through the Spirit;

for the Spirit searches everything.

Therefore, let us in penitence open our hearts to the Lord,  
who has prepared good things for those who love him.

*1 Corinthians 2.9,10*

Lord Jesus, you suffered a cruel death on the cross for  
our redemption,

yet we have forgotten your pain

and stayed in the realm of the evil you defeated.

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

Lord Jesus, you were raised from death to bring us new life,  
yet we have preferred the comfort of the familiar,  
and the empty promises of a sinful world.

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you have ascended to your Father and our Father,  
your God and our God;

plead there at the right hand of God

for our forgiveness and entry into the fullness of his presence.

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 Rick Nelms**

### **Acts 1:15-17**

<sup>15</sup> In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred and twenty people) and said, <sup>16</sup> 'Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus - <sup>17</sup> for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.'

<sup>21</sup> So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us - one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.' <sup>23</sup> So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> Then they prayed and said, 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup> to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to

go to his own place.’<sup>26</sup> And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

## **John 17:6-19**

<sup>6</sup> ‘I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup> for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup> I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

## **Reflection by Rev Claire Robertson**

We have recently had local elections to determine who our councillors and police commissioners will be. Whilst there are many candidates only one can be chosen for each post. People vote, often for a party rather than the individual who stands, which probably makes not being the successful candidate easier to bear.

In today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear about another type of election – the choosing of an apostle to take the place of Judas Iscariot, as one of the twelve. All we know about the two candidates, Barsabbus Justus and Matthias, is that they have been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry until his Ascension. They have been proposed after much prayer by a group of 120 men and women.

The followers of Jesus are choosing an individual not a party candidate which makes the election rather more personal.

When Matthias is chosen, I wonder how he feels? Is he joyful or is he daunted by the weight of the office he now holds - or perhaps he experiences both emotions.

And Barsabbus Justus – is he crushed by not being chosen or is he rather relieved not to be involved in the governance of the church at that level so he can go out and engage in some particular type of mission?

The Bible tells us no more about either of these men but in Christian tradition there is a legend that Barsabbus Justus became a bishop and he is venerated as a saint. He offered himself for service and God led him to where he was needed – to a little village just 20 miles north west of Jerusalem. God had a plan for him as he has a plan for each one of us.

As Cardinal Newman famously said :

“God has created me to do him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission; I never may know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I have a part in a great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.”

This Sunday, marks the end of Christian Aid week where we are reminded of the need to be in solidarity and relationship with our sisters and brothers across the world. To quote Newman , we are called to be “a link in a chain”. This Sunday also falls between the Feasts of Ascension and Pentecost, when we are invited to pray to God the Father “Thy kingdom come thy will be done”.

These words from the Lord's Prayer are so familiar to us, but how do we discern what God's will is for us and for the world? One thing is clear and that is that we need both prayer and action. One without the

other is not enough. Through prayer and action God will strengthen our relationship with him and with each other and we will have “a part in a great work”.

The charity Christian Aid encourages us to both pray and act for a world where poverty is history. It focuses on the poor and dispossessed because the mission of Jesus also focuses on them. It invites us to engage, as the liberation theologians do, by taking action for God’s kingdom and then reflecting through prayer on those actions and continuing that circle of action and prayer.

The great liberation theologian Gutierrez tells us that by choosing to send his Only Son to be born in a stable and to minister not in Rome, the centre of the Empire, but in despised and insignificant Galilee, God shows his preferential love for the poor as well as the universality of his love. At the start of his public ministry, Jesus emphasised that he came “to bring good news to the poor” (Luke 4.18; 6:20; 7:21-22) thus “making a personal option for the poor”. In allowing himself to undergo the death of a criminal, Jesus again identified himself with the marginalised.

Christian Aid invites us to identify with the marginalised too, by funding projects in developing countries through our financial contributions and challenging unjust structures in our world. This year the focus is on seeking to reduce climate change. The effects of climate change are catastrophic now for those in developing countries as well as being catastrophic for all of us in the future.

So, this week, let us take action by generously supporting Christian Aid financially if we are able to do so, and by changing something in our lifestyle to help reduce climate change. Then, in the best traditions of the early church and the liberation theologians, let us reflect prayerfully on what God is calling us to do as individuals and as a church as we offer our service to God and see where he leads us. Amen

### **Affirmation of faith**

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**All Though he was divine,  
he did not cling to equality with God,**

**but made himself nothing.  
Taking the form of a slave,  
he was born in human likeness.  
He humbled himself  
and was obedient to death,  
even the death of the cross.  
Therefore God has raised him on high,  
and given him the name above every name:  
that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bow,  
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.**      *cf Philippians 2.6-11*

### **Prayers of Intercession led by Clare Crang**

Today our intercessions are based on the prayers of the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell during Sunday Worship on Radio 4 last week. Stephen Cottrell acknowledged that sometimes it's difficult to find words for our prayers. Sometimes, he said, it is helpful to make prayer more physical, to express in external signs and symbols the internal longing and desires of our hearts.

The following way of praying is based on what the Dutch theologian Henri Nouwen called 'opening up our tightly clenched fists' to pray.

You take your closed fist, and gradually open it up, to receive the blessings and wisdom that God longs to give each and every one of us. In this way, your hands open before God; your hand itself can be a basic pattern and reminder of how to pray.

So I hold my clenched fist in front of me now.

I stretch out my thumb. We begin with thanksgiving, thanking God for today and for the good things in our lives. We thank God that we are not alone in this world; we are thankful for the abundance of new life in the natural world around us, for the new ways that are beginning to open up for us after months of being in and out of lockdown...

Then I stretch out my index finger, the finger we use to point. So we pray for direction in our lives, for direction in our church-life and in the world. We ask for courage and wisdom for all your people in the important decisions that need to be made about caring for our resources and each other...

I now add my middle finger, the tallest on my hand as we pray for those who have power in the world: for our Church leaders, for the Queen, for our government, for those recently elected to positions of political power, for governments across the world. We pray that those in power will be guided by principles of justice, peace, humility and the desire to do what is right...

My ring finger is the weakest finger. It can't do much on its own. We pray for the people we rely on: the retailers, delivery people, those who over the months have kept our water and electrical supplies going. We pray for those who help us, our friends and family. We pray too, for all those who care for others, that you will give them strength and compassion...

Lastly I stretch out my little finger and pray for those who need help: the sick, the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, the bereaved and those who face violence. We remember those who have died and those who mourn. May your presence bring hope to the hearts of all who suffer...

And finally we lift both our hands to God in thanksgiving, and pray for our own needs...

Together we say **Amen**

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

**Collect for the Seventh Sunday of Easter**

O God the King of glory,  
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ  
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:

we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,  
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us  
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,  
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**

May the Spirit,  
who hovered over the waters when the world was created,  
breathe into us the life he gives. **Amen.**

May the Spirit,  
who overshadowed the Virgin when the eternal Son came among us,  
make us joyful in the service of the Lord. **Amen.**

May the Spirit,  
who set the Church on fire upon the Day of Pentecost,  
bring the world alive with the love of the risen Christ. **Amen.**

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.**