

5th July 2020 6 pm From Pain to Pearls

Led by Ann Gibbons. Meditation and prayers by Lynda Howells

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Introduction

[Ann Gibbons:]

Welcome again to this healing and refreshing service from St John's Church Kenworth Sundays at 6pm. This is our third time of recording these services. So we hope you are enjoying them, and finding them useful. Tonight, our theme is 'From Pain to Pearls'. And once again, Lynda will bring her meditation. There will be times of quiet reflection, music with pictures and a prayer activity which we will explain later. But tonight we thought we would have more music as worship songs for you to listen to or to join in with, as you wish. So a prayer to begin. And then straight into our worship song. After this, Lynda will read her meditation, and there will be a time for quiet reflection.

So we pray:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with our theme of 'From Pain to Pearls' tonight, we pray for the healing of all those with pain, hurt and distress of COVID-19, or other pain in their lives. Come, Lord, we pray, that we may all be refreshed. To turn and trust in You afresh. Thank You for Your love for all of us. Amen.

Song: Here I Am to Worship

Light of the world,
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You

Chorus:

Here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God.
You're altogether lovely,
All together worthy,
All together wonderful to me.

King of all days,
Oh so highly exalted,
Glorious in heaven above.
Humbly You came to the earth You created,
All for love's sake became poor.

Chorus

Bridge:

I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross
I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross

Repeat Bridge

Meditation: Pearls from Pain

[Lynda Howells:]

God invites us to rest awhile.

Be still.

Come away to let Him carry our load.

So relax and be comfortable.

Breathe out your burdens.

And breathe in God's love for you and hope for the future.

My pain, Father, comes in so many forms.

I try to sleep, but I toss and turn.

Thoughts, doubts, failures, worries, all mixed up, whirling around in my mind like a whirling dervish, tossed like a small boat, fighting against a wind and a rough sea, buffeted, out of control.

Still I toss and turn, wide awake, exhausted.

Tired, defeated.

And in my own eyes, a failure.

Pain, Father, pain.

I feel for those I love: those in my family, my church family, who hurt, who are suffering, grieving. sad, lost.

Pain.

The pain I feel when I watch the TV, the news.

The violence.

Suffering because of man's inhumanity to man.

Children left as orphans.

War and terror tearing lives apart.

And I watch.

Helpless, sad.

I watch.

Pain.

I feel for those I care about who are so ill, with no hope.

Pain as I watch their families suffer

Helpless, sad.

I stand by and watch.

Pain I feel when I try to understand our politics in government and the church.

Where are You, Lord, in all the chaos?

As we seem to lurch from crisis to crisis,

and all with our own point of view.

Helpless, lost.

I stand by and watch.

What's the point, Lord?

What do I do with my pain?

Where does it hurt me?

My confused mind, my tired body.

When does pain come?

Niggling doubts, arrows like darts nipping at my heels, wearing me down,
robbing me of my peace,
or at tides with the force of rushing water, torrential rain,
flooding my whole being.

How does the pain come?

Whispering muttering in my inner soul:

"Failed again. No good, give up. You're letting everyone down."

Why, why do I lay awake, tossing, turning, suffering?

Why do I feel this emotional pain, physical pain?

After all, I'm a Christian and shouldn't suffer these agonies.

Where are You, Father God, in my pain?

Tell me. Show me. What do I do with my pain?

My feelings of worry anger confusion, hopelessness?

Help me Father, please. I can't help myself.

Jesus. Jesus.

We are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who's suffered more than we can ever begin to know. We will never experience suffering as He did. And yet He never turned back.

John gives us a picture in Revelation 21 verse 21: 12 gates for 12 pearls. And each gate was made of a simple pearl.

So where do pearls come from?

There is an oyster into whose shell one day comes a grain of sand.

This tiny piece of quartz lies there imposing pain and stress.

So what does the oyster do?

Lots of choices.

The oyster could do as so many men and women have done in times of adversity, and openly rebelled against God.

The oyster could, metaphorically speaking, shake a fist at God in His face, saying, "Why is this happening to me?"

"It's not fair."

"It's not true,"

or even, "There's no such thing as pain."

"It's in my mind playing tricks."

"I must think positive thoughts."

And yet the oyster does none of these.

The oyster slowly and patiently, and with infinite care, builds upon the grain of sand, layer upon layer of a milky substance, which covers every sharp corner and coats every cutting edge.

Gradually, slowly, a pearl is made.

The oyster has learned, by the will of God, to turn a grain of sand, which is a pain and an irritant, into a pearl.



As John has told us, the entrance into the New Jerusalem is through a gate made of pearl, pointing and reminding us that the way into the City of God is through a wound, which has been healed.

As I lay in my confused state, lost, searching, struggling,
I stop.
I look into the face of my Saviour:
My Jesus, who gave up everything for me, for you.
He is your Jesus too.

Our Father God, arms outstretched, to hold us, to comfort us,
to take our pains and turn them into pearls.

Our Father who loves and cares for us more than we can ever believe or understand.

Our Father who understands us better than we understand ourselves.

Our Father who never gives up on us, even when we give up on ourselves.

Our Father who's always there to take our hand and walk with us,
guide us through confusion and uncertainty.

He's always there to guide us in our prayers
and through the fog of daily living.

Father God, we come to You in trust for healing and wholeness.
Help us to turn every wound we bear in our lives into a pearly gate,
something through which we can help others to pass through,
to find faith, hope and love,
and knowing the precious peace and love of Jesus.

May my pain, my confusion, anything which rubs me and separates me from
the precious peace of God, be turned into pearls through the love and the
power of the Holy Spirit living in my life and in your life,

Amen.

[Music]

[Ann:]

Thank you Lynda for your meditation. Your words are always so moving and thought-provoking.

Before our prayer activity, we have another song. 'The power of Your love', 'Lord, I come to You'.

Song: The Power of Your Love

Lord, I come to You
Let my heart be changed, renewed
Flowing from the grace
That I've found in You
Lord, I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of Your love

Lord, unveil my eyes
Let me see You face to face
The knowledge of Your love
As You live in me
Lord, renew my mind
As Your will unfolds in my life
In living every day
By the power of Your love

Chorus:

Hold me close
Let Your love surround me
Bring me near
Draw me to Your side
And as I wait
I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love

Chorus x 2

Prayer activity

[Ann:]

So, from pain to pearls.

What would your pain be?

Which is probably a strange question to ask in these times. The pain. We all have things in our lives, those grains of sand that irritate or annoy us. Do they turn to pearls, when we look back?

Then what pearls, could you give thanks for

Our prayer activity is firstly to write a pain. It can be a single word or a few words. You may be prompted to write a list or something totally unconnected with the COVID-19 virus.

Then also write your pearl.

What could you give thanks for? Something the Lord has shown you, taught you, a growth in your faith? A stepping out into something new, or an answer to an ongoing prayer?

During this activity in church, we used cards to write our pain and pearls, and then placed them at the foot of a cross, to give what we had written to the Lord.

We then invited people to come forward for a blessing prayer, the same prayer said over each person individually. We have done this in small groups too. Both were moving in their own way. We had thought how we could do this in a recorded service and wondered how to 'tweak' this prayer. But we felt led not to change it at all.

This is a prayer especially for you, each person watching, no-one left out.

So after you've had time to write your pain or pearl, or just watch the pictures and listen to the music, if you so wish. we invite you to listen to this prayer.

[Music]



So we invite you to listen to this blessing prayer, said slowly so that you can absorb the words. The words will appear on the screen. And again, write it down if you want to, but maybe first just listen.

So, a prayer for you.

Lord, we come to You in the assurance that You are present with us now.

We do not have to seek Your presence.

We are daily living in Your presence.

Make us aware of it,

make it real to us,

and help us in these moments of prayer, to know that we are speaking to one who is near, and not far off,

whose love is all around us, and who knows our every need.

We ask it through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Song: Hide me now under your wings

Verse 1:

Hide me now
Under your wings
Cover me
Within your mighty hand

Verse 2:

Find rest my soul
In Christ alone
Know his power
In quietness and trust

Chorus:

When the oceans rise and thunders roar
I will soar with you above the storm
Father you are king over the flood
I will be still and know you are God

Chorus x 2

Verse 2

Chorus x 3

Prayers

[Ann:]

Lynda will now lead us in prayer, followed by a blessing. And the grace to end this service. Thank you for being with us.

[Lynda:]

We will now have our prayers.

Lord, as we come to You in the assurance that You are present with us now. We do not have to seek Your presence. We are daily living in Your presence, make us aware of it, make it real to us and help us in these moments of prayer.

To know that we are speaking to one another and to one who is near and not far off, whose love is all around us. And who knows our every need.

We ask it to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Normally at our services in church Ann and I offer to pray with anyone in need of personal prayer. As this cannot happen at the moment, there will be an opportunity during the prayers for you to ask your Father God for help, for healing, in fact, anything that you need. Just talk to Him and tell Him what's on your mind.

Father, we come to You just as we are, warts and all, knowing that each one is special and loved by You.

We bring to You our world, all the people who are suffering from the effects of COVID-19, whether it's through bereavement, isolation, illness, loss of employment, mental anxiety, loneliness, fear for the future, fear of the unknown.

We ask that Your Holy Spirit would bring healing, hope for the future, and peace to our world.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray that a vaccine will be found to free us from the grip of the virus, and the devastation that it has caused.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We thank You for the dedication of so many doctors, nurses, carers, emergency services, the military and all are helping in the communities, in the shops.

We press specially for teachers, as the children start returning to school. We thank You for their commitment and dedication.

We ask You to protect them from the virus and keep them well.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for our government, that they will be guided by You and have wisdom, knowledge and discernment in dealing with the virus and also about the way forward to ease us out of lockdown. We pray that Your Holy Spirit would come in power to anoint and empower the government to follow You, and have wisdom and integrity in all they do and say.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for countries around the world, especially where poverty is a major concern. Please may their people be helped and their needs met.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Now as we start to come out of lockdown we pray that people will be sensible, kind and caring and respect each other as a way forward is found.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

There will now be a short time for you to have time with your heavenly Father, for His Holy Spirit to minister to you as you need.

Just talk to Him,

Your Saviour, Jesus, is with you.

[pause]

Precious Lord, we commit ourselves afresh into Your loving faithful care. Help us to shine a light for you in the darkness.

You are our hope, Faithful One.

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

Shall we now bless each other in the words of the Grace. Say together,

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us, and those whom we love
evermore.
Amen.**

A final blessing from Numbers chapter 6:

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
The Lord turn His face towards you.
And give you His peace.

God bless.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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