

17th May 2020 10am The Father Will Give You The Spirit of Truth

Service led by Gill Palmer, talk by Sam Whiteside,
Bible reading and prayers by Charlie Palmer

Preparation.....	1
Hymn: Alleluia, sing to Jesus.....	2
First Scripture reading: Acts 17:22-31 [NIVUK 1984 edition].....	3
Second Scripture reading: John 14:15-21 [NIVUK 1984 edition].....	4
Talk.....	4
Creed.....	6
Intercessions.....	7
The collect for the 6 th Sunday of Easter.....	8
Prayers.....	8
Blessing.....	8
The Peace.....	9

[Gill Palmer:] [Responses read by Gill and Charlie Palmer]

Good evening, and welcome to this service of evening prayer. I'm Gill Palmer and I am the Eco church representative for St. John's Kenilworth. I do hope that in this strange, unprecedented time that you've been able to appreciate afresh the wonders of God's beautiful creation. Later, Sam will bring us a talk on the theme, "the Father will give you the Spirit of truth".

Preparation

So let us be still.

[Pause]

The light and peace of Jesus Christ be with you

All and also with you.

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

All Let us rejoice and sing God's praise for ever.

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

**All Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.**

**We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord.
All Amen.

Blessed are you, sovereign God,
our light and our salvation;
to you be glory and praise for ever.
You led your people to freedom
by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
May we who walk in the light of your presence
acclaim your Christ, rising victorious,
as he banishes all darkness from our hearts and minds.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
All Blessed be God for ever.

The day is almost over, and the evening has come;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your Spirit come down upon us
to set us free to sing your praise
for ever and ever.
All Amen.

Hymn: Alleluia, sing to Jesus

Alleluia, sing to Jesus,
His the sceptre, His the throne;
Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone.
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion
Thunder like a mighty flood.
Jesus, out of every nation,
Hath redeemed us by his blood.

Alleluia! Not as orphans
Are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! He is near us;
Faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received him
When the forty days were o'er,
Shall our hearts forget his promise,
'I am with you evermore'?

Alleluia! bread of heaven,
Thou on earth our food and stay;
Alleluia! here the sinful
Flee to thee from day to day.
Intercessor, friend of sinners,
Earth's Redeemer, plead for me.
Where the songs of all the sinless
Sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia! King eternal,
Thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia! born of Mary,
Earth Thy footstool, heaven Thy throne:
Thou within the veil hast entered,
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest;
Thou on earth both priest and victim
In the Eucharistic feast.

First Scripture reading: Acts 17:22-31 [NIVUK 1984 edition]

[Gill:]

Charlie and I will now bring you this evening's readings.

[Charlie:]

The first reading is from the book of Acts, chapter 17. reading from verse 22.

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now, what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ 'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ "For in him we live and move and have our being." As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring."

²⁹ ‘Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by man’s design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.’

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Second Scripture reading: John 14:15-21 [NIVUK 1984 edition]

[Gill:]

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ ‘If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever – ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.’

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Talk

And now Sam is going to bring us his talk.

[Sam Whiteside:]

Good evening, “Father will give you the Spirit of Truth” is the subject for tonight.

Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, only gives an outline of three of Paul's sermons:

- In Acts 13:16-41, there is one preached to Jews who were well-versed in the Old Testament.
- In Acts 14, there's an address to pagans in Lystra.
- And in Acts 17:22-31, which is our reading tonight, we have Paul's explanation of the faith to those who I suspect had no knowledge of all the Old Testament Scriptures.

It is likely that Luke, who was of course writing in defence of the followers of Jesus, would use the one we are considering this evening as a flop, as some do. In fact, as we shall see later, it was anything but a flop, although it may have appeared to be.

The time was during Paul’s second missionary journey. And he had arrived in Athens. There were idols everywhere: wood, stones, silver, gold, and maybe some other metal ones. Paul, I guess, was distressed and surprised. How could they worship all these things that could not hear or communicate? Then we get idols, spirits that were supposed to inhabit these images, worshipped by learned

people. How was it that Paul came to give this address to the meeting of, it's interpreted, "Mars Hill". It seems like an address to people who were pagans.

There seemed to be no legal charges against him: no prosecutor, no real formal interrogation, no verdict, no sentence. He was just asked to give an account of what he was teaching. Did they think he was going to tell them about another god to add to their collection? From Luke's rendering, there seems to be coming across, that they were contemptuous of Paul. "You're bringing strange ideas to our ears," they said in verse 20. The question was, was he going to be given the freedom to preach or be censored and silenced? Paul had courage to tell the truth to these pagan audience. We might ask, how do we, how do we give an account of what we believe?

"[I] see, you are very religious," he said to them. He took as his subject, the fact that they worshipping an unknown God. It's what they did. Paul had, of course, seen such an altar, as he had been going around the city. But he did not immediately challenge their folly of this idolatry. But he did question their own acknowledgement of their ignorance: what they thought. Paul made another claim to enlighten their ignorance by insisting that the living God, the true God, exposed the error of idolatry, what they did not know. Let's deal with Paul's account of his teaching:

- First of all, "God is the Creator. He made the world and everything in it. He is Lord of heaven on earth. He does not live in man-made temples." Any attempt to contain Him in a building or a concept is ridiculous.
- Secondly, "God is the Sustainer of life. He gives all humans life and breath and everything else." Any attempt to reduce Him to a thing dependent on us for food [and] shelter was a reversal of the rôles. We depend on God, not the other way around.
- Thirdly, "God is the ruler of all the nations and tribes of the world." God determined that mankind should inhabit the earth. And He set the places where they should live. "For in Him, we live, move, and have our being".
- And fourthly, God is the Father of human beings. "We are His offspring," we are made in His image. He is not metal, stone, or wood.
- And fifthly and lastly, God is the judge of the universe. "In the past, He overlooked ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent," verse 30. Moreover, "He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice, by the one He has appointed. He has given proof of this by raising Him from the dead," verse 31.

We know from back in verse 18, that Paul had been preaching about Jesus and the Resurrection. So when the Resurrection of Jesus was mentioned again by Paul, it prompted the abrupt end to the meeting. Now, if it stopped there, we might conclude that Paul failed to convince them: a flop, as I said a moment ago. However, we see two important things arise. First of all, "We want to hear you again on this subject," they said (verse 32). And secondly, "a few became followers and believed," (verse 33) including the very judge who invited Paul along to give this account of his teaching.

As we give an account by word, or how we live, people will want to hear. They will want to hear more. And some will believe. If we are willing to witness to our own experience of a personal relationship with Jesus, Father will give us the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16-17). Some will want to hear. Some will believe. So take courage, like Paul, and be bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you. Because He has given every Christian the Spirit of Truth, not an unknown God.

As we consider briefly our reading from John 14, it is helpful to look at the degree of comfort Jesus gives His disciples, and as we are His disciples, us. Jesus shows that His union with the Father, and belief in Him, would enable them to do great things. And His ascension to the Father would release the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to do the enabling. His presence with the Father would grant them whatever they ask in His Name (verses 13 and 14). The Father is therefore glorified by the triumphs of Jesus effected through the prayer of His disciples. And in verse 15, their obedience to Him is the evidence of their love. The promised Holy Spirit is the Counsellor and Comforter, who strengthens, but He is also the Spirit of Truth, who will remain with them and us. He gives the disciples the promise that seals His essential union with the Father, the Father who will give them the Spirit of Truth. In their obedience will be the test of their love, and proof of a union with Him (John 14, verse 21).

Look at it this way: the Father sent Jesus, Jesus finished the redemptive work, "It is finished," Jesus said on the cross, Jesus went back to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit to live in every Christian. Put simply, Jesus went back to heaven, leaving the body, the Church, and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to live in the body as the Spirit of Truth, and to enable us to do His will, by our love for Him, our love for each other, and also our love for those who still are to accept the free salvation offered through Jesus death and resurrection. Father God will give us the Spirit of Truth. So that, like Paul, we can give an account to anyone who asks. Some will hear, some will believe.

Heavenly Father, we just pray that you will help us as we live for you in the power of the Spirit of Truth, which you have promised to give us. Jesus said, "the Father, God, will give us the Spirit of Truth."

Amen.

[Gill:]

Thank you Sam. Now let's be still for a moment to ponder his words.

[Pause with music]

Creed

So let us now affirm our faith by saying the Creed together.

**All I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,**

**the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

Intercessions

Charlie will now lead us in prayer.

[Charlie Palmer:] [Gill joins in with the responses]

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for a beautiful world which you've created for us to enjoy and to shepherd. We see your hand at every turn of the path. Beautiful vista, blooming flower, busy garden bird. We marvel at the new growth we see around us and feel in it a deep connection to your unbounded love for us.

Lord, in your mercy
All hear our prayer.

The world aches and groans until you bring a new order. We are nervous. We are frightened, some exhausted, some lonely or aware of the families grieving for lost loved ones. You are not far away and we reach out to you in our distress and ask for your comfort.

Lord, in your mercy
All hear our prayer.

Creator God, guide us through these difficult times. Comfort us, provide for us, give us good sleep, share our anxieties, give us hope for better times when we can meet together as your Church and hold our loved ones.

Lord, in your mercy
All hear our prayer.

Father, we especially pray for young people this evening, who are missing their friends and the camaraderie of the classroom. Keep them safe, reassure them that they will catch up whatever work has been missed, and that there will be an end when they will meet again.

Lord, in your mercy
All hear our prayer.

We pray for our leaders. Lord, give them wisdom and clarity as they plan our route out of lockdown. Give them vision for how we can make things better for the future. May they be bold and find opportunity in all adversity.

Lord, in your mercy
All hear our prayer.

Finally, Lord, we pray especially for those grieving for lost loved ones. Numbers do not dilute our grief. We pray for comfort and look forward to a time when we can come together to remember and give thanks for wonderful lives and times.

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

The collect for the 6th Sunday of Easter

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us
to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord
Amen

Prayers

And now gathering our prayers and praises into one,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **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 for ever.
Amen.**

Blessing

[Gill:]

Our service is now drawing to a close. So,

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

All **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

We will say the Grace together:

All **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore.**

Amen.

The Peace

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

All **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you

All **and also with you.**

Amen.

Thank you

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

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The order for Evening Service can be found here (scroll down after clicking the link):

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/service-word/service-word-morning-evening-prayer-night-prayer#mm6c3>

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