

Traditional Home service Sunday 7th May

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

*Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (Abide with me)

READINGS - Acts 7.55-60
1 Peter 2.2-10
John 14.1-14

TALK

CREED

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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation,
our community and our families.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

HYMN 2 (The church's one foundation)

CONCLUSION

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you
and give you peace;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you
always.
Amen.

Hymns to use

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens Lord, with me
abide
When other helpers fail and comforts
flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with
me

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little
day
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass
away
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with
me

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to
bless
Ills have no weight, and tears no
bitterness
Where is death's sting?
Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me

Hold Thou Thy cross before my
closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me
to the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's
vain shadows flee
In life, in death, o Lord, abide with me
Abide with me, abide with me

The church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the Word.
From heaven he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation,
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
Till, with the vision glorious,
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee.

Sermon - Adrian Morton
Church - a people who belong to the Father
1 Peter 2:2-10 & John 14:1-14

Many of us of course went to Sizewell Hall in Suffolk last weekend.

It was great weekend, over 50 adults and over 30 children enjoyed great worship, great teaching, great food, great weather, and above all great fellowship.

I've used the word great a lot but I'm conscious I haven't seen any of the feedback forms!

But certainly those we spoke to seem to really enjoy the weekend!

A couple of people managed to get up and sit on the beach as the sun rose... at 4:45pm!!!

So thanks again to all those who were involved in making the weekend happen.

And also to all those who ensured last Sunday happened, particular thanks to Matthew for leading and speaking last week.

I realise that not everyone feels able to go to these away weekends.
But what they can do is really cement and strengthen relationships within the church.

They give a heightened sense, or experience, that we are a people who belong to God but also a people who belong to each other.

We are family, and a family with a common purpose.
A common mission.

Peter in our first reading is reminding his readers of this.

That they are a "chosen people."
"a royal priesthood"

How many watched the Coronation yesterday?

Apparently for the first time the public were invited to swear allegiance to King Charles.

Archbishop Justin Welby said it was an invitation not a command!

It caused a bit of a 'cofuffle' with some suggesting Archbishop Welby has gone rogue.

And King Charles himself would have never wanted people to pay that kind of homage to him.

As the church, as a chosen people belonging to God.

We are also a royal priesthood.
We belong to King Jesus!
Its good to swear allegiance to Jesus!

Our purpose, as the people of God, is also given in this chapter:

"that you may declare the praises of him..."

That is ultimately what the church exists for.
To declare His praise.

To give Him honour.
To ensure His reputation is lifted up and people are pointed towards Him.

That is mission.

To point people to King Jesus.
To point people to the Father.

Again, its why we do testimonies on a Sunday morning.

We want to declare His praises.

Many people come to Jesus wanting some part of their life sorted out.
Or wanting to be blessed in some way.

And I get that.
Jesus does that.

He heals people.
He gives people purpose.

But we also need to move pass that and realise that ultimately our lives are to serve Him.

To glorify Him.
To honour Him.

And it's not that He's insecure and needs our praises in that way.

But that is right and proper.
And it's good for our souls.
It orders our relationship with Him rightly.

Don't ever slip into thinking God is there to serve you.

We exist to declare His praises.
Any good works we do are to point people to Him.
To ensure He gets honoured.

Life will go better for us that way round.

I've known too many people come to Him.
Experience His goodness and kindness.
Tasted that the Lord is good.

Got very excited and passionate at their new found discovery.

Then got cool very quickly when they find out God isn't there to serve them!

That actually he calls us to serve Him.
And sometimes that will mean it's hard and it involves sacrifices.

But living life that way is ultimately good and satisfying.
It's the best way to live, it really is.

Peter asks his listeners to "crave pure spiritual milk", like new born babies.

Those of us who have had the privilege of bringing children into this world will know the cry of a newborn baby needing milk!

They really aren't polite about it.
New born babies crave, demand to be fed.
Whatever time of the night.

And Peter is saying that as the people of God you need to crave basic teaching.
Teaching that is pure, not watered down.

I'm tempted to say there is so much on the Internet to look at.

The problem is it can be difficult to discern whether the teaching is good teaching.

There is much that contains deceit...

But Peter is emphasising that we have a responsibility to seek out basic teaching.

We have a responsibility to grow up in our salvation.

We can't be passive about it.

We are to be built into a spiritual house....

I love this imagery of the living stones..

First it says Jesus is the Living Stone.
The one rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him.

Then it says you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house..

Again, thinking about the Coronation yesterday..

Did you pick up on the Stone of Destiny used in the Coronation ceremony?

This stone of destiny or stone of scoon as its known as has a fascinating history.

The oak coronation chair was made specially to hold this stone.

Its an oblong block of pale sandstone and is an ancient symbol of Scotland's monarch.

Much of the history surrounding it is a bit iffy really...

The English pinched it during a conquest.
Some Scottish students pinched it back in the 1950s.

Eventually it was returned to Scotland in 1996.

Its interesting the fuss around a stone!

I think I saw something posted by Barbara on Facebook about a guy who'd written a book about the significance of stones.

I must admit I did try and find it but couldn't.
I didn't really have time in my week to read it in any case.

But it sounded a good read!

Peter says Jesus is the Living stone.
A precious cornerstone or foundation stone.
The stone the builders rejected.
A stone that causes people to stumble.

Jesus is a stone that divides believers from unbelievers!

Then believers become living stones, collectively part of God's church, set apart for Him..

I titled this talk, "Church - a people who belong to the Father."

Its not the snappiest of titles!

But I wanted to emphasis what I think is happening in John 14...

Jesus had just said to His disciples, "Where I am going, you cannot follow."

So He is preparing His disciples for when He is gone.

For when they no more have Him around.

I'm sure they would have been unsettled. Apprehensive.

Uncertain about the future.

And He gives them both comfort...

"Do not let your hearts be troubled..."

And He gives them Hope...

"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?"

During those times in our life where we are unsettled.

Where we are apprehensive, uncertain about the future...

We need to hear these words over our life.

They are words of Comfort and Hope..

"Do not let your hearts be troubled..."

God has this in hand.

He has provided for you.

Your Hope is secure in me...

You haven't to worry...

Jesus also, takes the opportunity to expand their thinking as to who God is.

I know its not Trinity Sunday but John 14 is full of Trinity theology!

I'll look specifically at the Holy Spirit next Sunday.

But He says:

"You believe in God; believe also in me."

Then He goes on to explain how closely connected to the Father is.

"anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

"The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father living in me."

"I am in the Father and the Father is in me."

Jesus came to reveal the Father.

If someone asked us, why did Jesus come.

There are many answers we can give to that.

He came to die for our sins.

He came to save us.

He came to offer us life...

He came to demonstrate love..

Ultimately, Jesus came to reveal the Father and reconcile people to Him.

All he did was to reveal the Father in some way.

Whatever we think know about God we should be able to see in Jesus.

If we can't see it in Jesus then we should be suspicious about what we think we know about God.

Jesus revealed the Father perfectly.

The words He used weren't His own.

He only did what He saw the Father doing.

The miracles He did.

The healings He performed.

All reveal the Father, the Father's nature and character.

He came to an orphaned planet to reveal the Father.

We get hints of the Fatherhood of God in the OT.

But Jesus revealed the Father as never before.

John ch14 through to ch17 is just this extraordinary teaching and prayers about Jesus and the Father.

Our ultimate destination is the Father...

I used to read John 14 in this way:

That Jesus is the only way to salvation, to heaven.

But what it says is that more specifically, we are all going to the Father

No one comes to the Father except through me.

Our ultimate destination is the Father...

Its not like we'll get to heaven, be with, hopefully, some of our loved ones. With Jesus, who's our friend..

And it won't be like, Jesus is Ok, but watch out for the Father.

You can never please him,
Not sure I can depend on him...
He always there with criticism...
Won't be like that...

Jesus is saying the Father is just like Him. And our destination is the Father...

How many are excited about going to the Father...?

The problem many of us have is that we've been given a completely inadequate experience of what a true Father is like.

Even the best of our Father's don't come close to the Father Jesus revealed.

For some of us, our experience means that accepting God as Father is very difficult.

<Clergy conference...>

Jesus revealing the Father is so central to our mission and evangelism.

We are not just trying to get people into our church buildings.

We are not after people's money so we can pay parish share.

We are not simply trying to get people to believe certain things.

We want people reconciled to the Father. To experience a relationship with Him.

To know the Hope that in the Father's house are many dwelling places.

To know that their ultimate destination is to be with the Father.

Amen.