

# Service Transcript Sunday May24<sup>th</sup> 2020

*Leader/Preacher: Delyth Mayhew Prayers: Mark Reid*

Every single day hundreds of millions of our brothers and sisters around the world say the prayer Jesus put on our lips, praying 'Thy Kingdom Come'. In the past few years, the focus of our prayers in these days between Ascension and Pentecost has been for the coming of God's Kingdom in the lives of family and friends, neighbours and colleagues - that they might come to faith.

But Thy Kingdom Come is not a slogan and it is vital we aren't deaf to what is occurring around us. So, when we pray 'Come Holy Spirit' during Thy Kingdom Come 2020 we pray in the specific context of the COVID crisis, with all that we face, all that is unknown and all we are helpless before.

Haven't we sensed more than ever the longing for the Kingdom of God – where there is no pain or crying, no injustice or loneliness?

Haven't we longed for God's ways to be seen in the world?

Haven't we been most moved by those who give their lives to serve all that the Kingdom of God stands for?

Last year we prayed for the Spirit to work significantly in those who don't yet follow Christ, that they might encounter his love and peace and make the best decision anyone can ever make – to become followers of Jesus and in turn come to give their lives in service of the Kingdom of God.

But however important prayer is, we know that the pray-er is called to action. So, this year we are being encouraged not simply to pray that friends and family, colleagues and neighbours might encounter the love of God in Christ, but that they would experience that love in action. We are calling this 'Prayer and Care'. This year as we pray for others, we pray that they would come to know Christ so that they may come to give their lives to serve God's Kingdom.

And so, let us pray:

Blessed are you, Creator God. To you be praise and glory for ever. As your Spirit moved over the face of the waters bringing light and life to your creation, pour out your Spirit on us today that we may walk as children of light and by your grace reveal your presence to all we meet.

*As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.*

Psalm 47: Clap your hands, all you nations;

shout to God with cries of joy.

For the LORD Most High is awesome,  
the great King over all the earth.

He subdued nations under us,  
peoples under our feet.

He chose our inheritance for us,  
the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.

God has ascended amid shouts of joy,  
the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets.

Sing praises to God, sing praises;  
sing praises to our King, sing praises.

For God is the King of all the earth;  
sing to him a psalm of praise.

God reigns over the nations;  
God is seated on his holy throne.

The nobles of the nations assemble  
as the people of the God of Abraham,  
for the kings of the earth belong to God;  
He is greatly exalted.

These last 2 months have been interesting! Who knew as we celebrated the start of a new year what the year would bring? As many of you know, at the start of the pandemic in this country I was notified that, because of the medication I have to take, I was on the high risk register. That came as something of a shock and a realisation that I was going to be seeing the inside of my house and not much else for a long time. Fortunately, after 5 weeks, I was downgraded to “moderate” risk.! And so could leave the house for short walks. Otherwise, nothing changed. And so this room, the one I’m speaking from today, has become my safe place, my quiet place, my retreat – and a happy place too. I have been able to sew, to make scrapbooks, to play the piano, to rediscover the art of writing letters, and to read.

And I have realised that I am enjoying this time that I’ve been given so unexpectedly. And I have also realised how much time I have wasted in the past, and how precious time is. When I was faced with the thought that my time could be short if I should catch the virus – I found I had to re-evaluate what I do with my time.

Most importantly, I realised how much of my time I give, or don’t give, to God – to read His word, to talk to him, to listen to Him. And when I do come to him in prayer, I talk but don’t often listen. The early Church father, Clement of Alexandria said – “We are like old shoes – worn out except for the tongue”

So, I have spent more time in prayer and contemplation than ever before.  
And I have found great blessing in just sitting and listening – and waiting on God.

I haven’t had any great revelations, but I have found that I drew nearer to Him, even when the silence was only that – silence.

I invite you all now to be still, to be silent, for a couple of minutes– and maybe close your eyes or watch the screen - and wait on God to fill you with His presence and His peace

As we have sat and waited – so the disciples in those days between the Ascension and Pentecost waited – for what God/Jesus was going to do with them and for them.

## Reading

*Acts chapter 1 verses – 3 – 9; 12- 14)*

After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying.

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

## Sermon

*The Very Reverend Bob Key, reflects on the Biblical basis of ‘prayer and care’ from the book of Acts.*

*Thy Kingdom Come* - is about change: the great change that occurs in a person's life when they accept Jesus as Lord and welcome him as Saviour, Master and Friend. Scripture assures us that at that moment they become part of the Kingdom of God's beloved Son. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" writes St Paul (2 Corinthians 5:17).

So, we pray each year between the Ascension and Pentecost that families, friends, communities and countries would come to know the saving love of God in Jesus Christ. When we do that, we are following the example of the disciples in Acts 1:14 - They all joined together constantly in prayer, who, in a revolutionary ground-breaking manner united in constant, heartfelt world-changing prayer.

The prayer led to practical planning. The group, in a totally culturally-relevant way, appointed a replacement for Judas Iscariot - and then waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit who would drive them out of their comfort zone into the city whose authorities had condemned, to declare the Good News of God's transforming love in the death and resurrection of his Son.

The Change of Kingdom, from being only part of the world to being part of the Kingdom of God, is not the end, it's the beginning of lifelong, life-enhancing transformation.

At the launch of *Thy Kingdom Come* this year the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, noted the huge issues we are facing including Covid-19, climate change, poverty and selfish apathy. All those things bring into sharp focus the world's need of Jesus and the call of God on us to pray for transformation and, as Christ calls us into his Kingdom, to become agents of that transformation in the world he loves.

The prayer of Acts 1:14, broke down cultural barriers, prepared for Pentecost, and gave birth to worldwide evangelism.

Against the background of this pandemic, God calls all those who have received his saving love for themselves to be channels of his Kingdom in the world; men and women who demonstrate and embody God's transforming love to bring real change to the lives of those in greatest need. In his commentary on Acts, John Stott put it like this: "It is part of the responsibility of Spirit-filled believers to alleviate need and abolish destitution in the new community of Jesus."

As we continue to read Luke's story of the first Christians, those whom their enemies soon describe as the ones who had "Turned the world upside-down" (Acts 17:6) we see that preaching the Gospel wasn't done in a vacuum. Peter and John noticed the lame beggar at the gate of the temple and healed him in Jesus' name. Poverty in the church was noticed and assuaged by sacrificial sharing and very careful organisation. When those who spoke only Greek were being missed out of the food distribution in Acts 6 the Apostles thought it important enough that Stephen and six others are appointed to sort it out and ensure transparency and fairness.

In fact, when Peter and John were been arrested and threatened by the Sanhedrin in chapter 4 they responded with a prayer for more opportunities to preach and to show the power of God in transformed lives touched by the Good News and power of God.

Thomas Cranmer, who was the agent of the reformation of the Church of England and ended up giving his life for the Gospel of Christ showed the link between conversion and transformation in a letter he wrote to Henry VIII in 1538. He said this:

*"If the profession of our faith of the remission of our own sins enters within us into the deepness of our hearts, then it must kindle a warm fire of love in our hearts towards God, and towards all others for the love of God - a fervent mind to seek and procure God's honour, will, and pleasure in all things - a good will and mind to help every man and to do good unto them, so far as our might, wisdom, learning, counsel, health, strength, and all other gifts which we have received of God will extend."*

Prayer and Care go together in *Thy Kingdom Come* because they go together in the Scriptures. They go together in the story of the Acts of the Apostles which, of course, continues the story of Jesus who when faced with a hungry crowd told his disciples to give them something to eat.

Whether it is influencing those who shape the global economy so that the poor do not pay the price of the pandemic, or checking on the elderly, the lonely, the sick and the exhausted, we are called to

notice the needs with the eyes of Jesus; to love the needy with the heart of Jesus and show practical care with the hands of Jesus. We are called to pray that people are changed by Jesus and become those who in their turn help turn the world the right way up.

## **Prayers**

### *COVID-19*

As we come before God this morning we remember our world at this time as the effects of Coronavirus continue to spread. This week the virus had its greatest number of daily new reported cases globally - 106,000 . There are now over 5 million reported cases and over 320,000 deaths. Britain has had some 250,000 reported cases and over 35,000 deaths.

Most countries have now introduced lockdowns and as a result, even in countries like ours which have tried to introduce measures to soften the blow, we are now hearing of hardship, job losses, record applications for benefit and foodbank usage rapidly.

Approved treatments and vaccines are still some way off. That's quite a lot to pray about, so let's come before God.

Father, as we look at the rising tide of infection and death globally from Covid-19, we cry out, Lord have mercy on this world. We see in these figures a mix of the ignorance and sin of the human race and the work of the enemy. May you bring sense to politicians who do not act wisely and push back the forces of evil in this world. Give wisdom to our government we pray as they make decisions on how lockdown should end. Thank you that numbers of infections and deaths are falling. May decisions made further this. We pray that studies and tests for treatments and vaccines will bear fruit. Please be with those suffering hardship at this time, particularly those who have lost or who are losing their jobs. This is a difficult time in the history of our nation and world, may we as your people be active in prayer, and active in serving others and addressing need, that we may be salt and light in these dark times.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen

### *Cyclone in Asia*

Lord, we pray for the countries of India and Bangladesh as they face the destruction, death and injuries brought on by Cyclone Amphan. We pray that measures to protect people during the storm may have been effective. May rescue and aid get into these areas rapidly. Be close to grieving families and healing to those injured we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen

### *Thy Kingdom Come*

Finally we will pray for ourselves and others during Thy Kingdom Come.

Lord, we commit ourselves to prayer at this time of Thy Kingdom Come. We pray that the people we are praying specifically for will be led by the Holy Spirit to understand the cost of God's love for them in Christ, that this great sacrifice would lead them to repentance.

We commit as well to Prayer and Care. Give us opportunities to show your love to those we are praying for and others in our families and community at this difficult time.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We will close our prayer time by saying the prayer that Jesus taught us.

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.

From where we are to where you need us  
*Christ be beside us*  
From what we are to what you can make of us  
*Christ be before us*  
Surround us with Your presence, inspire us with Your purpose,  
*Confirm us in Your love.*

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your kingdom: inspire us with your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your Word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

There are no specific items for reflection and discussion this week. Take time to pray for your 5 and reflect on how you may pray and care practically in your present situation.