

The Rectorial Benefice of the East Vale
Morning Prayer
Sunday 2nd May, 2021
Easter 5

Hymn

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heav'n to earth come down;
fix in us thy humble dwelling;
all thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory,
till in heav'n we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Collect:

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 mind's 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 forever.

Amen.

First Reading

(Acts 8: 26-40)

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a wilderness road.) So, he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.' So, Philip ran

up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He replied, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so, he does not open his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.'

The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptised?' He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptised him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm

(Psalm 22: 25-31)

R/ Be not far from me Lord.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation. I will perform my vows in the presence of those that fear you. The poor shall eat and be satisfied, those who seek the Lord shall praise him; their hearts shall live forever.

R/

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord and all the families of the nations shall bow before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's and he rules over the nations. **R/**

How can those who sleep in the earth bow down in worship or those who go down to the dust kneel before him? He has saved my life for himself; my descendants shall serve him. This shall be told of the Lord for generations to come. **R/**

They shall come and make known his salvation, to a people yet unborn declaring that he, the Lord, has done it. **R/**

Second Reading

(1 John 4: 7-21)

A reading from the First letter of John

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live

through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Gospel

(John 10: 11-18)

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give thanks to the risen Lord.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give praise to his name.

**Jesus is Lord of all the earth,
he is the king of creation.**

Alleluia! Alleluia!...

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Listen to the gospel of Christ according to Saint John
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the eleven, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you,

ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Spread the good news o'er all the earth,
Jesus has died and risen.**

Alleluia! Alleluia!...

The Homily

Fr Martyn

One of the challenges of preparing for worship during the pandemic is that as I am writing this homily, Julie and I are about to go on holidays to West Wales for a week. The pew notes are prepared the Tuesday before each Sunday. This week it is when I was on holiday, hence the necessary forward planning.

I am writing this the day after the Queen's 95th birthday, which this year was always going to be a very difficult day, following the recent death of her husband Prince Philip. Much of his funeral service was chosen by the Duke of Edinburgh himself, with many personal touches. Throughout the service there were references to his faith, which was a faith shared with his wife. The Queen is known for her strong Christian faith, which has strengthened and guided her throughout her life and long reign. I have no doubt that it continues to do so, as she mourns the loss of her husband. In facing his death, she shares with us all that sense of loss felt when a loved one dies. She does so amid this pandemic, when things can't be done as we would want them to be.

On her 21st birthday in 1947, five years before she became queen, Princess Elizabeth said the following, 'I declare before you all, that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong. But I shall not have the strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do so. I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.'

What an amazing thing to say on her 21st birthday, in the knowledge that she would one day be queen. I believe that even then, underpinning those words, was her strong Christian faith. It has been significant that in more recent years she has spoken more about her faith than ever. Wherever she goes, worship is at the heart of her Sundays and I imagine prayer underpinning each day. Queen Elizabeth the second is clearly a person who is rooted in Christ.

Our readings today talk about faith. In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Philip shares his Christian faith, leading to the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. Our psalm says 'The poor shall eat and be satisfied. Worship before God and serve him.' That call to love and service is repeated in the epistle reading from the 1st letter of John

when he writes, 'Let us love one another. God is love. Those who say I love God and hate brother and sister are liars.' Strong stuff isn't it. 'If you do not love brother and sister, whom you have seen, how can you love God, whom you haven't seen?' Love of God clearly must impact on our lives, our relationships and our sense of love and forgiveness and our service of one another. In our Gospel reading from St John Jesus says, 'I am the true vine and my father is the vine grower.' We are branches connected to the vine. We are called to be rooted in Christ and so bear much fruit. When we are rooted in Christ, we become his disciples, or followers.

We are called to remain faithful to Christ in the good times but also through the difficult times. I can see this in the life and example of Queen Elizabeth the second. As she faces life without her Philip, I know that she does not face that alone. The God in whom she believes is at her side, giving her hope and strength in the days, months and years that lie ahead. The God in whom she believes is not a God only for Kings and Queens, but a God who is here for everyone.

On her 21st birthday Princess Elizabeth said, 'God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.' May that same God help us to remain true to our vow, to follow him as faithful disciples today. May the Love of God impact on our lives, our relationships, our sense of love and forgiveness and our service of one another. May we be rooted in Christ, the true vine, so that like our monarch, we may bear fruit in our lives.

**Anthem – 'With a voice of singing' by Martin Shaw
Performed by the choir of
The Royal School for the Blind**

40 years ago, Roger and Pam lived and worked in a residential establishment for blind and partially sighted people in Leatherhead, Surrey. This centre, known as, The Royal School for the Blind, housed 150 residents, who were blind with additional handicaps. Pam was Deputy Matron and a House Parent and Roger taught Braille and Elementary Music. The Royal School for the Blind had its own consecrated chapel complete with a choir and pipe organ. Of course, the choir was made up of some of the residents in the school. The piece we heard this morning was one of several pieces we may use over the coming weeks. Many thanks for Roger and Pam sharing their story and these pieces of music.

Hymn

**Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
Come bow before him now,
with reverence and fear.
In him no sin is found,
we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.**

**Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
How awesome is the sight
our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.**

**Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace
No work too hard for him,
in faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place**

The Intercessions

Our loving God guides us with care and love, and so we are confident that he will listen as we place our needs before him.

Jesus you are the vine, and we are the branches. Keep us abiding in your life and your love. We pray your church maybe fruitful in its witness to the world. We pray for June our Bishop and Carin the Bishop of Uppsala. We pray for our brothers and sisters in the Lagunda pastorate, praying for.....

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus, the Ethiopian official, sought to understand your good news. Expand the hearts and minds of all in authority to pursue truth, justice and peace for all people. We pray for countries of the world who are in crisis at this time, thinking particularly of India – may the world continue to respond to this situation.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus, your love sets our hearts ablaze. We give thanks for times when people can exercise their talents, times when people are free to think and act without barriers. We pray for all who are enriching our world with their gifts and talents.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus your love precedes us, and we respond with adoration and praise. Give to all in any kind of need, the grace to see your love for them. We remember all who asked for our prayers..... In the power of the risen Lord, we ask that they may be renewed, refreshed and restored.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus we are made for your love and we praise you for all who have been fruitful in your service. Those who have brought into your kingdom by their love and goodness. We remember those who have died recently..... and those whose anniversaries occur this week. May we all come to abide in you forever.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

In a moment of stillness, we bring our own needs and concerns to our heavenly Father.

Silence is kept.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

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

Hymn

**Colours of day dawn into the mind,
the sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
and let's give the message
to the people we meet.**

***So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.***

***Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.***

**Go through the park, on into the town;
the sun still shines on, it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
the people of darkness
are needing a friend.**

***So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.***

***Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.***

**Open your eyes, look into the sky,
the darkness has come, the sun came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
but Jesus is living,
and his Spirit is near.**

***So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.***

***Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.***

Prayers for the sick this week:

Elizabeth Thomas
Kath Loughor
Eunice Wood
Catherine Brynach
Margaret Price
Ian Dixon
Lorna Powell

Annie & Ray Petrie
Colin Bailey
Sophie Sabit
Helen
Kevin Hurst
Brendan
Barbara Goodway

Prayers for the departed

Reverend Malcolm Davies

Hymn Requests

If you have any hymn requests for our Zoom worship, please send them to one of the clergy team.

Bible Study Group

Our next Bible study is on Wednesday 12th May at 6-7pm, please email Rev Angela for the link.

Children's Saturday Club

Children's club on Zoom every Saturday at 10am during term time. If you would like to join want to join, please email Rev Angela at angelacooper03@gmail.com

The clergy team continue to meet for morning prayer each day. Please send any prayer requests, for yourself, family, friends etc to one of the clergy team.

If you need any help or assistance, practically or spiritually in these difficult times please contact one of the team:

Fr Martyn Davies

fr.martyn@sky.com – 01446 760498

Fr David Morris

davidmorris@churchinwales.org.uk – 07498 318325

Reverend Dr Angela Cooper

angelacooper03@gmail.com - 07811018685