

Swaythling Parish

Sunday 19 July 2020

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Welcome

Below is a service sheet for you to use for this week's Sunday morning service. This is based on a service that is being broadcast as a video on Sunday morning through the YouTube channel. It will be available on YouTube from 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it (viewable from any smartphone, tablet or computer, and also from most "smart" TVs). If do not have access to watch the YouTube video, we hope you will be able to use these words and join us too in spirit.

Introduction from Rev Peter Dockree

A warm welcome to everyone joining us for this service. When we last met together in person a few months ago none of us had any idea it would be the last time for months to come, no clue as to what would evolve between then and now. The knowledge then would have been depressing and dented hope for many of us, but these last few months have evolved, without full knowledge of what lay ahead and it is that evolving that has, I suggest, enabled us to make the most of the time we have now, of the opportunities in these moments, of the possibilities of this time. Hope is a word that can be used lightly, but true hope is something that can often evade us. In this morning's service we will explore the theme of hope some more. So lets start with a question, What is your most pressing hope at the moment? Let's take a few seconds to think on the answer.

Greeting

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

And also with you.

The Lord be with you
And also with you

Prayer of Thanks

What has your last week been like? If you had to find three words to describe your week what would they be. Perhaps the first words that would jump to mind would be positive words, hopeful words, or perhaps if you were answering from your heart they would be negative words. Your gut reaction to last week though may not be the last word. Later we will own the mistakes of the week, but for a moment let's own the positives. The things that have happened that we can be thankful for.

Thank you Lord for all you have given us – for the people that brighten our days, the love that you surround us with, your presence with us and the beauty in the creation around us. Help us in all the joys and sorrows of our week to find causes to be thankful.

Amen

Hymn: All my hope on God is founded

- 1 All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.
- 2 Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

- 3 God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendor, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore, from his store
newborn worlds rise and adore.
- 4 Daily doth the almighty Giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.
- 5 Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

R Bridges (1844-1930) based on
Meine Hoffnung stehet feste by J Neander (1650-1680)

Normally at this point in the service we say sorry to God, give God the mistakes we have made and embrace God's forgiving love. For reasons that I hope will become obvious, this week we are going to leave that until later in the service, but for now let us just take a moment to remember we are loved, and made in God's image.

The Collect

Creator God,
you made us all in your image:
may we discern you in all that we see,
and serve you in all that we do;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings:

Romans 8: 12-25

The Spirit of God leads us from fear to hope for the fulfilment of God's purposes for us.

Read by the Saunders family in the video

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

That passage speaks of a hope we do not see as being

the most real, because it does not come easy. When you are checking the tracker for a passport, or a parcel, or anything at all, the hardest time can be when there is no update. Even a change from something like "received" to "processing", or "your item has left the warehouse", may tell you little or nothing about timescales but assure you that something is happening. But some hope requires a tenacity to hold onto because it cannot be seen. Our second reading is actually about hope too, but it doesn't really feel like it to a modern readership.

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

Jesus gives another picture of the nature of God's kingdom

Read by Rachel in the video

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age,

and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Peter Dockree

When I hear passages like the one above, I tend to focus straight away on the rather colourful language like furnaces of fire and risk losing anything positive within it. Last week Bruce gave a great gardening analogy in his reflection. It made me think - I must confess that our vegetable patch does not always get the best care it could. There are times when we go out and it looks like we are going to be inundated with vegetables and then other days when the weeds are coming up, and it looks like all the plants are going to die. A really experienced gardener, in our case often Sarah's dad, will be able to look beyond the wilting plants and the weed covered bed and see that if only we do this, or that, then the plants still have a great chance of producing lots of vegetables. I on the other hand am very prone to the mood that takes me whenever I look at a particular plant in a particular moment. I either believe we are going to have more tomatoes than a greengrocer, or that it will all die and we will have nothing to show for our labours. My reaction to this passage is a little similar. When I look at those words about fire and furnace, I can't get beyond them, I take them personally and literally, or I ignore them entirely, and jump to the easy nice promise at the end.

But true hope doesn't focus on the weeds, but neither does it ignore them. This passage is a

promise that the seeds of the kingdom, seeds in all of us can grow, so that we can shine like the sun. A promise that even as the weeds grow around us, the good grows too and will be harvested. Analogies like this used by Jesus rarely mean what we interpret them to mean today, language and concepts of things that we are sure we know what they mean today, are nowhere near as simple, as we miss the subtle cultural references that would have been evident at the time. What is clear though is that we cannot ignore the weeds, there are many, many things wrong with the world today, many things that are deeply and profoundly wrong and many things that are not as we would wish in our own lives. Hope does not pretend that the bad things don't exist. But this passage is profoundly hopeful, because it is explaining to people who perhaps were feeling like the weeds were in control, that they would not win in the end. Under Roman oppression it must have felt like the weeds had won, and in these words of Jesus is a promise that whilst it might look like that it is not true.

I confess I am far more interested in speaking of God's love than of God's punishment. I want people to know that God's love is there for us all, whatever broken places we may find ourselves in. Many of us don't need to be told what we have done wrong, that is too often there already in our consciences and dreams, and yet if I let myself think about it I want and need God to help me dig out the weeds in my own life and in the world. The weeds of intolerance, the weeds of deceit, the weeds of abusive power, the weeds of hate, the weeds of anger and the weeds sewn by past pain.

Hope is not a shallow concept about wishing for all the good things to keep coming good, but a concerted belief that the seeds of goodness and love and grace and beauty can and will grow, that the weeds will not win the day. Hope is prepared to face the opposition to that promise head on.

Confession

For the last few weeks we have used words of confession, that touch upon much of what I said above. Words that recognise and name many of the weeds. We will use them again this week, as we seek to embrace hope, by recognising that which is not right in our own lives and in our wider world and then allowing ourselves to be embraced by God's forgiving love.

From a need for order and control,
From the need to insulate ourselves from doubt,
From the need to appear invulnerable,
From that need for security which closes our minds:

Good Lord, release us.

From intolerance of others' views,
From fear of others' beliefs,
From fear and rejection of those who are not like us,
From letting our faith hinder our expression of humanity:

Good Lord, release us.

From scepticism of reason and argument,
From disregard of scientific exploration,
From fear of questions and discoveries,
From fear of research and experiment:

Good Lord, release us.

From fear of freedom,
From fear of the responsibility of free will,
From false humility which dishonours your creation,
From hypocrisy and any exaggerated sense of self worth:

Good Lord, release us.

From fear of any challenge to our faith,
From the certainty which blinds us to other possibilities,

From any attempt to claim all truth,
From fear of using all our gifts in worship:

Good Lord, release us.

Dorrie Johnson

May the God of love
Bring us back to himself,

Forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayers

In the video, Karen leads us in prayers for our world and our community.

Everlasting God, we join together in praying to you for the needs the church, the world, our communities and ourselves, trusting in your love which reaches out to all without boundaries or exception. At this time of turmoil throughout the world, we pray that all those entrusted with government are mindful of their responsibilities for the poor, the homeless and those who are in most need. May they make wise decisions recognising the need to balance health and economic needs. We pray for all in authority in this country, including church authorities, that you will grant them wisdom and insight, as we take steps to move forward into the new normal world, And we pray that each one of us will play our part, moving forward together positively and taking care of those around us, We remember those countries where war or poverty are making the issues of coronavirus more difficult to handle, especially the Yemen, Sudan and Venezuela. We remember before you all countries where there is war or conflict and pray that you will look mercifully upon the sufferings of the people involved, and bring all people the blessing of peace.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We continue to pray for the victims of violence, and prejudice. Grant us the compassion and empathy we need to understand the effects on people's lives, and show us what we can do to take a stand and offer support. We ask that you will help us look within ourselves and show us any attitudes or assumptions that are in any way discriminatory, and then help us to change, so that we each Eradicate prejudice from

our hearts, our words, and our actions.. We ask that the church will celebrate and welcome the diverse faces of Christ in our community.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

In our local communities we thank you for all volunteers, who give willingly of their time and talents, especially during this difficult time, to ensure that people are supported, and have access to the supplies and human contact they need. We pray that you will keep them safe and given them satisfaction in their service.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

God of life, we ask for your healing power for those who are enduring pain and illness, whether physical, mental or spiritual, for those who are afraid or in isolation. We remember the unemployed, those on furlough and all those worried about the security of their jobs. For those we know, we name them quietly in our hearts before you. We share the grief of people who have recently lost loved ones. We weep with the grieving, remind them, and us, that your everlasting light shines with us within our darkest night,

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Faithful God, we thank you for the opportunity of being together in prayer. As we look forward to the week to come, we pray for an awareness of your love and support in all we do, and ask that you will keep us steadfast in prayer and practical action remembering that you have no hands but ours with which to do good.

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

Prayer of thanks for Gifts

This Saturday (yesterday if you're reading this on Sunday) is our virtual fete, and we are grateful to the

creative ideas and energy and of those who will make it happen, and who have worked tirelessly to help this church not just to stay alive, but to be active and engaged in our community and beyond even when our buildings are still largely closed.

If you would like to give to the life and work of this church then you can send a cheque made payable to Swaythling Parish, or give online using the details on the screen.

www.give.net/SwaythlingParish

Let us take a moment now to give thanks to God:

We thank you Lord for all the gifts we have received, financial and in so many other ways. Help us to use them wisely to share your love in this place. **Amen**

Hymn: The Spirit lives to set us free

1. The Spirit lives to set us free,
Walk, walk in the light.
He binds us all in unity,
Walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, (x3)
Walk in the light of the Lord.*

2. Jesus promised life to all,
Walk, walk in the light.
The dead were wakened by his call,
Walk, walk in the light.

3. He died in pain on Calvary,
Walk, walk in the light.
To save the lost like you and me,
Walk, walk in the light.

4. We know his death was not the end,
Walk, walk in the light.
He gave his Spirit to be our friend,
Walk, walk in the light.

5. By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
Walk, walk in the light.
The Father's kindness is revealed,
Walk, walk in the light.

6. The Spirit lives in you and me,
Walk, walk in the light;
His light will shine for all to see,
Walk, walk in the light.

D Lundy (1944-1997) © 1978 K Mayhew Ltd

Closing Blessing

Thank you to everyone for joining us today. May God's Kingdom grow in you, and bring you freshly to the week ahead.

A Closing :

Enjoy beauty / Forgive recklessly / Accept forgiveness / Stand up / Tear down / Be heard / Don't be afraid.

Be a sister / Be a brother / Cry / Pay attention / Listen / Be released / Be reborn / Welcome / Be known / Be loved / Love / Remember.

We are dust and shadow / And God's ok with that

© Emma Major, Liturgy in a Dangerous Time.

And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. **Amen.**

*Thank you for joining in with us. If we can support you in any way, please get in touch. 023 8055 4231
peter.dockree@outlook.com*

Songs reproduced under CCLI Licence No 159376. Streaming Licence (for video) No 101226. Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995.