

Swaythling Parish

Sunday 25 April 2021

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Welcome

Below is a service sheet for you to use at home. You can also find our Sunday morning reflection on YouTube channel, available at 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it.

*If we can support you in any way at the present time, or you would just like to chat, do please get in touch: 023 8055 4231
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Introduction from Rev Peter Dockree

Welcome to our service today, however you are joining us. This Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Easter, and I will be reflecting on sacrifice and the difficult decisions we can all face.

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

Give thanks for all you have to be thankful for today. For those who have been there for you, and those who have made sacrifices on your behalf and we give thanks too for the

sacrificial love and grace of God.

Lord God

For grace and Love and hope, we give you thanks.

Prayer of Confession.

Take a moment to own the things we have done that we wish we have not, said that we regret and thought that we should not have thought.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

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.**

The Collect

Risen Christ,
faithful shepherd of your Father's
sheep:
teach us to hear your voice
and to follow your command,
that all your people may be gathered
into one flock,
to the glory of God the Father.

Hymn: Amazing Grace

- 1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.
- 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!
- 3 Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.
- 4 The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.
- 5 Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease:
I shall possess, within the veil,
a life of joy and peace.
- 6 The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine;
but God, who called me here below,
will be forever mine.

John Newton (1779)

Readings

Acts 4: 5-12

Peter and John are arrested after healing the lame man, and questioned about their authority.

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is

“the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;

it has become the cornerstone.”

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.'

I John 3: 16-end

Jesus' followers are encouraged to follow his example of sacrificial love.

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

John 10: 11-18

Jesus the Good Shepherd willing to lay down his life.

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

A Reflection by Rev Peter Dockree

In a week where there has been furore over the now seemingly no more European Super League. It was fascinating watching the conversations around this, and some of the justification by those proposing it because it was for me a window on what we all do when we really want something to happen even if we perhaps know deep down it is not a good thing. We come up with a narrative that we can hide behind. In the case of the ESL the narrative was that this is good for fans, for football and for all the clubs down the leagues even although almost no consultation with any of those people had actually taken place.

I know that I have at times in my life justified a thought or an action on the basis that it was okay really, or necessary or the best thing, when I knew if I was honest that that was not the case. Let's reflect for a moment on the hired hand referred to by Jesus in the Gospel today. The hired hand that ran away and left the sheep to the wolf in this case would no doubt have had a convincing narrative. It was necessary, the wolf would have killed them if they had not.

But the way of Jesus is different, Jesus is like the good shepherd, not avoiding the sacrificial way but facing it square on, not running away, but staying with the sheep no matter the consequences. Sometimes in our journeys of faith we can face choices. They may not be the dramatic choices between life and death, they may not be any where near as radical as that, but they can be as important in their own ways. The choices about what we buy and

who it affects, the choices about whether we speak out against injustice or unfairness or just stay silent, the choice about whether we comply with a narrative or don't. For Jesus the choice was stark, he could have chosen another way, he could have avoided the cross and slinked off, and disappeared into the night, but instead he chose the most painful path, the path that would result in the cross, but the path that he knew to be right.

The question for us in our smaller day to day choices is - are we prepared to make the less palatable choice and are we prepared to be honest with ourselves when those decisions confront us?

Prayers

Let us pray for our world, our community and those in need around us. You may wish to light some candles as you pray.

We pray for those facing great sacrifice at this time, sacrifice for what they believe, sacrifice for the sake of others, sacrifice for love, sacrifice for the sake of holding onto hope.

For our world and all the challenges we face as a global community. Challenges to tackle the climate crisis and to show true resolve to do so. Challenges to see justice and fairness, in all aspects of society. Challenges to hold onto

hope and keep the faith. Lord God we have not always treated your world and its people as we should but we pray that you may use us to make the world a better place.

We pray for the sick the grieving and the hurting at this time, and we name people in our hearts now.

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

Amen

Hymn: Take my life and let it be.

- 1 Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise,
- 2 Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee,
- 3 Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee,
- 4 Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use every power as thou shalt choose,

- 5 Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,
- 6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

F R Havergal (1836-1879)

Closing Blessing

Thank you to everyone for worshiping with us today.

As we take up our cross and follow, may we experience love, embrace challenge, and hold onto hope.

May the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us always.

Amen

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Annual Church Meetings

You are invited to join us for the Annual Church Meetings (APCM and APM) of Swaythling Parish, to be held on **Sunday 25 April 2021 at 11am at St Alban's Church,** as part of the morning worship service.