

Swaythling Parish

Sunday 9 May 2021

Sixth 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 sixth Sunday of Easter, and we will be thinking about sacrificial love.

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

For most of us we love because we have first been loved. Loved by others and loved by God. We take a moment to recognise that

love that we have received and to give thanks for the many ways in which it works out in our lives.

For those we love and those who have loved us.

For love that transcends all barriers and fear.

For love that is greater than everything.

Amen

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.**

Finally let us take time to own the hurt and pain that so often holds us back, and give it to God.

Lord God

We offer to you our wounds and our

pain, and ask that we may carry them together. **Amen**

The Collect

Risen Christ,

by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples:

help your Church to obey your command

and draw the nations to the fire of your love,

to the glory of God the Father.

Hymn: Love Divine.

1. Love Divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.
2. Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy light receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more 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.

3. 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 heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

C Wesley (1707-1788)

Readings

Acts 10: 44-48

Peter has had a vision which convinces him that the Gospel is for Gentiles too. As he is speaking to the Gentile Cornelius, all present receive the gift of the Spirit, and are baptised.

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

John 15: 9-17

Jesus tells the disciples that the fruit of their relationship with him must be love.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

A Reflection by Rev Peter Dockree

"If you really loved me, you would let me do this", is the mantra of children in households I suspect around the world, certainly in households across the UK, and yet sometimes our love for our children can be shown through doing the very opposite of what they may be asking for. Love can so often be judged in the context of whether what we wish for is being met. Now a parent will always want their child to be happy, to be flourishing and full of abundant life, so love can of course be manifest in the day-to-day things that make that happen, always saying no is far from a good thing. When Jesus though calls on us to love others as he has loved us it is a call to something deeper. This is not just a love of those we are naturally close to and protective of, our family, those like us; but a love that calls us to transcend boundaries. This is not niceness embodied, this is realness encountered. This is what led those early Christians in the first reading we had to notice that the holy spirit was at work in those not like them, the Gentiles. This is reaching out to the person we find it hard to like. This is listening to the person that frustrates us. This is sitting alongside someone whose pain is too raw and immediate to make them easy to be alongside. This isn't doing for someone the thing we want to do anyway (not that there is anything at all wrong in enjoying helping or supporting others, of course not), but sometimes this is doing something that we find

hard or difficult or even painful to do. Seeking to love as Jesus loves us may be sacrificial.

Seeking to love as Jesus loved may also be honest and does not always mean hiding behind the niceties. Sometimes this may be spoken of in term of tough love, but there is a real risk that tough love can be applied in deeply unhelpful ways, times when powerplay can prevent that love being anything remotely positive. Tougher love and correction can only ever work if it comes from a place of deep abounding love. A parent can put boundaries in place for their children and as much as they might kick back, if deep down they know and see evidence of that parents love they are more likely to ultimately accept those boundaries. More often with others the critique and correction that may reach our lips comes from a different place, a place of insecurity ourselves, a place of discomfort, a place of fear, a place of superiority, a place of guilt, or many other places we can find ourselves in. The love that Jesus calls us to is a love that seeks to put a mirror on ourselves first. A love that makes sure we ask ourselves our motivations for all we say and do, and then puts us alongside others to honestly be their mirror reflecting back to them and helping them make the sometimes tougher choices.

The love that comes easy, the love that we find ourselves feeling without trying is not I would suggest the only love that Jesus calls us to embody. The love that is harder to enact, is the love that has with it a great power to

transform us and others. With all our failings and struggles and battles, Jesus looks into our lives and sees the good, the wonderful, the fruitful and the blessed within us. If we are to emulate that love then we are to look into the eyes of others and see the good, the wonderful, the fruitful and the blessed within them.

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.

For all those who don't know love. Children growing up without the experience of feeling loved. Adults who feel deeply and profoundly alone. Those racked by anger and mistrust. Those engulfed by bitterness.

For our world, and all those battling to find meaning and hope around our world this day. For India and other places where the pandemic is out of control. For situations of conflict and natural disaster.

For our communities. For the sick, the grieving and those struggling to make ends meet.

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

Amen

Hymn: Let there be love

Let there be love shared among us
Let there be love in our eyes
May now Your love sweep this nation.
Cause us oh Lord to arise
Give us a fresh understanding
Of brotherly love that is real,
Let there be love shared among us,
Let there be love

Dave Bilborough © 1979 Thank You Music

Closing Blessing

Thank you to everyone for worshiping with us today.

We pray that this week we may be guided by a love that is greater than fear, by a grace that is stronger than shame, by a hope that is greater than despair and by a joy that is deeper than all our pain.

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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