

**3 May 2020**

Vocation Sunday

## **Welcome**

Welcome to our short service on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

Each week we try and offer some prayers, scripture, reflections and music, both to sustain us, and to keep us connected. Those early Christians we read about at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles devoted themselves not only to the prayers and the teaching, but also to the habit of breaking bread together and spending much time together in fellowship – being in one another's company.

Although it is not possible to be together for the present time, our longing can become our prayer for the day when we can gather once more.

Today is Vocation Sunday, the third Sunday after Easter. An opportunity to reflect on our call as a church, our call as to who we are to be, and what we are to do.

St Teresa of Avila invited us to prayer, so let us pray:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,  
no hands but yours,  
no feet but yours;  
yours are the eyes through which to look at Christ's compassion to the world,  
yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good,  
and yours are the hands, with which he is to bless us now. Amen.

## **Invitations to Confession**

God has called us to follow Christ,  
and has formed us into a royal priesthood, a holy nation,  
to declare the wonderful deeds of him who has called us  
out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Let us confess the times when we have failed to heed this call.

Lord Jesus, you said to your disciples:

'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.'

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, we know that the harvest is plentiful  
but the labourers are few.

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you appointed us to go and bear fruit that will last.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

May the Father of all mercies  
cleanse us from our sins,  
and restore us in his image  
to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **Collect**

Let us pray for the ministry of the whole people of God.  
We keep a moment of silence...

God our Father, Lord of all the world,  
through your Son you have called us into the fellowship  
of your universal Church:  
hear our prayer for your faithful people  
that in their vocation and ministry  
each may be an instrument of your love,  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### **Bible reading**

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (*Acts 2.42-end*)

### **Reflection**

A young seminary student went to consult a much-loved bishop about his future.

The bishop replied, "Do whatever you like, whatever comes your way, but do it well as a Christian. Whatever you choose, do it for the love of God and the service of others".

Another goes seeking vocation advice from the abbot of an Orthodox monastery. The abbot responded to his question of vocation by saying, "God doesn't care...God only cares that you seek first his kingdom."

We are all called by God, called just as those first believers of the early church were called. And it is the word 'to call', 'to summons', that gives us the word 'vocation'. We all have a vocation. Not just those who are nurses or doctors or priests or Readers, we all are 'called'. There will be a few people are called upon to do great things, amazing things in their lives,

but we all have a vocation, a call, to love God and our neighbour, to serve other people, and to seek first the kingdom of God.

Have you seen Captain Tom on the telly? One hundred years old, and now limited in his physical abilities.

But within his limitations he has made the effort to serve others by raising money for the NHS. Doing laps of his garden, he's currently raised over £30 million, and he only set out to raise £1000!

He's not done a big thing, but his small thing, done with great effort and devotion, and achieved a great thing.

It was Mother Teresa who said, "We cannot all do great things. But we can do small things with great love." And maybe it is the case that God is calling you to new things, to great changes, but the chances are not so. 'Flourish where you are planted', is often good guidance.

I wonder whether the idea that 'God has a plan for you' is actually true. I rather wonder whether God gives us a compass bearing, rather than a detailed map (the detail of which he inconveniently keeps hidden!). Maybe God doesn't care, but cares only that we seek first the kingdom of God, and that whatever we do, we do for the love of God, and in the service of others.

There is so much kindness, love and generosity in the world all around us, and especially in our local communities, that there is much to be so thankful for.

So, for today, maybe ask yourself these searching questions:

- How can we 'do small things with great love' in our current situation?
- What is coming my way today that I can do well as a Christian?
- What might it look and feel like to do something for the love of God and the service of others?
- How might my life look different if I were to 'seek first the kingdom of God' in fulfilment of my vocation?

These are hard questions, deep questions, not to be rushed. So hit the pause button, have a ponder, maybe put the kettle on, and spend a little time thinking on these things.

### **Intercessions**

Let us turn to God in our prayers of intercession.

Lord God and Father of all,  
over all and in all and through all:  
we give thanks that we are called to your service;  
may all your people be attentive and obedient to your calling.  
Lord, hear your people  
**and answer our prayers.**

Lord of all, we give thanks that you call some to be apostles,  
sent out to do your work.

We pray for all who respond to this calling to serve in your name:

for those immersed in the world, seeking to bear witness to the gospel in word  
and action,

for those whose service takes them to places where they face opposition and difficulty.

May they be continually filled with your Spirit, and empowered to follow your calling.

Lord, hear your people

**and answer our prayers.**

Lord of all, we give thanks that you call some to be prophets.

We pray for all whom you have called to speak out and proclaim the values of your  
kingdom:

for those who challenge injustice and apathy and untruth,

for those who campaign for the well-being of your people and your world.

May they be continually filled with your vision, and have courage in their prophetic calling.

Lord, hear your people

**and answer our prayers.**

Lord of all, we give thanks that you call some to be evangelists.

We pray for all whom you have called to share the message of your love:

for those who communicate the good news of Christ to others from a variety of  
backgrounds,

for those whose enthusiasm and love conveys your truth.

May they be filled with your love as they share the good news with others.

Lord, hear your people

**and answer our prayers.**

Lord of all, we give thanks that you call some to be pastors.

We pray for all whom you have called to care for others through prayer and  
through service:

for those who take care of any who are young or old, who are sick or struggling,

for those whose work supports medical, social and community services.

May their lives be channels of your love and grace.

Lord, hear your people

**and answer our prayers.**

Lord of all, we give thanks that you call some to be teachers.

We pray for all whom you have called to encourage adults and children to learn and grow:

for those who teach informally as parents, mentors and facilitators,

for workers in schools, colleges and universities, and for those who teach in our churches.

May they speak your truth, and help others to grow in wisdom.

Lord, hear your people

**and answer our prayers.**

Lord of all,  
you have called each of us to serve you  
in your world and in your Church;  
strengthen and equip us by your Spirit  
to recognise your call to us,  
and give us grace and courage to fulfil that calling.,  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Rejoicing in God's new creation,  
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **Act of Commitment**

Let us commit ourselves to be followers of Christ.

Christ, you call us.

**Help us respond to your call.**

Christ, you call us to be your people in the world.

We will follow your call to be your people:

our hands will do your work, our feet will walk your way.

Christ, you call us.

**Help us respond to your call.**

Christ, you call each one to be your child for the world.

may our hearts search for your truth,

may our souls listen for your voice, may our lives follow in your path.

Christ, you call each one of us.

**Help us respond to your call.**

Christ, you call us to be your people in the world.

**We are the body of Christ.**

## **Blessing**

We ask for God's blessing upon us all:

May the boldness of the Spirit transform you,  
may the gentleness of the Spirit lead you,  
may the gifts of the Spirit equip you  
to serve and worship God;  
may God bless you and those whom you  
love and pray for, today and always. Amen.

## **Hymn**

“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—  
“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!