

SUNDAY 5th JULY 2020

Welcome & Announcements

Call to worship Psalm 119 12-16

Praise Song 'The valleys will ring'

Opening prayer

Video 'Gospel'

Children's thought

Hymn Tell me the old old story (Sun 17/6/18)

NT Reading Acts 5:17-33

Sermon

Video 'The Apostles Creed'

Prayers

Hymn Fight the good fight (Sun 23/9/18)

Blessing

Live Communion 12noon on Facebook

Call to worship Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees.

¹³ With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

¹⁴ I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. ¹⁵ I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

¹⁶ I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

And now let us worship God as the praise group leads us in the song 'O the valleys shall ring with the sound of praise.'

O the valleys shall ring

With the sound of praise

And the lion shall lie with the lamb

Of His government there shall be no end

And His glory shall fill the earth

May Your will be done

May Your kingdom come

Let it rule, let it reign in our lives

There's a shout in the camp as we answer the call

Hail the King, Hail the Lord of lords!

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Opening prayer

Hail the King, hail the Lord of Lords! God of all glory, Majesty enthroned on High... we bring You our praise this morning... For You alone are the sovereign ruler of the universe, You are the creator & the giver of life... You are the source of all goodness, of all that is lovely & beautiful... You are God... The One who did not discard humanity when we went our own way in selfishness & rebellion... No You sought us out in love, sending Your Son our Saviour... Jesus who lived & died that we may be offered new abundant life.... Lord we worship You the life giver this day...

But as we remember You & all that You gave so that we might have new life... We pause & quietly confess that even now we sometimes fail to appreciate, enjoy & share your new life...

Lord forgive, revive & embolden us that we might know the richness of Your life in us each day & that we might share You with others... In Jesus name Amen

We are now going to watch a video entitled 'Gospel' then we will have a word for the children.

Video- 'Gospel'

Children's' address

Ohhh Where am I now...? have you ever been lost... ? Not very nice is it? I like to think that I have a good sense of direction... even when I am driving somewhere strange, somewhere I haven't been before... I like to think that I am good at finding the way...And generally I am not too bad... But on a few occasions I have to admit ...I got lost.... & then it was really good to have this with me...

Yes my phone will show me where I am ...& it will give me directions to get where I want to go... Sat Navs can be really useful....they are like have a talking MAP beside you to guide you to where You need to go...

One way of thinking about the bible... is to see it as God's Sat Nav for us... in fact there is a verse in the bible which tells us "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*" (Proverbs 3:6). Yes God promises to guide us if we look to Him...

& read His word... now wouldn't it be silly if we just kept trying to go our own way & didn't listen to God..?

Let's all remember that God wants to direct & teach us through His word, so we should open it regularly.

Lets pray Heavenly Father, help us not to forget to read or listen to Your word. And we ask You to direct our ways & help us make good choices. In Jesus name we pray.

We are now going to sing again the hymn '*Tell me the old old story*' & then we will have our bible reading.

New testament Reading - Acts 5:17-33

¹⁷ Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ They arrested the apostles & put them in the public jail. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail & brought them out. ²⁰ 'Go, stand in the temple courts,' he said, 'and tell the people all about this new life.'

²¹ At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, & began to teach the people.

When the high priest & his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin - the full assembly of the elders of Israel - & sent to the jail for the apostles. ²² But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back & reported, ²³ 'We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.' ²⁴ On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard & the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to. ²⁵ Then someone came & said, 'Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.' ²⁶ At that, the captain went with his officers & brought the apostles.

They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

²⁷ The apostles were brought in & made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching & are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.'

²⁹ Peter & the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than human beings! ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead - whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince & Saviour that he might bring Israel to repentance & forgive their sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, & so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.'

³³ When they heard this, they were furious & wanted to put them to death.

SERMON They call them *life books* & they provide according to their website a '*unique piece of family history, a custom-made, handcrafted treasure, to be shared by generations to come.*' Yes quite a sales pitch! But what LIFEBOOKS do is give people the opportunity to record & pass on their life stories to the next generation...It's a little like the old programme '*This is your life*' where the person got to see again those events and memories that are for them the most important, those precious things that they want to hold on to & indeed pass on to others.... Yes aren't there things we have learnt or experienced that we want to pass on to others...? Truths we have learnt, perhaps the hard way, that we want others to be aware off....

Last week we began a new series looking at the life of the early Christians in the book of Acts & I asked the question what were these early Christians devoted too? I hope you remember that we looked at some verses in Acts chapter 2 that gave us a short summary of the life & different activities of those early Christians. Mentioned first in this list of things that the early Christians were devoted too was the *Apostles teaching* & that is what we are going to take time to reflect on some more this morning.

In this morning's passage we hear how the early Christian community began to grow as the apostles '*performed many miraculous signs & wonders*' 5:12. So the Jewish leaders began to be jealous of the apostles' popularity & they arrested them. However during the night 'an angel of the Lord' opened the prison doors to set the apostles free. But not so as they could escape & hide, no so they could once more go into the middle of the temple courts & '*tell the people the full message of this new life*' 5:20

Yes let's be clear that this teaching that the early Christians were devoted too wasn't just a new code of laws or even a new way to understand the old Jewish Law, like the 10 commandments. No, what we see in this passage is that they were sharing the '*full message of new life*'...they weren't just passing on *information* or some sort religious or ethical teaching.. This was '*good news*', it was gospel, this was a message that had changed the lives of these fishermen, tax-collectors & others. It was & is a message focussed, as we shall see in a moment; on the

person of Jesus Christ & this *good news* could lead ordinary people to the one who called himself... 'the bread of life..Jhn 6:35 & 'the way ,the truth & the life.' Jhn 14:6 Yes this message that the apostles preached & taught, that the early believers were devoted too, was a life changing message... in fact more than that it was & is a *life giving* message!

Of course today we here in the western world live during a time when the gospel is probably regarded by most as just one religious message among many. In fact, for some the Christian message may be something that they consider to be an outdated & disproved by science. They may even think of our message as something life restricting rather than life giving... a message full of rules telling them what they can't do... Faced with this challenge, we as Christians might be tempted, out of fear, to just keep our mouths shut or we might spend our time trying to defend our Churches... or worse still we might begin to doubt the power of this life giving message ourselves....we might lose our devotion to the apostles teaching... & perhaps we might even be tempted to just gradually move to a form of the message that we think might be more widely acceptable in today's times. And yet the words of the angel of the Lord come back to us again from this passage, go *tell the people the full message of this new life*

5:20

So the apostles couldn't pick out the bits they wanted to share & perhaps gloss over the bits they knew might be unpopular or might get them into even more trouble...No they were

commanded to share the full message concerning Jesus Christ... And time & time again we read in the book of Acts that this meant declaring to everyone, even those in authority, the facts of Jesus' life death & resurrection & then explaining what that meant for all people.... Let's hear those few verses again from this morning's passage as the apostles are brought before the religious authorities who had imprisoned them... They didn't try to defend themselves... no instead they turned the spotlight on Jesus & what God had done in & through Him...verses 30 onwards.

*The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead - whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince & Saviour **that he might bring Israel to repentance & forgive their sins.** ³² We are witnesses of these things, & so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.'* Yes here in a short few sentences we have the

apostles proclaiming the message that they taught & shared... this life giving message... a message focussed completely on Jesus, what He achieved & the need of every human being to respond to Him. It's a message that certainly brings a deep challenge. For as the writer to the Hebrews says, *God's word cuts 'between soul & spirit, between joint & marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts & desires.'* Heb 4:12 Yes the message of new life... makes us confront the truth of our own lack in life....it faces us with our brokenness & guilt before graciously leading us to the One who generously offers us new abundant life...

Yes the message of new life in Christ is a message so vital... so crucial that we must remind each other of it regularly.....It's a message so deep & rich that we should never think that we have come to an end of it... it's a message so exciting, yet so challenging that we must continue to be transformed by it & it's a message so powerful that we must be ready to share it humbly but also confidently & expectantly with others...

The early Christians were devoted to the apostles teaching, hearing it in the temple courts...but also in their homes as they met together in smaller groups... Over the past years the general experience of most western Christians has been to come to a Church building to hear the gospel message proclaimed & taught. However during this crisis none of us have been able to do that & so we have adapted & the message has been shared more online or through DVD's. Hopefully we have also had more opportunities, more time for personal bible study & reading through this season. These ways of encountering God's message of life will remain important in the days ahead. While we as a Church will be preparing through the summer months, with the hope of opening for Sunday morning worship again on 23rd August. I would ask all of us to remember that this wonderful life giving news about Jesus, isn't just for Sundays.. & neither was it intended to be something that was only shared in a certain building...amongst a certain group of people... As we come back into our buildings in the weeks ahead we must take care so that the message doesn't become in any way restricted or contained... rather we

must continue to look for ways for us to take it & share it in the market place, in homes & wherever there is opportunity...

I will never forget many years ago, sitting down on a garden bench with an ice cream with Aileen's nephew who was then very young & hearing him say...*this is the life*.... He was so young & had obviously picked up the phrase from his Dad... so I couldn't help but smile... But the moment has stuck with me through the years.... because it reminds me that God wants us all to have & enjoy life... Not just muddling through, not just existence, but a life that's bubbling up in our hearts because we are in relationship with Jesus...This is a life that isn't restricted by the walls of our buildings....or even the boundaries of this earth.... It's a message that God calls us to enjoy & to share with others.... as apostle Peter would write.. *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15*

We are now going to see another video 'The Apostles Creed'

Video- APOSTLES CREED

Prayers for Others

We begin our time of prayer by remembering one of our Methodist Overseas Mission partners... the Dabane Water workshops in Zimbabwe.

Currently, most global news stories still have a corona flavour. This is understandable. However, this can distract from deeper hurts, sufferings & struggles within some countries. Zimbabwe may be in freefall again: accelerating inflation & lack of local currency, fuel queues 3 abreast, mains water available for just 3 hour a day (in Bulawayo), high unemployment, police roadblocks into urban areas, whispers of another coup, political negligence & much more. This is where World Development & Relief partner, Dabane Water Workshops tries to make a difference. Let us pray for our partners at this time.

Father, we pray for the Zimbabwe nation. For those without reliable safe water. For those without a job, an income, an opportunity. For those fearful of brutality from those paid to protect them. For those fearful of an unstable political future.

For those who have seen it all before and have lost hope. For those who cry to their God and feel abandoned. For leaders locked into a culture of self-preservation and greed.

For Dabane Water Workshops, our friends, that they might fight on, bringing change to rural communities. Amen.

As we enter the summer months we now also pray for our young people & children. Pray for wisdom, discernment and safety as young people start meeting up with friends again.

Pray for those who are awaiting results and confirmation of places for university for next September.

Pray for those young people who still feel a sense of loss as term finished in a completely different way than normal.

Pray for those children who will be transitioning to another school in September.

We continue in prayer as we pray for...

Hannah Smyth, who is now out of ICU. We pray for a full recovery for her & for peace for her & her Dad.

We continue praying for **Timothy Harte**, & **Daniel Kidson**. Asking God to work healing in their bodies & lives.

We pray for **Mark Armstrong** seriously ill & his wife Roberta & we continue to pray for **baby Rosie**.

We pray also for **Elsbeth White** & for her daughter Marion.

We pray for **Ann, Colette, Nan, Tina & Christine**.

We remember **Helena** following her operation asking God to give her a speedy & smooth period of recovery.

We remember **Jerry** awaiting the results of hospital tests.

We continue to remember **Margaret Kennedy, Lou Kennedy & Marta Kennedy** as they recover.

We remember all those who have experienced loss in these past days. **We finish with the Lord's Prayer**

We sing our final Hymn 'Fight the good fight'

Hymn

Fight the good fight with all thy might;
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right:

lay hold on life, and it shall be
thy joy and crown eternally.

2 Run the straight race through God's good grace,
lift up thine eyes, and seek his face;
life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

3 Cast care aside; upon thy Guide
lean, and his mercy will provide;
lean, and the trusting soul shall prove,
Christ is its life and Christ its love.

4 Faint not, nor fear, his arms are near;
he changes not, and thou art dear;
only believe, and thou shalt see
that Christ is all in all to thee.

John S. B. Monsell (1863)

Closing Blessing - God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life; & the blessing of God the Father & Jesus the Son & the Holy Spirit remain on us forevermore.. Amen..