

Dorset South & West Written Service
Sunday May 7th 2023
Rejoice.
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick'



Call to Worship:

For you are my rock and my fortress, therefore for your name's sake lead me and guide me. Psa 31:3

STF 334

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways.

O loving wisdom of our God!
when all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
which did in Adam fail,
should strive afresh against the foe,
should strive and should prevail;

And that a higher gift than grace
should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence and his very self,
and essence all-divine.

O generous love! that he, who came
as man to smite the foe,
the double agony for us
as man should undergo;

And in the garden secretly,
and on the cross on high,
should teach his followers,
and inspire to suffer and to die.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways.

Prayers of approach and confession

Loving and faithful God, we come into your presence rejoicing. We come to sing your praise, we come to hear your words of power, we come to share your all-embracing love. Be present with us in this time together as we come to worship you. Called to be your people, called to walk the way of Jesus we come with the offering of ourselves and seeking your words of comfort and challenge. Living Jesus, we praise you because you show us that God is love: love which reaches to all people; love which does not count the cost of loving; love which never ends.

Forgive us when we love ourselves and not you. Forgive us when we take our own way and not yours. Forgive us when we think we know better than your truth. Forgive us when we live for ourselves and not for you. Loving God, help us to respond to your promise and challenge of discipleship and renew us in your service.

Amen

Hear now the good news: There is rejoicing in heaven when we turn from our sins. Rejoice, people of God; in Christ, our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God! **Amen**

Gospel Reading: John 14: 1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

STF 99

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing,
alleluia, alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam,
and silver moon with softer gleam:

*O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

O rushing wind that is so strong,
and clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!
O rising morn, in praise rejoice;
and lights of evening, find a voice:

O flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your Lord to hear,
sing 'Praise him, alleluia!
O fire, so masterful and bright,
giving to all both warmth and light:

Dear mother earth, who day by day
unfolds rich blessings on our way,
O praise him, alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that bloom and grow,
let them his glory also show:

And all who are of tender heart
forgiving others, take your part,
sing, 'Praise him, alleluia!
All who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God, and on him cast your care:

And now, most kind and gentle death,
waiting to hush our fading breath,
O praise him, alleluia!
You homeward lead the child of God,
and Christ the Lord the way has trod:

Let all things their creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness;
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One:

Reflection

Did you get to see the Coronation yesterday? Was it a wonderful experience for you? John Wesley apparently came into close contact with the ruling Monarch of the day. Sadly this is his reflection, "I was in the robe-chamber, adjoining to the House of Lords, when the King put on his robes. His brow was much furrowed with age, and quite clouded with care. And is this all the world can give even to a King? All the grandeur it can afford? A blanket of ermine around his shoulders, so heavy and cumbersome he can scarce move under it! A huge heap of borrowed hair, with a few plates of gold and glittering stones upon his head! Alas, what a bauble is human greatness! And even this will not endure."

Oh dear, Methodist's founding father seems to have quite a negative aspect on royal robes and crowns.

In John's gospel we hear the familiar words. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son'. (3:16) What did the world put upon him? A crown of thorns and a robe and instruments of mockery as they nailed him to a heavy wooden cross.

Now this service is about rejoicing and indeed no matter what the physical aspects look like we know God takes the foolish things of this world and turns everything upside down. To give us a new way of being and seeing.

This is the fifth week after Easter but it's message is still wonderful and new. Our reading today in John's gospel shows us that Jesus is preparing to move forward and to take His disciples on this spiritual journey. "I am the way and the truth and the life." We too can be on this wonderful journey. Christ has risen from the dead, our sins are forgiven and we have much to rejoice about as we believe in Him. Worldly trinkets may not endure but the message of God's immeasurable love endures.

In the coronation service of King Charles III there were four distinct stages. How can we see these elements or stages, applied to our lives and our faith in Christ?

The recognition. While standing beside the 700-year-old Coronation Chair, the monarch was presented to those gathered in the Abbey. There are times we like to be recognised and times we want to be hidden from the 'limelight'. In Christ we stand before His throne and we hear His proclamation of our Salvation. How does that make you feel?

It's surely a message to rejoice about? I guess for some it will make us 'quake in our boots'. I think this was what was behind the disciples questions and comments. A concern that were they really worthy to be included in their Heavenly Father's home?

Sometimes it's easier to ask peripheral questions rather than coming straight to what seems like a hard point. I like the Message Bibles rendition of the first verse of our gospel reading: 'Don't let this rattle you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home.'

We rejoice as we stand beside our Heavenly Father's throne, assured that we are welcome in His presence.

The anointing. Monarch's through numerous generations have been anointed almost in secret and in a most private and in an intimate manner.

We are anointed in Christ to be in His service. In the coronation anointing it's as if the sovereign is giving to God for service, His heart, mind and hands. How do we dedicate those aspects of our lives and use them in God's services? Scripture has many examples of how we are called to do good deeds in secret. And yet it's contrary to our human nature. We love to know who is doing what and to have others know of what good things we have done.

Do you remember the Milk tray man? An advertising campaign that ran from the late sixties for four decades with a mysterious daring man who would go through all manner of secretive activities to deliver the unexpected gift to it's recipient. I remember several churches adopting the idea of doing good deeds in a similar secretive manner but hopefully without the daring antics. Instead doing something kind for someone who is not expecting it and without seeking recognition for the deeds. In these difficult days it's something we could certainly resurrect. To look for ways we could use are heart, hands and minds in service of God and our neighbours in need, but in secret. Knowing our reward is in Heaven not in human praise. 'Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing,' for whose glory? 'so that the Father may be glorified'

The investiture and the symbols: John Wesley would probably have hated a tourist visit to the Jewel tower at the Tower of London. However I still like the shiny things and I am afraid his description of the crown etc seems quite miserable.

Yet all that wealth represented in the symbols of investiture and vestments raises questions about the inequality of life. The poverty of so many and the riches locked away in ivory towers. The coronation symbols of orb, sceptre, crown and robes represent peace, justice, mercy and power. How are those 'gifts' present in the world we inhabit? King Charles III has arranged a three part coronation, The Service, a celebration through the concert held in Windsor Castle and then acts of community service in 'The big help out' to be carried out tomorrow.

When Jesus tells his disciples about his forthcoming ascension to His Heavenly Father it's not about, 'job done!' His ministry on Earth is just beginning to take momentum. Through those who will take up Christ's message and mission. Did you see how in the gospel the words are proactive not passive? Going, doing, living and most important, preparing.

We have the riches of Christ's salvation. How are we using these in the service of others and ourselves. Or are they locked away in what might be described as the ivory towers of our forgetfulness?

Fred Kaan's communion hymn, 'Now let us from this table rise' was written to impress upon us the need to fulfil what we connect with in the communion service. 'You believe in God; believe also in me', but how are

we making this known? Fred Kaan through his lyrics tells us that after the service is over it's not over until we find ourselves in active service to others.

Homage. It's going to be strange to hear and read about The king's birthday honours instead of The Queen's. I never feel easy about those lists. So many people are put forward to receive an honour but obviously only a few can be chosen. With our Heavenly king all who do His good deeds will receive their eternal merit. However I hope that in doing so and in knowing that, we will not seek homage for our selves. 'In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.' (Matthew 5:16)

Prayers of intercession

Our Father in heaven, We pray today for all who offer themselves in service to others.
We pray for those we rely on every day and yet hardly notice.
Help us to be more mindful and appreciative of those who serve us
And to seek out ways we can serve others too, for your glory.

Our Father in heaven, We pray today for the nations of our world.
This weekend seems to have lowered barriers and divisions in one united celebration.
Help us to find ways to hold onto justice, mercy and respect for all people.

Our Father in heaven, We pray today for the places in our world that are in turmoil.
We think of the places in the news because of ongoing warfare or disasters.
We pray to for the numerous places and peoples of our world who have slipped from our thoughts
And yet their suffering continues in ways we can't begin to imagine.
We thank you for the work of all Aid agencies and pray for those working amongst them.

Our Father in heaven, We pray today for those we know personally who need our prayers
We take a moment to remember them and their particular needs.....

.....Be very near to them and show us how we can help them too.

Our Father in heaven, We pray today for our new King Charles III.
Grant him your peace as he commits himself again to your service.
Give him strength and perseverance as he promises to serve us all as King.
May he know you are walking with him day by day. Help him to fulfil his vows and promises.
May he follow the example of Jesus – the ultimate King of Kings.
God bless the King. **The Lord's Prayer**

STF 596

Now let us from this table rise
renewed in body, mind and soul;
with Christ we die and live again,
his selfless love has made us whole.

With minds alert, upheld by grace,
to spread the Word in speech and deed,
we follow in the steps of Christ,
at one with all in hope and need.

To fill each human house with love,
it is the sacrament of care;
the work that Christ began to do
we humbly pledge ourselves to share.

Then grant us courage, Father-God,
to choose again the pilgrim way
and help us to accept with joy
the challenge of tomorrow's day.

The Blessing.

The Blessing of God The Father,
God The Son and God The Holy Spirit,
Be with us now and always. **Amen.**