

Issue 9  
18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

# For these days ...

*'I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.'*

*John 14.18*

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## Lectionary Readings

Acts 17. 22-31

Psalms 66. 8-20

1 Peter 3. 13-22

John 14. 15-21

## Hymns

63, 'All people that on earth do dwell'

489, 'Come down, O love divine'

'The Spirit lives to set us free'

Dear friends, isn't technology wonderful? Well, it is when it works! Thankfully the problems that many from Waterfront had with Zoom yesterday morning was part of a much bigger national meltdown, as many – not least churches – logged on for worship and chats. Who would have thought that the Church could take down the internet ... we certainly live in strange times! We shall try again in the coming week and hopefully have better luck. For those who missed the installation of Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair as the new Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, you can catch up with that on Facebook and the Church of Scotland website and I encourage you to do so – it was wonderful! There is also the opportunity to watch *Heart and Soul* that was on yesterday too. As we look towards Pentecost, there is plenty to be involved in. From Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> through to Sunday 31<sup>st</sup>, I'm asking everyone at midday to stop and pray the Lord's Prayer either on your own or together, knowing that as you do so, many are saying it with you. This is part of the *Thy Kingdom Come* initiative and more information can be found here: <https://www.thykingdomcome.global> Last, but by no means least, normally on Pentecost Sunday I would invite you all to wear something red as we celebrate the arrival of the Spirit and the birthing of the church. We obviously cannot meet this year, but it would be great if you could pop something red on and record a little video. Perhaps waving, or saying hello or sending a short Pentecost message, that can be edited together and enjoyed on Pentecost Sunday. Similarly, if you would like to participate in the weekly worship videos – readings, prayers, music, dancing (I'm open to all suggestions!) – then please get in touch. Videos can be sent to [RMorrison@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:RMorrison@churchofscotland.org.uk) or sent via Whatsapp or text to 07557657079. Please do check Facebook and your e-mails for updates.

## Prayer

Lord God,  
Times may change,

Life is unpredictable and fragile,  
 And fads, trends and fashions may come and go,  
 But in and through it all,  
 One thing remains unchanging and trustworthy –  
 you and your great love for us.

From age to age,  
 Your love has echoed.  
 In Jesus,  
 It took on flesh for all to see.  
 And since his return to you,  
 It is made known through the power of your Spirit at work  
 in your church and world.

And so we worship and praise you,  
 We listen for your word and pray in your name,  
 Seeking ways,  
 in these strange days,  
 to be your people as you grow your kingdom on earth.

Lord God,  
 Forgive us when we have not worshipped,  
 loved or served you as we should have done,  
 Through your Holy Spirit,  
 Set us free to try again,  
 So that through our caring and praying,  
 Our listening and witnessing,  
 In short – through our call to love you and one another -  
 Others might come to know  
 that they are loved beyond all measure by you.  
 We ask it all in Jesus' name,  
 Amen.

## Reading

John 14.15-21

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

<sup>15</sup>“If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— <sup>17</sup>the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be <sup>in</sup> in you. <sup>18</sup>I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup>Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will realize that

I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

## Reflection

Way back at the beginning of lockdown, I decided to buy a Facebook portal whilst it was on special offer. To all intent and purpose, it's a digital photo frame that does quite a few things, including allowing you to make messenger and whatsapp calls. Not only can you hear the person you are calling, but you can also see them and others who are in the room. It's been lovely to video call family and friends – to hear and see them – and it's really helped us to feel as if we are not alone.

At the beginning of last week though, quite by accident, I discovered something else that the portal could do on a video call and that is a feature that allowed us to change our appearances and voices! For a while I was a monster. Then I had googly eyes – I'm sure there's a few of us like that at the moment as we spend so much time in front of a screen! Then I was a cute bunny, and also, at one point, had a rather bemused looking cat on my head! There are plenty more and we laughed heartily when we saw them, which is something that definitely helps us through these days. However, there were a couple more that stayed with me and that was two clouds.

One was a nice bright cloud, complete with sunshine and rainbow hanging above my head, and the other, a much darker and greyer cloud, complete with raindrops pouring down upon me. It reminded me of that beautiful hymn, Abide with me, and, in particular the third verse:

'I need thy presence every passing hour,  
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.'

And it got me thinking about life, these days and God; especially as we turn to our reading today.

It's part of that farewell discourse of Jesus and follows on from the reading we heard last week. There's one thing for sure, the disciples and indeed Jesus were all too aware of the dark clouds gathering. Jesus was preparing himself and them for his death, there was confusion and fear and despair and into all that he seeks to reassure them of God's unchanging love. And that's what we hear in these

verses. Jesus reminds them of the centrality of love to their calling and then he goes on to say that he is going to ask God the Father to give them another advocate who is going to help them and be with them forever.

This advocate, is none other than the Holy Spirit. The promised one, who came upon believers in the festival of Pentecost that we will celebrate in just a couple of weeks. The Spirit has many names including: Advocate, Counsellor, Comforter, Helper; and all stem from the word Paraclete, which means the one called alongside another. Jesus takes it a step further and assures them that not only will the Spirit be alongside them, but, as we remembered last week, will be within them, not leaving them abandoned or orphaned, but assured of God's presence with them always. For God is their Father too and through Jesus, they have been adopted into God's family – so too have we.

There was a post that appeared a few days ago on Facebook: 'Church is not something you go to, it's a family you belong to,' and that is a wonderful reminder for us all, as we seek to find our way through and cope. We have the promise that even when clouds are gathering and bursting upon our heads, through the Spirit, God is with us, and we see that really clearly when we love and care for one another.

When we let someone know that they aren't forgotten.  
 When we lift someone's spirit and make them laugh.  
 When we share our resources and help someone who is hungry.  
 When we give of our time to listen and love.

There are so many ways to love and serve, so many ways to show that we follow a God who is alive and cares. And that's one of the things that stays with me from these verses. Jesus says to his friends that many in the world cannot see or know the Spirit and yet here we are, folks that have not seen or heard Jesus physically, but nevertheless know and believe and trust in him. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, within hearts and lives and working through the church, to help make Jesus known.

Therefore, whether things are feeling sunny or cloudy with you, may you know the power of the and the love of God's Spirit, and may that same Spirit, lead us, the church, ever deeper into life, that we may see Jesus and his ways more clearly and be fired up to follow where he calls and make his love known.

## Prayer

God,

Who is present,  
 And our constant companion,  
 Thank you for the promise that we are not alone,  
 Thank you that you are our loving Father,  
 And that, through Jesus, we belong to a family bigger than we can ever  
 know.

Thank you for those who are helping us cope at this time,  
 Those whose calls and presence make us smile and laugh,  
 Reminding us to see the bright side,  
 And that thank you for those whose kindness and care is a great  
 comfort in dark days.

As rain clouds hang over so many,  
 We pray for those providing support and help,  
 And for those who need to know that they are not abandoned  
 And that brighter days will come.

And so we pray for Counsellors, pastors and trained volunteers,  
 offering listening ears and support to family, friends and strangers,  
 Some of whom are struggling with loneliness and mental illness.

Lord of all, hear our prayer.

We pray for those working with children,  
 Nursery leaders, teachers and child minders,  
 Seeking to teach, reassure and nurture young hearts and minds.

Lord of all, hear our prayer.

We pray for those offering belonging and comfort,  
 To young lives fragile and damaged,  
 Foster carers, social workers, adoptive parents,  
 Creating a place to call home.

Lord of all, hear our prayer.

We pray for those helping vulnerable and struggling neighbours,  
 organising food parcels,  
 Sorting out venues,  
 And volunteering to distribute and deliver food.

Lord of all, hear our prayer.

And Lord,  
 We pray for all those who are caring,  
 All those who are suffering,  
 All those who are grieving this day.

In the silence, Lord of all, hear our prayer.

*Silence*  
 God,  
 Who is present,

And our constant companion,  
And assures us that all have a place in your family,  
We pray your blessing upon our new Moderator Martin,  
And all that you will do through him as he serves in your name,  
And pray for your church,  
That we might grasp the opportunities before us for change and  
renewal,  
As we seek to live out the ways of justice, love and peace,  
And pray thy kingdom come.

We ask it all in the name of Jesus our Lord,  
Who taught us to pray together saying:  
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name ...

### Closing Thought ...

We've now been in lockdown for enough weeks to be able to know that the expenditure for both congregations greatly outweighs the income. This was to be expected, not least as a consequence of there being no collection of free will offerings. Can I once again encourage you to fill and keep your envelopes and for those who would like to know more about standing orders and gift aid to contact our Treasurers at Waterfront and Dalmuir Barclay.

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