

Bath Mission Area Worship - Sunday 22nd November

'Christ the King' - led by Pat Heynes

Loving God;

You call us to you, even when the places we usually meet are inaccessible

Help us to know your Spirit's presence wherever we are,

Help us to respond to you with love and service, and without fear. AMEN

Hymn

It is God who holds the nations
in the hollow of his hand;
it is God whose light is shining
in the darkness of the land;
it is God who builds the City
on the Rock and not on sand:
may the living God be praised!

It is God whose purpose summons us
to use the present hour;
who recalls us to our senses
when a nation's life turns sour;
in the discipline of freedom
we shall know God's saving power:
may the living God be praised!

God reminds us every sunrise
that the word is ours on lease:
for the sake of life tomorrow
may our love for it increase;
may all races live together,
share its riches, be at peace;
may the living God be praised!

Singing the Faith 705 Fred Pratt Green (omitting v3)

Let us pray

Loving God, all worship and adoration belongs to you for you alone are Lord,
you alone are the mighty God, Creator of all that is good.

And yet you are closer than our very breath.

Closer than our very breath and we thank you Lord that you are always with us,
whether we know it or not,
whether we recognise it or not,
whether we delight in it or not.

You are always there to comfort us and to challenge us

Thank you for your saving presence. AMEN

Reading: Matthew 25: 31-46

Time to Reflect

We know this passage well. It's an analogy that has passed into modern day speech, separating the sheep from the goats, the good from the bad.

It's not so much a story, a parable, as a piece of teaching. Lots of repetition, banging the message home.

So we have got the message, be a sheep not a goat....

What does that message mean to us, sitting in lockdown in the twenty-first century?

Each and every one of us is made in the image of God.

When we move into action for good that is God shining through us.

If we deny that action, if we turn away with some excuse, we are not recognizing that image of God in ourselves.

We are not recognizing the image of God in other people who we may have been able to help.

For those who God calls "blessed", those who step forward into action, it's not just the doing of the action, but the encouragement that the action spreads for others to do likewise.

Of course, the reverse is true - if we deny the image of God within us, if we turn away from an opportunity, if we bury our head in the sand, then that gesture gives permission for those around us to do the same - nothing is accomplished, everything goes on in the same old way.

The things we do change others for good or ill - not just the ones we help or don't help, but those who stand by and watch.

People can be incited by all sorts of activities. We have all seen how evil can duplicate rapidly because of what others say, the social media is a good example of this, but long before social media was ever thought of I can think of situations in school or work where malicious gossip changed people's lives.

The opposite can also be true, people can be swept along to join in a helpful action, making a difference in communities because of the example of others.

All because of the image of God within us.

Surrounded as we are today, by confusion, fear and uncertainty I find it very easy to bury that image under my own concerns, to ignore the God within me.

"What would be best for me" replaces "what is God asking of me".

Because so many things have changed, we have to look for new ways to project God's image within us. Inside and outside the church we are called to show kindness.

The challenge is to find opportunities to do so in our different circumstances but find them we must, if we are to live out the image of God in us.

Intercessions

Lord, we pray for this your church, fragmented and uprooted as we are.
Shine the light of your presence into our hearts and give us the strength and power
to do great things in your name.
Circle us Lord, keep light within and darkness out.

Lord, we pray for our nation, and those nations who make up your world.
Give them the values of justice, concern for the weak and fairness to all
May the members of those nations be blessed with hope and encouragement
Circle us Lord, keep hope within and despair out.

Lord, we pray for our family, our friends and those we love
Keep them in peace and security, guard the vulnerable and strengthen the
struggling.
Circle us Lord, keep love within and danger out.

Lord, we pray for the sick and the bereaved, the fearful and those in pain,
Those we can name, and those unknown to us but known to you
Touch them with your healing presence
Circle them Lord, keep peace within and fear out.

Circle us Lord, our hearts, our homes, our church, our nation, our world.
Circle us and never let us slip outside your grace, for Jesus's sake. AMEN

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn

There's a spirit in the air,
telling Christians everywhere:
Praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world!

Lose your shyness, find your tongue,
tell the world what God has done:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrows life today!

When believers break the bread,
when a hungry child is fed,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.

Still the Spirit gives us light,
seeing wrong and setting right:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today!

When a stranger's not alone,
where the homeless find a home,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world.

May the Spirit fill our praise,
guide our thoughts and change our ways,
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today

There's a Spirit in the air,
calling people everywhere:
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.

Singing the Faith 398 Brian Wren

Blessing

In our passage today
the people God calls blessed
are the ones who feed the hungry
welcome the stranger
care for those in pain

Not a word about who or what they do or don't believe in,
only a description of how they live their lives.

So today we ask a blessing on not only ourselves
but our friends who cannot or do not believe in you.

A blessing that they are not expecting
yet one which they will recognise.

Give us all, Generous God, a blessing of joy, integrity and justice,
a blessing of love and life.

AMEN