

Parish of Central Exeter
6th Sunday in Easter 9th May 2021

Rogation Sunday and Christian Aid Week



*The reflections this morning are from Peter, intercessions from Helen.
Many thanks to you both.*

Welcome everyone.

Preparing for worship

Come and celebrate our common home
we gather with the family of humanity.

The mountains, islands and deserts
we honour the glory of God in creation.

The lakes, rivers and seas
we come to the source of living water.

With the land, its soil, seeds and sustenance
we give thanks for God's generous provision.

With the forests of great trees, the lungs of the planet
we will sing with joy and clap our hands.

We join with the whole of creation, inspired by those who have gone before and the prophetic voices of today.

We dare to praise and pray for another possible world. Amen

(Adapted from 'We are the Amazon', an ecumenical act of solidarity and justice for the Amazon and its people.)

Today's Psalm is Psalm 98, echoed in our **opening prayer**

Here today there is love, freely available to all.
Not our human loving, fragile and intermittent,
but God's supreme love.

**May a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth,
break forth into joyous songs of praise.**

Here today is love, higher than our loftiest hopes,
deeper than the immensities of time and space,
God's inclusive love.

**Let the seas roar their praise,
and everything in them.
Let the rivers clap their hands
and the hills sing together their happiness.**

Worship song

We hear John Rutter's 'For the Beauty of the Earth'. This is a recent virtual recording with just four voices and a piano, but what an amazing result! Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47gTydwGSv4>

Confession

For the beauty of the Earth
desecrated by pollution, extinguished by forest fires, choked by plastic waste
Christ, our God, forgive us for systemic greed.

For the urgency of this hour
ignored by apathy or procrastination
wasted by ineffective decisions and denied by economic interests
Christ, our God and Saviour,
forgive us for selfish short-term behaviour.

For the joy of human love
fractured by forced migration, crushed by bereavement
lost to typhoons, floods and starvation.
Christ, our God, bringer of justice, forgive us for this climate crisis.

Words of Assurance

We are God's children, called to be different,
called to act different, called to live as new people.
Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Collect for the sixth Sunday of Easter

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us
to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.



New Testament Reading

James 1: 22-27 Listening and Doing

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.



A chair created using decommissioned weapons as part of a project in Cambodia that turned instruments of violence to other uses.

Worship song

'O for a closer walk with God'. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wWVpafJX8A>

Gospel Reading

John 16: 23-33 I have overcome the world

²³ In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

²⁵ "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. ²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. ²⁷ No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸ I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

²⁹ Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. ³⁰ Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

³¹ "Do you now believe?" Jesus replied. ³² "A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

³³ "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Reflection Send My Roots Rain

Even if poetry is a foreign country to them, most people would immediately recognise how the observation and experience of the natural world is an inexhaustible source of the poetic imagination -from the great names of the Romantic Movement like Wordsworth and Coleridge, through the pastoral poetry of John Clare, to the work of Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, R H Thomas and Alice Oswald in our own day. Among the greatest in a crowded field is the Jesuit priest-poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, and 'send my roots rain' is the last, apparently desolate, line of one of his many poems in which he contrasts the fecundity of nature, in this case of spring unfolding, with the barrenness of his spiritual condition.

'Send my roots rain' seems an especially apt cry for Rogationtide this year. This is traditionally Rogation Sunday when we ask for God's blessings to be poured out on us – specifically upon the land for an abundant harvest, but by extension, as today's readings make clear, for blessings of all kinds 'from whom all good things come' as today's collect has it. That cry will be especially fervent from farmers and growers after one of the coldest, sunniest and driest April's on record – you know we're in trouble when even in this wet part of the country the farmers say the grass has stopped growing.

But the poet's cry is one of spiritual desolation, a lament about his aridity and faltering growth in faith, a fear, as it were, of spiritual crop failure. May be that too has at least a faint echo for us as we find ourselves emerging blinking into the spring sunlight and walking haltingly into a world changed by our experience of the pandemic. We need to ask for our roots to be watered again, our wells of our inner resources refilled. We find ourselves

Prayer (in Christian Aid week)

Great God,
Who makes the sun to rise, and opens the heavens,
Hear the cry of the people
Who sow in hope for rain, but reap only despair,
Hear the cry of the people
Seeking shelter from the storm, their hopes and homes submerged
Hear the cry of the people.

When creation is hitting back, with rage and resistance
Give us hope, grant us salvation,
Give us a new relationship with creation
With reverence to tend this gift from You
And say once again of the earth and all you created
It is GOOD.

(Rev. Bob Kikuyu, Christian Aid Global Theology Advisor, Nairobi, Kenya)

Worship Song

Heaven cannot wait, by John Bell. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHMt3YJHbZE>

Intercessions

God of abundant life,
we see Your goodness all around us
and we thank You for every part of it:
from the plants and animals that create complex ecosystems,
to arid deserts and deep oceans that test the limits of life.
We pray that in this time of climate crisis and ecological emergency,
You will help us to rediscover Your love of creation
and to reflect that love in our own lives.

God, in Your mercy, send our roots rain.

God, who speaks through unexpected people,
we thank You for contemporary prophets,
who challenge us to act on climate change:
for indigenous people and their invaluable knowledge,
for scientists warning us about changes to the planet,
and for young people striking for their future.
We pray that You will help those in power hear these prophetic voices,
and see beyond short-term political and business priorities.
Give them wisdom and courage in their decision-making.

God, in Your mercy, send their roots rain.

God of second chances,
we recognise the damage we have done to the Earth
and the injustice we see in society every day,
fuelled by worship of profit and possessions.
We pray for the coming of a better world
with justice, kindness and humility at its heart.
We ask that You guide us to be co-creators of this new world.
Give us confidence to follow the prophetic voices,
to stand against injustice to people and to planet.
so that together, in Your strength,
we transform this climate crisis
and help bring about your Kingdom on earth.

God, in Your mercy, send our roots rain.

Adapted by Helen from Christian Aid's intercessions for this Sunday on the Church of Scotland's website

The Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, life-giver, pain-bearer, love-maker
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe.
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world.
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings.
Your kin-dom of peace and freedom sustain our hope
and come on earth.

With the bread that we need for today, feed us.
For the hurts that we inflict on one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love
now and forever. Amen

Developed in the early 1980s by the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness

Affirmation

We believe in God above us,
Creator of all things, sustainer of all life.

We believe in Christ beside us,
Companion and friend, redeemer of all the broken pieces of our universe.

We believe in Spirit deep within us,
Advocate and guide, who lives with us eternally.

We believe in God's resurrection created world,
Where all things are fixed, and all creation fits together in vibrant harmonies.

We believe in God above, beside, within,
God yesterday, today and forever, the three in one, the one in three,

We believe in God.

(from the Lenten series Journey into Wholeness written by Christine Sine.)

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.

You may like to listen to: 'Christ has no body now but yours', sung by the Exultate Singers. Words (on the screen) are attributed to St Teresa of Avilla.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoV6R6gk4vY>

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

God our Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life:
may we thirst for you,
the spring of life and source of goodness,
through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Commission

Go out, and be doers of the Word.
Cleanse your hearts of all pollution,
be quick to listen and learn,
welcome the Word that God implants in you,
and bring it to birth in acts of righteousness and compassion.

And may God pour grace upon you and bless you forever;
May Christ Jesus reveal to you the truth of God's ways;
and may the Holy Spirit fill your life with passion and love.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Blessing

May God bless us with wonder at creation's glory.
May God bless us with fury at creation's spoiling.
May God bless us with courage at this critical hour.
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Rest upon us and on all creation,
This day and for the future to come. Amen.
(ACT Alliance)

Closing Hymn

'Inspired by Love and Anger'. Another offering from the Church of St Cuthbert, Wells and Wookey Hole. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMH1-Bu-7U>



May is Mary's month. Part of 'The May Queen', 1900, by Margaret Mackintosh, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow.