



Living churches at the heart of their communities...

St Giles', Durham, St Cuthbert's, Shadforth and St Mary's, Sherburn

**Sunday 17 May 2020
Easter 6**

Collect

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. Amen



Bible Readings

Acts 17. 22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him— though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said,

“For we too are his offspring.”

Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’

1 Peter 3. 13-end

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

John 14. 15-21

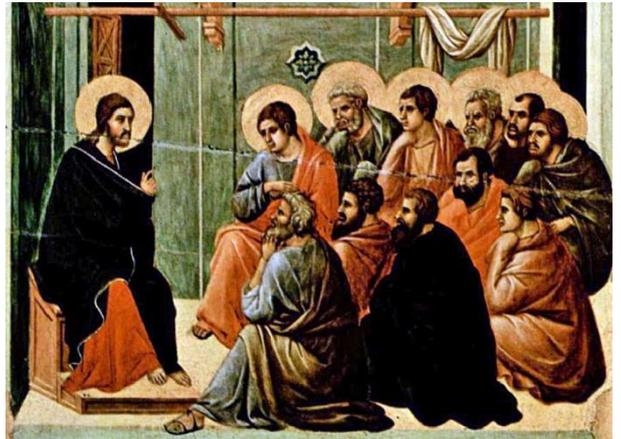
‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’



A reflection:

Today's gospel reading is taken from what is known as the Farewell Discourse. This is a long passage of St John's Gospel just before Jesus's passion, and it is his last instructions to the disciples before he goes to the cross. In them he seeks to reassure them that although what is about to happen will be tough, will be pretty terrible in fact, that all in the end will be well – all will be ok. This is particularly true of the passage we read today. Jesus talks about the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate who he will send. He says to the disciples that in a little while they will not see him, but that he won't leave them, he will send his Spirit.



In the week ahead, we will celebrate the feast of the Ascension – that time after Jesus' resurrection when he miraculously ascends into heaven to return to his Father. Then, two weeks from this Sunday, we will celebrate the feast of Pentecost, or Whit Sunday, when we remember his Holy Spirit being poured out on the disciples. So, the reading we have today is a very appropriate one – Jesus is going back into heaven, but the disciples will not be left alone because his Spirit will be with them. Although the disciples are told to wait, for a little while, they will have the presence of the Lord with them always.

Today, that idea of waiting seems to be very much with us at this time. As we continue to wait for a time when the restrictions can be eased more; as we wait for a time when the number of new cases of this awful disease decline even further; as we wait (and pray and hope) that a vaccine or an effective drug to treat the virus can be developed. And in the midst of this waiting we will no doubt be feeling anxious, anxious about what the future might bring. But just as the disciples were told, in the midst of their anxiety in the Farewell Discourses, Jesus will not leave us comfortless. We continue to be in the season of Easter, a great season of joy and of hope in the resurrection – a reminder to us of the transforming power of God even in the midst of so much adversity. And we too need not to lose hope, because of what Jesus tells us today, because we know of the power of the resurrection.

Even though we are apart in church, in many other areas of life, Jesus's Spirit continues to be with us to help us, guide us, equip us and comfort us. We continue to be led through our lives, not only in these difficult times but in the joyous times to come – the time which is coming when we will be able to be back together and will be able to celebrate together. A little while we must continue to wait, but we know the presence of Jesus with us, today and always.

Online services

Services which will be available to join via zoom this week. We hope as many of you as possible will join in - and if you know of anyone else who would like to join, please let Rev'd Tom know and he will send them an invitation:

Sunday 17 May	10.00am	Service of the Word
	6.00pm	Evening Prayer
Wednesday 20 May	10.00am	Morning Prayer
Thursday 21 May	7.00pm	Ascension Day Service

The Collect for Ascension Day Thursday 21 May

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.



Morning and Evening Prayer for the coming week

	Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
Sunday 17 May	Job 14. 1-2,7-15; 19.23-27a 1 Thessalonians 4. 13-end	Zechariah 8. 1-13 Revelation 21. 22 - 22.5
Monday 18 May	Numbers 16. 1-35 Luke 6. 27-38	Deuteronomy 26 1 Peter 4. 1-11
Tuesday 19 May	Numbers 16. 36-end Luke 6. 39-end	Deuteronomy 28. 1-14 1 Peter 4. 12-end
Wednesday 20 May	Numbers 17. 1-11 Luke 7. 1-10	2 Samuel 23. 1-5 Colossians 2. 20 - 3. 4
Thursday 21 May <i>Ascension Day</i>	Isaiah 52. 7-end Hebrews 7. [11-25] 26-end	Songs of the Three 29-37 Revelation 5
Friday 22 May	Numbers 20. 1-13 Luke 7. 11-17	Deuteronomy 29. 2-15 1 John 1. 1 - 2.6
Saturday 23 May	Numbers 21. 4-9 Luke 7. 18-35	Deuteronomy 30 1 John 2. 7-17