

**Sheffield United Reformed Churches**  
**Team Ministry an act of devotion for individual or families**  
**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 10:30 am**

**Opening words**

If you are passing through hard times: come!

If you need strength to support those who are suffering: come!

If you are full of happiness: come!

If you are burdened and busy: come!

Come; let us unite in worship of the one who offers us protection, comfort and joy.

**Opening Hymn MP 50**

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy One, is here;

Come bow before him now with reverence and fear.

In him no sin is found we stand on holy ground.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;

He burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned:

how awesome is the sight our radiant king of light!

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

**Prayer of Approach, Thanksgiving and Confession**

Ever-living God, we praise you for the mercy. Creator God, as we draw ever nearer to Pentecost, we remember that in the beginning, the earth was 'formless and empty, And that darkness was over the surface of the deep.'

But we remember too that you were present

And that your creative Spirit was on the startling line, ready to go.

And so we praise you that out of nothing you brought everything into being

And that through your spirit, we have order and not chaotic nothingness.

As we lift our gaze to the stars, and as we marvel at the beauty of delicate spring flowers,

With thankful hearts we rejoice in all that is; in all that you have given.

But we acknowledge the darkness of our own lives

And our need for the light of Christ, ministered by the Spirit.

Forgive us, we pray, our self-centredness, our fractiousness, our greed and all that is contrary to your will for our lives.

For a healing touch, we pray, and for a deep sense of assurance that your love for us made known in Jesus is sufficient.

Forgive us, gracious God, when we have turned away from your word and immersed ourselves in the distractions of the world.

Forgive us, when we have sought to belong to the world and compromised your truth to fit in.

Forgive us, when we have bickered among ourselves and not shown the world that we are one.

Forgive us, when we have distanced ourselves from those you have called us to serve.

Forgive us, O God; protect us and unite us. In Jesus' name

Gracious God, we thank you for the enduring prayer of Jesus for his disciples

Which reaches and reassures us today as we walk in their footsteps,

Reminding us that we are not alone

But protected, empowered, forgiven, and surrounded by your grace every step of the way.

**Amen.**

## Readings



**Psalms 1:** Happy are those whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night.

**John 17: 6-19** - Now they know that everything you have given me is from you...

**Acts 1: 15-26** - Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen...

**1 John 5: 9-13** - God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son

## Reflection

This week Jesus prays for his friends, as he knew that they were experiencing difficulties. The reading takes us back before the crucifixion and after the last supper. The prayer actually runs from verse 1 through to verse 26. Jesus realised that his disciples were sorrowful because he had said to them a number of times that he was going to die. They did not understand why and to make matters worse, Jesus had talked about the Advocate who he was sending who would help them to understand the things in the world. Jesus assured them to take courage as he was with them all the time.

For us this morning Jesus sets the example for us. He was about to go to his Father, it was going to be a challenging journey, so before he does anything else he places his situation in God's hands. So he prays for his disciples, so that they may be one with his Father as he is one with him, he asks for their protection in uncertain times and prays that they may be made ready to go out and be the 'good news' to the world.

As Jesus prays to his Father we see the potential for prayer and how the prayer captures the intimate and urgent tone of Jesus' love and passion for his Father and his disciples. There are echoes here to the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples. Let's just spend a few minutes looking at a couple of the similarities.

1. Jesus starts his prayer *Father*, the Disciples prayer starts with the words. "Our Father...."
2. Jesus asks for *protection from the evil one* and in the Disciple's prayer we ask to be delivered from evil and kept from giving in to temptation.

Now having read or heard the prayer again today, I would like to draw out two aspects from the prayer in John's Gospel. The first one is found from verse 6 to 9 and it is all about giving. The second point is Jesus asking for the disciples to be "sanctified" in the truth in verse 17.

Let us look at the relationship which Jesus has with his Father and with us. In this prayer it is a giving relationship. The verb *give* occurs 17 times in this chapter. The Father gives Jesus authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom God has given him during his time on earth. He has given Jesus work to do.

In this *giving* relationship, we could describe it as one where we belong to God and we were given to Jesus so that he could show us how to live in the world. The Father gave his Son as a gift to us and now the Son is asking for us to be given protection by the Father.

We are not being taken out of the world but because we believe that the Father sent the Son we are given protection. The prayer is to offer protection not for our own sake, but also in order that we can fulfil God's mission in the world.

The disciples are to be protected so that they may love as they have been commanded to love in a way that not only draws them into union with the divine love but also shows that love to the world into which they are being sent as Jesus was sent.

You know the saying "What is yours is mine and what is mine is mine" – that doesn't apply here. Jesus concludes the prayer in verse 17 by asking the Father to sanctify the disciples in the truth; through God's word which is truth. This is how we are connected with Jesus. Let us look back at Jesus' statement in John 10:34-36 where his own sanctification is what qualifies him to be God's Son.

Similarly, then, our sanctification on that basis is part of our claim to be children of God. Jesus said that he was sharing his word with us as he gave us the commandment to love one another as he loved us. This sanctification is not about claiming 'godly' status or being 'holier than thou.' It is intended as the way for the disciples (us) to live, to be sent out to share the truth (the word) in the world. It is not a way of being taken out of the world but being sent into it. Remember Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life"

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." Our sanctification, therefore, comes freely to us through grace knowing that we also need to lose our lives in order to gain it. Take the time to read the Psalm and be encouraged to meditate on God's word day and night. If we truly follow, his way and his truth, the life we give up becomes for us the eternal life in Christ which begins here on earth. Thy kingdom come.

So, this morning, let us examine our prayer lives once more. We are sanctified to be sent into the world as salt and light, being good news to the poor, proclaiming sight to the blind, release to the captives, to be peace makers and care takers of the Earth.

Imagine Jesus, praying this prayer over you

### **Song for Meditation**

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed;  
the motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try,  
prayer the sublimest strains that reach the Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air,  
his watchword at the gates of death: he enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice, returning from his ways;  
while angels in their songs rejoice, and cry, 'Behold, he prays!

The saints in prayer appear as one, in word and deed and mind;  
while with the Father and the Son sweet fellowship they find.

Nor prayer is made on earth alone: the Holy Spirit pleads,  
and Jesus on the eternal throne for sinners intercedes.

O Thou by whom we come to God, the Life, the Truth, the Way,  
the path of prayer thyself hast trod: Lord, teach us how to pray!

## **Prayers of Intercession – contributed to by Micheal Gillott**

Loving Lord, as Jesus prayed for His disciples so we pray today for your Church in all its part. We pray for those working to bring unity to your church in the past present and future. Their work is hindered by the world because they are not of the world as we are not of the world. We pray for the worldwide Church, praying for a fresh outpouring of Your Spirit in the days of Pentecost now before us.

We pray especially for those parts of your Church which live under the daily threat of persecution. Grant protection, courage and strength, we pray. We ask that you give us strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

We pray for our own congregations, asking that you would give us the persevering spirit of those of our forebears who came through seasons of great challenge.

We bring the people who are bereaved and those who have lost loved ones in tragic circumstances. We pray for those who need your love and compassion no matter what the cause. Gracious Father we now bring before you those whom we have personally mentioned.....

Lord Jesus Christ fill all these people with your love and Grace may they know this and feel that you are with them and that there are those who are coming alongside them in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

We pray for the Church – traditional denominations, independent streams, fledgling fresh expressions – that you would equip it with all necessary grace for the challenges of this day. Bind us together in loving unity, as Christ prayed.

We pray for the Church for all who serve within it and for all who turn to it seeking light and love. Grant it a sure sense of where you are leading; strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. We pray for our own congregations, asking that you would give us the persevering spirit of those of our forebears who came through seasons of great challenge. Father you know that we are now the ones that Jesus is praying for to ensure the word continues to be received by those who are hungry and thirsty for you. We bring all these things to your feet and thank you for answering them in the way you know best.

And we pray for ourselves for we are the Church, the individual parts which make up the Body of Christ on earth. Inspired by Your word, shaped by your Spirit, send us out to be salt and light. We a few minutes to lift up those in our hearts....In Jesus' name, Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Hymn**

Brother, sister, let me serve you; let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christlight for you in the night time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

### **Blessing (2 Thessalonians 3: 1-5)**

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us,  
so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere,  
just as it is among you,  
and that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith.  
But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.  
May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.