

Church at Home August 23rd 2020

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.

Please have a pen and piece of paper to hand.

Call to worship

When Jesus asked, Simon Peter answered:

‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’

Let us make the same bold answer, and let us come together to worship Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Lord, do we really believe that we are in the presence of the Son of the Living God?

Still our hearts now, so that we may truly appreciate who you are.

As we hear these words of power, we bow down before you and praise you.

Amen.

Hymn StF 34 O worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness [Chester Cathedral]

Psalm 138 [said responsively.]

1 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
before the ‘gods’ I will sing your praise.

2 I will bow down towards your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,
for you have so exalted your solemn decree
that it surpasses your fame.

3 When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me.

4 May all the kings of the earth praise you, LORD,
when they hear what you have decreed.

5 May they sing of the ways of the LORD,
for the glory of the LORD is great.

6 Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;
though lofty, he sees them from afar.

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.

You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;
with your right hand you save me.

8 The LORD will vindicate me;
your love, LORD, endures for ever—

do not abandon the works of your hands. Amen

Prayers

Lord God, we come before you in humble adoration. How blessed are we that the one who holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven is the one who has the

key to our hearts. Thank you, God, for the privilege of being part of the amazing story of faith that sustained our ancestors. Thank you, God, that we know our future is safe with you. **Amen.**

‘This was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.’

The Lord blessed Simon because he finally understood who Jesus was. He called him Peter, and said that great things would come to pass through him. He promised him the keys to the kingdom. **Amen**

Lord, thank you that you are always ready to forgive me when I trust you enough to confess my sins to you, even when I feel I don't deserve it.

Be merciful to me, O God.

Forgive me for the times when just because someone else's story is different from mine I don't always want to believe it. Forgive me for the times I only live my story, not seeing the bigger picture.

Be merciful to me, O God.

Forgive me for the times I see you as less than the Son of God, and my whole outlook on life needs a good dose of your love and understanding.

Be merciful to me, O God.

Lord, we already have so many keys on our bundles. Help us to find the right ones to open the doors you choose for us.

Make us ready to be like Simon, and to become Peter, doing great things in your strength and for your kingdom.

Amen.

Let us join together in the prayer our Lord taught us, O Father.....

Readings: NT. **Romans 12.1-8;**

Matthew 16.13-20

Drama

What's it all about?

A drama for two people.

A father is reading the newspaper when interrupted by his young daughter.

Alice: Dad – do you think the keys of heaven are huge?

Dad: I don't know. Why are you asking?

Alice: Because if the keys are enormous, St Peter must be a giant!

Dad: Oh, I see. Well, St Peter started out as just plain Simon Peter, a fisherman. He was probably about the same size as me. I expect he still is.

Alice: So how does he carry gigantic keys?

Dad: I'm not sure if Jesus meant Peter would be given real keys, big or small, Alice. It was a way of saying that he would be given an important job to do for Jesus.

Alice: Oh...but the church is real, isn't it? The one that's built on top of him?

Dad: Well...when Jesus told Peter that he was the rock, and he would build his church on him, he meant that Peter would have an important job, building up the church family.

Alice: But my teacher says there is a real church built on top of St Peter, over his tomb!

Dad: Oh yes, St Peter's Basilica in Rome! But that's not really what Jesus was meaning. The church is more than buildings...the church is people, God's family. It all began on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached. Lots of people put their faith in Jesus and joined God's family.

Alice: So...because we belong to St Cuthbert's, does that include us?

Dad: It certainly does!

Alice: Are we related to St Peter, then?

Dad: Yes, I suppose we are! All followers of Jesus are like brothers and sisters in God's family.

Alice: Wait till I tell my teacher! Dad?

Dad: Yes, Alice?

Alice: Are you sure those keys aren't real?

Address

Jesus has travelled to the Eastern capital of the Roman Empire. Named after Caesar and the local ruler Philip in this case Caesarea Philippi- the seat of governing, the headquarters of a foreign governing power.-Rome. It is here that Jesus decides to explain, what is laid out in front of him.

So Jesus asks his disciples "Who do the people say I am?" and then to the disciples "Who do you say I am?" and it is Simon who is able to declare, in this Roman strong hold, against the authorities of the time, that Jesus is the Saviour, the Son of the living God.

How would you describe yourself ?

Note down on a piece of paper, Patient, kind, hospitable, a listener, ...What skills and talents do you have?

something to reflect on in the coming week

How would others describe you? note down honestly.

How does God see us? How would he describe us?

We are all his children, deeply loved and cared for by our Father in heaven.

What would your answer be to Jesus about his identity. Who do you say Jesus is?

Jesus goes on to say, that what Simon has pronounced is knowledge which has been given to Simon by God and that Simon will become the foundation of the church. The rock on which the church will be built and multiply throughout the world. It is at this time that he gives Simon the name Peter.

Later in 1 Peter 2v 4-6 Peter reminds all Christians that they are the church, built on the foundation created by the apostles and prophets, with Jesus as the cornerstone. We are all joined into the church by our confession of faith. Just as Peter was called at this time, to do the will of God and become the foundation on which the church was built.

Jesus then told the disciples not to repeat what they had just heard, this must have been difficult for them but at this time they did not fully understand the type of Messiah that Jesus was, not a military aggressor but a servant king.

Our second reading from Paul's letter to the Romans Chapter 12 is the beginning of the section on "How to behave as a Christian," following on from the information to the church in Rome, as to what Christians should believe. Our personal responsibilities- following the Lord Jesus Christ, transforming our lives, so that we use the skills and talents we have been given, to the benefit of our communities: where we worship, live, work and with those we meet, even those we meet through Zoom or other technological contacts

We are all given gifts: serving, teaching, encouraging others, giving, leadership and so many many more attributes but all these gifts come from God. We all have different gifts which complement each other.

The gifts we have been given are for us to dedicate to service and not personal success or gain. We should use our given gifts to their full potential don't hold back, be faithful, to do our best, to seek to follow Christ and serve him and others to the best of our ability

So it is good to know:- Who we are and what we do best.

How do we describe ourselves and how others describe us?

What gifts do we have, are we using them?

So back to the beginning and that piece of paper. Keep it to look back on and if you are feeling strong, have a conversation with others to see if they see you, as you see your self.

Let us work together to build on the foundations of the church as Simon Peter was commissioned.

In the strange times in which we find ourselves we have many things to consider as we open our churches again and we look back on what this pandemic has taught us.

Let us continue to serve the Lord to the best of our ability, using the gifts and talents we have been given. Let us pray

Lord, you asked who people thought you were.

You got all kinds of answers.

Only you had the right answer.

Help us, Lord, always to trust you
to give us the right answers to our questions.

Help us always to remember
that you are the Son of the living God. Amen.

Hymn StF 518 Father hear the prayer we offer [The choir of Gloucester Cathedral]

Prayers of intercession

Response:

We trust you, Lord, to answer our prayers.

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Your will be done, O Lord.

We pray for people who struggle with their faith:
through self-doubt,
through difficult circumstances,
through bad things happening,
through being led astray,
by wanting fame and fortune.

We trust you, Lord, to answer our prayers.

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Your will be done, O Lord.

We pray for people who feel in the dark,
locked in a situation where they can find no answer,
that they might come to understand
that you are the key to everything they need.

We trust you, Lord, to answer our prayers.
Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.
Your will be done, O Lord.

We pray for ourselves:
when we are in difficult situations,
when we try to unlock doors that aren't ours to unlock,
when we don't focus on the kingdom,
when we don't share our story.

We trust you, Lord, to answer our prayers.
Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.
Your will be done, O Lord.

In a time of silence we bring to you our personal prayers. *Silence*

We trust you, Lord, to answer our prayers.
Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.
Your will be done, O Lord. Amen

Hymn StF 661 Give me the faith which can remove [tune Mount Zion]

You could add to your piece of paper and make a list of the things you are thankful for, something to reflect upon and give inspiration if the situations of the world crowd in. At the University we have a thankfulness tree- the opportunity to attach a small tag to acknowledge what we are thankful for in our lives.

Blessing

Jesus told his disciples not to tell anyone he was the Messiah. We go out now, hearts so full of amazement and joy, that we can't help but share the good news. Go with us, good Lord, and help us to tell everyone who will listen. **Amen.**

The Grace

This service was prepared by Chris Watkins [Local Pastor at East Leake Methodist Church.]

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