

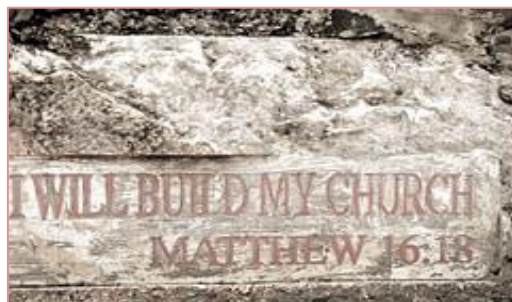
Home Worship for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

10th May 2020 - Rev Kathryn Taylor

As you commence this service, sit quietly, and let all the thoughts of the day drift away, so you feel able to focus on the service with the many people around HAEBEA will be also reading it today.

Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."

(Matthew 16:17-18)



Call to Worship

The night is past, the dawn is here.

The old has gone, the new has come.

Let us rejoice in God's new day, let us join with Father, Spirit, Son.

Prayer

Lord God we thank you for the Way of your love in the life of your Son;

a love so clear, a life so dear, a pattern for our pilgrim purpose.

We thank you for the Truth we receive in the life of your Son;

a truth so precious, so demanding, a guide in your pilgrim purpose.

We thank you for the Life we find in the life of your Son; a life so vibrant, so persuasive;

a model in our pilgrim purpose.

Lord God, for the Way to follow, the Truth for hungry hearts, the Life for pilgrims,

and above all for Jesus we give you thanks. Amen.

Bible Reading: 1 Peter 2.4-10

Reflection

What are the building blocks that God calls living stones? Can it really be the people we worship with every week? Are they the foundations on which we build our faith? Peter was a witness, a leading living stone on which Jesus said he would build his church. Witness is the responsibility of all living stones. We might look at our church building and ask what it says about us. Perhaps it is open and valuable to the community, accessible to people of all abilities, promotes a living community not a glorious past.

Stories embody stories. If only the church could talk! Sometimes people talk about being able to sense the history of a place. Do the stones really absorb a sense of prayer or a momentous event? John Denver's song 'Country Roads' describes his longing to be in the familiar surroundings of home. I don't know if we see our journey of faith as being a journey leading us home to God both in this life and the one after. But I am certain that most of us see Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. The question is though how we respond to those who don't? Is this how we see church? Do we see our journey of faith as being a journey leading to the home of God?

Just as drystone walls are built by selecting stones that will fit together to build a stable structure without slipping, skill is required in selecting the stones and in fitting them together. Do our churches naturally hold together or are there splits and separate bits of competing building?

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. One man described how he never thought that he looked like his father. Yet when his son was born, a family photograph was taken of the baby, the man, his father, and his grandfather – four generations together. It was then that the family resemblances occurred, and all the men were amazed how each of the four generations looked like the others. Unique individuals nevertheless have strong similarities. Maybe this is how we see the church – generational.

Jesus reminds his disciples that they have all that have seen him have seen the Father. And we too reflect the likeness of God in our everyday lives pointing others to Jesus, who leads us on. If we are in a strange town and ask for directions a person will no doubt help us. But the chances are that we will be lost before we get halfway. Better still, it would be for the person to take us there. That person becomes to us, the way, and we cannot miss it. That is what Jesus does for us. He does not only give advice and directions. He takes us by the hand and leads us. He strengthens and guides us personally each day. He does not tell us about the way, he is the Way, which follows on naturally from the shepherd whose voice, we heard the sheep recognise and we are the rock on which Jesus builds his church today!

Hymn: The Church's One Foundation – STF 690, R&S 566, H&P 515

Watch the clip, or sing, or read and pray: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jotNbcFelX4>

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| 1 The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation by water and the Word:
From heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy Bride;
With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died. | 3 'Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation of peace for evermore;
Till, with the vision glorious, her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest. |
| 2 Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses, with every grace endued. | 4 Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly, in love may dwell with Thee. |

Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Lord God, as we think of what has happened over the coming weeks, we thank you that the situation seems to be getting more positive. The numbers of new cases are gradually decreasing, and some patients are being able to return home. As we continue with isolation, we are slowly beginning to learn how to occupy our time more fruitfully.

We thank you for all the front-line staff, the NHS staff in hospitals, the delivery staff, supermarket personnel, and all those who are continuing working in order to make our lives more pleasurable.

Father as we continue to help our neighbours, we have made some new connections and friendships even though we cannot meet in person. Instead we have used other means of communication wherever possible. And when we return to some more freedom in the future, we will renew these possibilities.

Thorough our fear, through our doubt, through our confusion may we continue Christ's work as we travel many roads united by the love of God.

We now say the prayer that Jesus taught us Our Father...

Blessing

May we know that God our heavenly Father is watching over us,
That Jesus our brother abides with us,
And the Holy Spirit lives with us for evermore. Amen.