



Sunday 19th July Mary and Rhoda

PREPARATION

Welcome

Leader The Lord be with you
All and also with you.

Hymn **564 Praise to the Lord the almighty the king of creation**

Praise to the Lord,
the Almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise Him,
for He is thy health and salvation;
all ye who hear,
brothers and sisters, draw near,
praise Him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all
things so wondrously reigneth,
shelters thee under His wings,
yea, so gently sustaineth:
hast thou not seen?
all that is needful hath been
granted in what He ordaineth.

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper
thy work, and defend thee!
surely His goodness and mercy
here daily attend thee.
Ponder anew
what the Almighty can do,
who with His love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in
me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath
come now with praises before Him!
Let the amen
sound from His people again:
gladly for aye we adore Him.

Words by Joachim Neander
Words tr. by Catherine Winkworth

Opening activity ~ 'Domino effect'

Confession

Leader Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
Firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
And to live in love and peace with all.

All **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,**
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.

**We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us, forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in
newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.**

Absolution

Leader Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon *you*,
pardon and deliver *you* from all *your* sins,
confirm and strengthen *you* in all goodness,
and keep *you* in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Collect (6th Sunday after Trinity)

Leader Creator God, you made us all in your image:
may we discern you in all that we see,
and serve you in all that we do;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

This time @home - Martin Maguire, St Peter's

Hymn **975 Before the throne of God above**

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea,
a great High Priest whose name is
Love,
who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
my name is written on His heart;
I know that while in heaven He
stands
no tongue can bid me thence
depart,
no tongue can bid me thence depart.
When Satan tempts me to despair,
and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see Him there
who made an end to all my sin.

Because the sinless Saviour died,
my sinful soul is counted free;
for God the just is satisfied
to look on Him and pardon me,
to look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there! The risen lamb,
my perfect, spotless righteousness;
the great unchangeable; I AM
the King of glory and of grace!
One with Himself I cannot die,
my soul is purchased with His
blood;
my life is hid with Christ on high,
with Christ my Saviour and my God,
with Christ my Saviour and my God.

Bible readings

Luke 8:1-3 ~ Joyce Hunt, All Souls'

¹After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Acts 12:6-17 – Dramatised reading

⁶The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision.

¹⁰They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

¹²When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

Sermon – Robin Jones, Children's and Families' Minister

Powerful Prayers

You are in prison. And you need to escape. But the only things you have to help you escape are the things directly to your right, right now.

What is it? Maybe your morning coffee, maybe a notebook and pen, stuffed animal, family member. How are you going to escape?

Well, our reading today begins with a prison escape. But Peter didn't use a ball point pen and a straw. He didn't even use his favourite teddy bear. No, Peter didn't even free himself – he was freed by an Angel.

We find Peter in prison, chains on both arms, two guards standing outside at the entrance or exit. And an angel appears, wakes Peter up and releases him from his chains and they simply walk out the jail as the big iron gates swing open for them.

Just imagine what that would have been like, Peter himself at the time didn't even believe it, he thought he was dreaming. What an amazing miracle. Just look at the power of God on show: a shining angel, chains breaking, guards being oblivious, I think, Iron gates swinging open. Just amazing, but God didn't just wake up one day and decide to break Peter out of Jail. We see if we read verse 5, it started with prayer.



A little way away from the prison was a house where a group of Christians were gathered earnestly praying. We don't know much about who was in this house or what their prayer was like, whether it was quiet whispers or shouting and dancing, but we do hear about two of the participants.

Firstly, we hear about a woman called Mary who was the mother of John Mark, surely a faithful follower of Jesus. She was so dedicated to Jesus that she was willing to give up her home for the Church. Even in a time of persecution, Mary gave up her home for people to come and meet, worship and earnestly pray and I don't think this would have been a simple hour or two prayer meeting.

I am fairly confident in saying that this would have been hours and hours, even days. She would have been welcoming people, possibly as high as 40, into her home – not for an evening but for the whole day, whole

night. All to pray, to intercede on behalf of Peter, trapped in prison about to go on trial.

It puts many of us, including myself, to shame when we see the way the early church prayed and the dedication of Mary to the Church.

The second person we are introduced to is Rhoda, Rhoda is a servant but lives up to none of the expectation we may have of how servants would have been treated or behaved.

She was treated; by my reading, to be an equal part of the church. She knew who Peter was, she was overjoyed in seeing him and went back into the room shouting about Peter being at the door. I imagine that she was there praying with everyone else, sitting by the door, ready to serve as her servant duty required. But not treated as a servant, only there to serve as an inferior, but a maid who had a job to do but welcome as a fellow member of the body of Christ.

To picture this scene, we need to make some assumptions, so these are my assumptions. You may image the scene differently.

We are in the house of Mary, obviously a rich woman to have owned a house. She hosted the meeting, making people feel welcome and comfortable in her home. Her home is full of people. The Church had grown to thousands, spread around many homes each full of people praying and worshiping. So, Mary's home is full - every chair, every piece of floor is taken up. Some standing, some sitting, some possibly leaning out the window. There are men and women of many different back grounds maybe there are children asleep on the floor. They have been praying since the morning and it's now 11pm, but they do not cease. They continue to pray for Peter's release. Yet even though they are together, all praying for the same thing, their belief that God will answer their prayer is perhaps, small. Rhoda is there sitting at the edge, praying even while she fetches drinks and food for the group.

Each individual is doing something they think is so small. Mary giving up her home - does she really think it has the power to impact Peter's release? Rhoda serving those present - does she really think her job will aid in Peter's release? The rest praying earnestly but not really believing they are thinking it will make any difference.

Yet little do they know one by one their prayers are building up and with the power of God will break Peter free.

Throughout our sermon series, we have explored many characters, some faithful some not so faithful. But we gave the sermon series the name: The ordinary and the extraordinary.

Here we have two individuals in our reading. Both women, deemed lesser in their time, one a servant placed even lower. Yet their actions, which they thought were ordinary, turned with the power of God into the extraordinary.

A woman who gave up her home, a servant girl doing her job. Both praying along with the rest of the Church, by the power of the Spirit breaking Peter out of jail.

Hymn **Who breaks the power (This is amazing grace)**

Who breaks the power of sin and
darkness?
Whose love is mighty and so much
stronger?
The King of glory, the King above
all kings.
Who shakes the whole earth with
holy thunder?
Who leaves us breathless in awe
and wonder?
The King of glory, the King above
all kings.

*This is amazing grace, this is
unfailing love,
that You would take my place,
that You would bear my cross.
You would lay down Your life,
that I would be set free:
Jesus, I sing for all that You've
done for me,
all that You've done for me.*

Who brings our chaos back into
order?
Who makes the orphan a son and
daughter?

The King of glory, the King above
all kings.
Who rules the nations with truth
and justice,
shines like the sun in all of its
brilliance?
The King of glory, the King above
all kings.

This is amazing grace . . .

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
and worthy is the King who
conquered the grave.

(x4)

. . . worthy, worthy, worthy.

*This is amazing grace, this is
unfailing love,
that You would take my place,
that You would bear my cross.
You would lay down Your life,
that I would be set free.
Jesus, I sing for all that You've
done for me.*

Creed

All We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers ~ Geoff Pugh, St Peter's

Heavenly Father We give you our thanks, this morning, that some of your community here are now back to being able to worship you together in our church buildings, initially at St Peters, your local centre of worship for so many centuries in this community. And we also give you



thanks, from those unable to attend today, but who are able to enjoy their worship still by on line services or recordings. Lord Jesus, although you are always in our lives, it is good to be able to gather together in your light and for your worship

Lord Jesus, you are Lord, to the glory of God the Father Amen

Lord Jesus You have told us that we can all be seen to be your disciples, if we love one and other. We pray that you will help each of us not feel in any way separated in our manners or ways of worship in these weeks ahead, and even more so, that we will feel united with Christians in all your churches and places in these difficult times right across your world, always with the wisdom to know your truth and the courage to do your will, for your kingdom to come.

Lord Jesus, you are Lord, to the glory of God the Father Amen

Lord God You are the physician of men and nations, you are the restorer of lost times currently much destroyed by the pandemic, you are the creator for new ways of life. We pray for your healing hand in the disunity of many national and international reactions to the pandemic. We pray this morning especially for all those committed to governing our nation, in these difficult times. We ask that you bless them with special gifts of wisdom and understanding so that in their deliberations they may consider all matters calmly, act wisely and strongly, and uphold what is right and just in your sight.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour Amen

Lord Jesus Christ You above all have the power of life and death, health and sickness. We thank you for all those who have been helping with ministering to the ill and infirm in recent months, whether those in the NHS, in Care Homes or providing other care support services. We ask for your blessing on them and that their example might not only help with the healing and care of the infirm, ill or those with the Covirus19, but act thus as your lamp of hope in what for many have been very dark hours indeed

To the glory of God the Father Amen

Heavenly Father We ask for your care and compassion for all those suffering or anxious about their future work and employment, whether already in the work place or those looking to their futures after leaving schools or universities. We pray that you may counsel those engaged in ordering our economy and working lives, so that all may kept free from

the fear of want or purposelessness and find and enjoy your security and peace in your world

For the sake of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour Amen

Lord God We pray that you will grant us the blessing of good health, and if it is your will, may we avoid this and future virus epidemics, so that in both body and mind we may continue to serve you in strength.

For the sake of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour Amen

Lord and Heavenly Father, whether as a virtual or physically real church gathered in your presence today, particularly we pray for the families and friends who are suffering the recent bereavement of *Thelma Black*

All of us this morning know people who are perhaps friends, or acquaintances, or are family who are suffering with crises in their lives, which may be epidemic related or otherwise, or with illness. We particularly pray today for *Mary & Bob Baker, Eileen and Peter Bliss, Trevor Lloyd, Mary McAvoy, Joy Storkey*. In a moment of silence, we hold before you these, and others suffering known to us personally.

Lord God, your love and care for them is infinitely greater than ours: may they be comforted and given patience, healed if it is your will, or strengthened in coping with their needs or sufferings, in the knowledge of your love and the comfort and joy of your everlasting glory.

Though Jesus Christ our Saviour – Amen

Lord God, you have given us the comfort of our friends and families; look in love on those from whom we are currently separated, especially in these times. Protect them, keep them from harm or being afraid, and prosper them: let no shadows fall between us and them, so that in your own good time we may be re-united in fellowship.

Though Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour – Amen

Concluding our prayers, now let us all say together the prayer that our Saviour and Lord taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

**All Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your Kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen**

Notices (See Notes & News)

Hymn **33 And can it be**

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His
pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
that Thou, my God, shouldst die for
me!

He left His Father's throne above –
so free, so infinite His grace –
emptied Himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
for, O my God, it found out me!
Long my imprisoned spirit lay

fast bound in sin and nature's
night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray
I woke, the dungeon flamed with
light;
my chains fell off, my heart was
free.
I rose, went forth, and followed
Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach the eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through
Christ, my own.

Words by Charles Wesley
Music by Thomas Campbell

The dismissal

The peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

