



Parish of
St Peter Woking
St Peter's · St Mark's · All Souls'



Sunday 9th August

Leader Welcome in the name of Christ.
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you
All and also with you

Welcome

Hymn 1003 My Jesus, my Saviour

My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord, there is none like you;
all of my days
I want to praise
the wonders of your mighty love.

My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength,
let every breath,
all that I am,
never cease to worship you.

Shout to the Lord all the Earth,
let us sing
power and majesty, praise to the
King:
mountains bow down and the
seas will roar
at the sound of your name.

I sing for joy at the work of your
hands,
for ever I'll love you, for ever I'll
stand;
nothing compares to the promise
I have in you.

Opening activity

Confession

Leader God our Father, we come to you in sorrow for our sins.
For turning away from you, and ignoring your will for
our lives;
Father, forgive us:
All: save us and help us.

Leader For behaving just as we wish,
without thinking of you;
Father, forgive us:

All: save us and help us.

Leader For failing you by what we do,
and think and say;
Father, forgive us:

All: save us and help us.

Leader For letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;
Father, forgive us:

All: save us and help us.

Leader For living as if we were ashamed to belong to your Son;
Father, forgive us:

All: save us and help us.

Absolution (*we are reminded that God forgives all who repent*)

This or another absolution may be said

Leader May the Father of all mercies cleanse *us* from *our* sins,
and restore *us* in his image to the praise and glory of his
name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Collect (*Prayer for the day*)

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light
of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that
we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and
peace; 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 forever.

This @home

Hymn The Steadfast love of the Lord never ceases

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

His mercies never have come to an end;

They are new every morning, New every morning:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord,

Great is Thy faithfulness!

They are new every morning, New every morning:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord,

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Morning, New Every Morning

Great Is Thy Faithfulness (Oh Lord)

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Bible readings

Joshua 24.14-18 – Andy Holcombe, St Mark's

¹⁴"Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. ¹⁵But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

¹⁶Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! ¹⁷It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled. ¹⁸And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God."

Acts 16.16-34 – Barbara Phillipps, All Souls'

¹⁶Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷This girl followed Paul and the rest of us,

shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." ¹⁸She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

²⁰They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

²²The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

²⁶Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. ²⁷The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." ³²Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family.

Sermon (We explore God's word together)

The Jailer ~ We are called to be a channel of the good news of God's Salvation

In this talk, I'm continuing with our sermon series from the book of Acts, looking at a number of 'ordinary' characters in the early church who were called to do 'ordinary' acts but often with 'extra-ordinary' results. Last week, Rachel, our licensed lay minister in the parish introduced to us Lydia, who we are told after encountering the gospel through Paul and his team, found eternal home in the Kingdom of God and used her wealth to further this Kingdom. And this morning the character I'm looking at, is only referred to as 'the Jailer.'

Both Lydia and the Jailer have a few things in common, they were both witnessed to by Paul and Silas, they believed and were baptized immediately, they hosted Paul and his team to their homes, which in effect made them pioneers in the early and very young Church at Philippi, their church planting ministry begun with their own households after everyone in their households believed and were baptized. I begin with these similarities because I believe they paint a picture of the Church's life should be like.



In both these stories of Lydia and the jailer, there is a call to faith, then rejoicing over faith, which then frame a scene in which we find 1) the Word of God spoken, 2) service to others, 3) baptism, 4) and sharing a meal (communion). In these two short stories we see what the early church was all about and what we too as a church today are called back to, to hear God's word (discipleship), to serve (Mission), to lead others to Christ (evangelism), to communion (fellowship).

Before I share a couple of other lessons we can take away from the story of the jailer, a bit of background; His story is found in Acts 16.16-34. And just like many characters we have looked at in this series, he makes a brief appearance in these pages of scripture and is never heard of again. The slight difference here, is that whereas many of the characters we have so far looked at have been named, the jailer remains nameless... All we know is that he is a 'company guy' (a slave too to the Roman penal

system), obedient to the responsibilities given him to imprison Paul and Silas among other prisoners

But one night while he is asleep, something happens as a result of Paul and Silas's worship. There is an earthquake, the shackles on the prisoner's feet and hands are broken, the prison doors open... On realising what has happened, and thinking the prisoners have escaped, terrified of what would happen when his superiors find that he had lost his prisoners...the jailer moves to end his life. But just as he is about to 'fall on his sword,' Paul calls out to him, saying, "Do not harm yourself, we are all here."

Upon seeing the miracle of the prison being opened and yet seeing that the prisoners had not left, the jailer asks the question, "What must I do to be saved?" This question is key to this whole narrative... Preparing this talk I wondered whether the Jailer was asking Paul and Silas how he could get out of this mess, how was he going to explain this to His superiors....and so he asks, how can I be saved? But when Paul heard the question, it had a different spin on it...to Paul, the jailer is asking, what do I need to turn my life around? To have a better life? And so, Paul answer's, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household*" (Acts 16.31)

The irony in this short text is immense;

1. **Of all the prisoners in that prison that day, it was the jailer who was set free.** A man who knew not God and who was about to take his life had been set free and now was a passionate member of the body of Christ.

For the jailer, his 'chains' were unbelief, and his identity being wrapped up in his job. Which is why failure at his job meant death to him. But each of us has our own form of 'chains'.. It could be doubt, fear, anxiety, addiction, inability to forgive, dependence on earthly things, self-pride or a controlling spirit, an illness-physical or mental, or painful childhood memories.

Each of us has our own version of 'chains' that might be holding us captive. But the good news is that, the gospel is available to us, calling us out of darkness into light. The gospel brings hope to the lives of those who are lost. Acts 2.21 says, "*And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" The liberating good news of Jesus Christ unshackles us from what imprisons and enslaves us. But, being set free takes time and patience and courage to be changed.

2. **The jailer, the man who was supposed to be holding Paul and Silas captive, is now the one inviting them to his home, washing their wounds and feeding them.** Hence, it's no surprise that his household, seeing this almost unbelievable transformation and the joy this man now had, they too believe and were baptized.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, *"Your life as a Christian should make non-believers question their disbelief in God."* And I think for us as believers, this is our biggest challenge, to live lives, both in our words and actions, that are going to make our families and friends (who are not believers) to question their unbelief.

This is what happened to Jailer and his household (Family and servants). On encountering the gospel, he was not the same again, and it was noticeable, hence the impact it had on those around him. Being set free from the things that enslave us mentioned above, we are most likely to impact family and friends.

Conclusion

The jailer believed and, in that moment, he became a new man in Christ. His life was transformed. His first act was to wash and tend to the wounds of the prisoners, whom he had cruelly mistreated and who had repaid him by telling God's great plan of salvation

Like the many encounters of people in the New Testament with Jesus, the Jailer too became a changed man. He went from being ready to commit suicide to rejoicing in his salvation. Paul and Silas' evangelism led him to be set free, His evangelism led all of His household to be set free, our evangelism in both word and action should lead others around us to be set free.

Pray

Dear Lord, just like you set the heart of the jailer on fire for you through the witness of Paul and Silas, may you set my heart on fire for your love Lord, that I too will be a vessel, a channel of this love, for those around me. This I pray, in Jesus name.

Hymn 456 Make me a channel of your peace

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

*Oh Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul*

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy

Oh Master...

Make me a channel of Your peace
It is pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life

Oh Master...

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

Creed *(We stand to declare our faith)*

Leader Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
 source of all being and life,
 the one for whom we exist?

All **We believe and trust in him.**

Leader Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
 who took our human nature,
 died for us and rose again?

All **We believe and trust in him.**

Leader Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
 who gives life to the people of God
 and makes Christ known in the world?

All **We believe and trust in him.**

Leader This is the faith of the Church

**All This is our faith.
We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers

Spirit of God, come into our worship like a rising gale, to take away our complacency.

Come, as the breath of life, source, guide and goal of creation, to breathe new life into us and restore our faith.

Come as an icy blast against the destructive heat of our enmity:
extinguish our hostility.

Come as a healing breeze, to lift us gently and set us on our feet with confidence and delight.

Fierce, wild, gentle Spirit: like a mother, bring us to new birth, as you brought Jesus from the tomb.

Be the death of us,

be the life of us,

be the joy of us;

assure us of the presence of our loving God,
with Jesus Christ, our resurrected Lord.

Amen

God of compassion,

have mercy upon this nation and our world in this time of fear and confusion:

we bring before you those who are suffering from Coronavirus;
older people and those who are most vulnerable and for all who tend to their needs;

we pray for those who are isolating themselves;

that they may know your comfort and company

and that those around them may truly love their neighbour by prayer and in works of care and kindness;

we pray for health professionals, doctors, nurses, care workers and hospital support staff

as they answer their vocation under increasing pressure;

we pray for key workers across the country ensuring that essential services are maintained;

and we pray for those upon whose shoulders the yoke of leadership rests,

that in their conversation and communication your still small voice may be heard;

we ask this in the power of the Holy Spirit,
through the One who stretched out his hands to bless and to heal
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

In recent months the Black Lives Matter movement has brought new energy into the fight against racism and discrimination in all its forms. Loving Father of us all, help each of us to search our attitudes and behaviours for times when we have been less than truly fair to others simply because they are different to us. We are blessed to be called your children, help us now to say sorry for the times when we have not been fair to some of our brothers and sisters and inspire us to work together to build a just society for all.

Until your kingdom comes, Amen

Loving Father, we bring before you our young people who are expecting their GCSE and A-Level exam results in the next two weeks. Encourage them in their successes and console them in their disappointments, guide them well in the decisions they make for their future at this most challenging time for both education and employment.

Amen

Loving Father,

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of the Lebanon at this time of desperate need. We pray for all those affected by the disastrous explosion in Beirut. Comfort the friends and families who now mourn their loss and bring healing and relief to those who have been injured. Give succour to all who have lost their homes and face a difficult future in a country beset by so many problems.

Give strength, O Lord, to those who have faced the horror of this disaster in their efforts to help the injured and the dying, and those who are, even now, working to recover and identify the dead.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Enable this church to do your will O Lord.

Make it vulnerable that it may speak with calm humility;

Make it outward looking that it may care deeply;

Make it a community of peacemakers and bridge builders.

In the midst of chaos let the church make space for the hearing of your still small voice.

Amen

We pray for all those who work in your name here in the parish of St Peter, our clergy, lay leaders and parishioners who are working so hard to continue your mission and bring help to so many who are experiencing difficulties and hardship as a result of Covid.

We pray for all those who are on holiday, especially Jonathan, Rachel, Mark and Robin, that they may be safe and find rest and relaxation whilst they are away.

Loving Father, we pray for those in need of our love and care in our parish, especially:

Bob Baker, Peter and Eileen Bliss, Trevor Lloyd, Mary McAvoy and Joy Storkey.

Lord Jesus, preserve your church family in the parish of St Peter, fill us with your Holy Spirit and give us the courage to live your Word in our lives. Amen

Now please join me as we close our time of prayer with the words of the Lord's Prayer:

The Lord's prayer

Leader Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
As our Saviour has taught us so we pray.

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

Hymn 758 When the Lord in glory comes

When the Lord in glory comes, not the trumpets, not the drums, not the anthem, not the psalm, not the thunder, not the calm, not the shout the heavens raise,	not the chorus, not the praise, not the silences sublime, not the sounds of space and time, but his voice when he appears shall be music to my ears;
---	--

*but his voice when he appears
shall be music to my ears.*

When the Lord is seen again,
not the glories of his reign,
not the lightnings through the
storm,
not the radiance of his form,
not his pomp and power alone,
not the splendours of his throne,
not his robe and diadems,
not the gold and not the gems,
but his face upon my sight
shall be darkness into light;
but his face upon my sight

shall be darkness into light.

When the Lord to human eyes
shall bestride our narrow skies,
not the child of humble birth,
not the carpenter of earth,
not the man by all denied,
not the victim crucified,
but the God who died to save,
but the victor of the grave,
he it is to whom I fall,
Jesus Christ, my all in all;
*he it is to whom I fall,
Jesus Christ, my all in all*

Blessing

This or another blessing may be said

Leader The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his
service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

The Grace

**All The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
Be with us all evermore. Amen.**

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

