



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



Sunday 13th September

PREPARATION

Welcome

Leader We come from scattered lives to meet with God.
Let us recognise His presence with us wherever we are right
now

All As God's people we have gathered
let us worship together

Hymn 7 **All creatures of our God and king**

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing:
hallelujah, hallelujah!
Thou burning sun with golden
beam,
thou silver moon with softer gleam:

*O praise Him, O praise Him,
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!*

Thou rushing wind that art so
strong,
ye clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise Him, hallelujah!
Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,
ye lights of evening, find a voice:

O praise Him . . .

Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for thy Lord to hear,
hallelujah, hallelujah!
Thou fire so masterful and bright,
that givest man both warmth and
light:

Opening activity ~ Adverts

O praise Him . . .

And all ye men of tender heart,
forgiving others, take your part,
O sing ye, hallelujah!
Ye who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God and on Him cast your
care:

O praise Him . . .

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship Him in humbleness,
O praise Him, hallelujah!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the
Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three-in-
One:

O praise Him . . .

Words by St Francis of Assisi
Words tr. by William Henry Draper
Music arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Confession

Leader We are often slow to follow the example of Christ.
Lord have mercy.

All Lord have mercy.

We often fail to be known as Christ's disciples.
Christ, have mercy.

All Christ have mercy

We often fail to walk the way of the cross.
Lord have mercy.

All Lord have mercy.

Absolution

Leader The Lord enrich us with His grace,
and nourish us with His blessing;
The Lord defend us in trouble and keep us from all evil;
The Lord accept our prayers, and absolve us from our offences,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

Collect (14th Sunday after Trinity)

Leader Merciful God, your Son came to save us
and bore our sins on the cross:
may we trust in your mercy and know your love,
rejoicing in the righteousness
that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

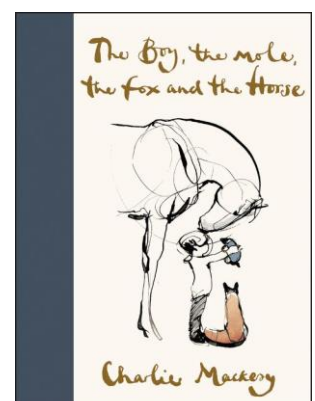
All Amen

Leader Loving God, we have come to worship you.

**All Help us to pray to you in faith,
to sing your praise with gratitude,
and to listen to your word with eagerness;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Charlie Macksey story

Alpha testimonies



Hymn **Every move I make I make in you**

Na-- na-- na na na na (x4)

Every move I make, I make in You

You make me move, Jesus

Every breath I take,

I breathe in You

Every step I take, I take in You

You are my way, Jesus

Every breath I take,

I breathe in You

Na-- na-- na na na na (x4)

Waves of mercy, waves of grace

Everywhere I look I see Your face

Your love has captured me

Oh my God, this love how can it be

Bible readings

Acts 26 – Acted out – Paul is on trial before King Agrippa

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself."

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defence: ²"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defence against all the accusations of the Jews, ³and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴"The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. ⁵They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. ⁶And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. ⁷This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. ⁸Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

⁹"I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

¹²"On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

¹⁵"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' ¹⁶" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have

appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

¹⁹"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²²But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen – ²³that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.'

²⁴At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defence. 'You are out of your mind, Paul!' he shouted. 'Your great learning is driving you insane.'

²⁵'I am not insane, most excellent Festus,' Paul replied. 'What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.'

²⁸Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?'

²⁹Paul replied, 'Short time or long – I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.'

³⁰The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. ³¹After they left the room, they began saying to one another, 'This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.'

³²Agrippa said to Festus, 'This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.'

Colossians 4.2-6 ~ Claire Lee, All Souls'

²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Sermon **Called to Witness** – Rev Sam Waako

In this talk, I'm continuing with our sermon series looking at the extraordinary life of the Apostle Paul. Last week, Jonathan spoke about Paul's conversion (and God's grace) on the road to Damascus, from Saul the zealous persecutor of Christians, to Paul, the Zealous winner of souls for Christ.

Whereas Paul's story of conversion last week from Acts 9 was a historical account by Luke, in our main reading this week from Acts 26, it's Paul's personal testimony used in his defence against false charges that had been brought against him by his Jewish opponents in Jerusalem ~ And Paul being Paul, this was another opportunity to announce to his listeners the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ

Book alert Before I dig in, I want to recommend a book I have been reading on Paul at the start of this sermon series that has brought 'Paul to life' for me. The Book is called '**Paul A Biography**', written by Tom Wright, who I believe is, if not, one of the greatest theologians of our time especially on matters concerning the New Testament. This Book follows Paul's life from a young man in Tarsus all the way to Rome (and maybe beyond). It's a fascinating read, hence why I'm recommending it.

And now getting back to our text, a bit of background and context before I draw out three things with the help of the Holy Spirit that we can take away from Paul's witness and testimony in this text. In Acts 26, we find Paul in an audience room standing before Festus, King Agrippa (and Bernice with whom the King was having an incestuous relationship) and a number of high-ranking officials, defending himself against charges that had been levelled at him by the Jewish people.

Paul was innocent of these false charges, and Festus, King Agrippa and many in that audience knew very well that Paul was innocent. And so after spending now two years in prison in Caesarea where he had been transferred to from Jerusalem, Paul saw that he was not going to receive the justice he wanted initially from Felix and now at the hands of Festus and King Agrippa. And so, as a Roman citizen, he appeals to Caesar for an opportunity to defend himself in the court of Caesar in Rome. This then puts Festus in the position of needing to write an official report on the case, a statement of facts so to speak, to send with Paul to Rome. And with the visit of king Agrippa in tow, this was the perfect opportunity for Festus to gather these facts for his report with a second opinion from

King Agrippa. But, as we are about to find out shortly, it also turned out a greater opportunity for Paul to share his testimony with these people.

And so in context, that's what Acts 26 is all about. And from it, I want to draw out three things from this ordeal that Paul has with Festus and King Agrippa, that hopefully might be an encouragement to us.

1) **Paul was more concerned for his audience than himself;** At the conclusion of his address in v28, Paul says, *“That’s what I’m praying for, whether now or later, and not only you but everyone listening today, to become like me—except, of course, for these chains!”* Paul did not care so much about his condition as he was about the condition of those who stood before him. The irony in all of this is that, although it was Paul in chains, in tattered clothes and doomed to die, it was he who was free and saved amidst all the glamour and pomp that surrounded him. And so his appeal was less for his freedom but more for his audience to find the same assurance of the forgiveness of sins and salvation in Christ that he had found. In Luke 19.10 Jesus says, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* That was Paul’s desire, it should be our desire as well

2) **Pauls best defence was his testimony (life story);** The most convincing, the most powerful explanation Paul could offer his listeners, was the story of his own life. By describing what he was before he became a believer and his life after encountering the Risen Christ, not only proved his innocence, but showed proof to the power of the gospel to save and to change men and women. There are a number of tools we can use to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with unbelievers, but the most authentic and probably the most powerful is our testimony. Just like Paul (if I can compare myself to him), I have never shied away from sharing my story before becoming a true believer to my story as a believer today ~ I find it’s the simplest and easiest way to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Even if it means sitting down and writing it out, and maybe even rehearsing it! I believe with the eloquence with which Paul spoke, he must have done the same.

Which is why I, and am sure many others have been greatly encouraged and inspired from the online services by recent Alpha testimonies including two this week from Charlie and from our very own in the parish from Lyz and Angela (Do have a look online). The good news is that we all have a story to share. What’s your testimony?

3) **And finally, for Paul, every opportunity to speak, was to speak of Christ Crucified;** It's important to note in this text that Paul was not on trial, there was no charge against him. He didn't even have to appear before this group, but he did. Because he wasn't going to miss an opportunity to proclaim Jesus Christ. Yes, there was a sense of convincing his audience of his innocence, but the greater opportunity was a chance to tell all his listeners of this Jesus he had encountered on the road to Damascus. Paul was faithful to his commission, and Paul's commission is our commission, to go and make disciples (Matthew 28.19)

But, it's also important to note that it's not easy, which is why in our second reading in Colossians 4.2-6, Paul is imploring us to "Devote ourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful," if like him, we are going to effectively proclaim the mystery of Christ to those we have been sent to us. Paul goes on to say, *"Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders (unbelievers), make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversations be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."*

I can imagine when Paul was standing and speaking to these leading men of the city, and all others who were rich and mighty, where anyone else would have panicked and made a fool of themselves, Paul was full of the Holy Spirit, and hence enabling him to make his defence, making him bold, wise and unafraid to declare God's truth. And so it's my prayer as well, that like Paul, we too shall continue to seek more and more of the Holy Spirit, to help us in God's mission to make disciples for Christ.

Hymn 178 Go forth and tell

Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take:
proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,
that all the world His worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
He will in grace respond to all who call:
how shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of His word?

Go forth and tell! men still in darkness lie;
in wealth or want, in sin they live and die:
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like Yours which cares for all mankind.

Go forth and tell! the doors are open wide:
share God's good gifts – let no-one be denied;
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,
your ransomed powers for His sole glory use.

Go forth and tell! O Church of God, arise!
Go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;
go till all nations His great name adore
and serve Him, Lord and King for evermore.

Words by James E Seddon
Music by John Barnard

The Creed

Leader We say together in faith

**All Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.**

Leader We believe in God the Father,
who created all things:

**All for by his will they were created
and have their being.**

Leader We believe in God the Son,
who was slain:

**All for with his blood,
he purchased us for God,
from every tribe and language,
from every people and nation.**

Leader We believe in God the Holy Spirit:

**All the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'
Even so come, Lord Jesus! Amen.**

Prayers Andy Holcombe, St Mark's

Loving Father, there is so much we want to ask of you, so many situations where we need your help. We give you thanks, that we can always ask you to support us, to guide us, to protect us. And we ask you now to direct these intercessions, that we will pray as you desire, that our thoughts will be where you wish them to be.

We lift up to you first, those who are closest to us. We think of our friends and families, and our brothers and sisters in Christ here in our parish. We thank you that we are able to worship you together, in your



churches, online, in our Connect Group Zoom meetings. Lord, you are with us always, even when we're alone, but we feel blessed when we can share in worship. And we ask you Lord, to look after our friends who are in particular need of your help right now. Let's pause for a moment so that each of us can raise up anyone we love who needs God's healing...

We pray for Peter and for Eileen Bliss. We pray for Olive Park, for Joy Storkey and for Len Reeder. We pray for all those who are mourning the loss of Bob Baker. Father, we give each of them into your care. We ask that you will comfort them, you will ease their pain, you will assure them that you are with them.

We spread our thoughts a little wider. We think of all those who are scared for their jobs, or have already lost them during lockdown here in the UK. We think of those who are struggling to find the money to pay for food and to keep their homes. And of course we don't forget all of us who feel threatened by Covid, who feel nervous to try to "go back to normal", and are worried by the return of restrictions and local lockdowns. Holy God, we cast our anxieties upon you, we trust that you are in charge of this situation. Guide all those in authority that they can make the right decisions, at the right times, that they can deliver money and resources where they are needed, to support those who are most in need of help. Guide us Lord, so that we help where we can, whether with money or time or the right words or just by listening – and always, by praying.

And now our hearts turn to those who have fled their homes because of war, or who are trying to find a home where they can rebuild their lives. We pray for all refugees, who are desperately seeking a safe place to live. We ask you Father to help us ensure that they are welcomed here, that we do all that we can to give them a new start. We pray especially for all those who have been made homeless all over again, through the fire in Lesvos. We can't begin to imagine facing the terror of that journey away from our homeland, and then having what seems to be at least a safe haven, taken away again. Father, give them your love, make them safe once again.

Before we bring our prayers to a close, let's just take a second or two to remember that God always hears our prayers, and he will provide an answer for each of them. Maybe not in the way we expect, maybe not at the time we want, but we trust in his grace and his wisdom and his love. We thank you Father for listening to every one of us as we pray, and giving us the answer that is right for each one of us. We ask that in all that we have prayed and will pray, your will be done.

Let's finish with the prayer that Jesus 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 **249 How lovely on the mountains (our God reigns)**

How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him
who brings good news, good news,
proclaiming peace, announcing news of happiness,
our God reigns, our God reigns!

*Our God reigns, our God reigns,
our God reigns, our God reigns!*

You watchmen, lift your voices joyfully as one,
shout for your King, your King.

See eye to eye the Lord restoring Zion:
your God reigns, your God reigns!

*Your God reigns, your God reigns,
your God reigns, your God reigns!*

Waste places of Jerusalem break forth with joy,
we are redeemed, redeemed.

The Lord has saved and comforted His people:
your God reigns, your God reigns!

*Your God reigns, your God reigns,
your God reigns, your God reigns!*

Ends of the earth, see the salvation of your God,
Jesus is Lord, is Lord.

Before the nations He has bared His holy arm:
your God reigns, your God reigns!

*Your God reigns, your God reigns,
your God reigns, your God reigns!*

Closing Prayer

Leader Jesus, Lord of time,
All hold us in your eternity.

Leader Jesus, image of God,
All travel with us the life of faith.

Leader Jesus, friend of sinners,
All heal the brokenness of our world.

Leader Jesus, Lord of tomorrow,
All draw us into your future. Amen.

Blessing

Leader May the Father keep us in all our days.
May Christ shield us in all our ways.
May the Spirit bring us healing and peace.
May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from us
and pour upon us blessing and light.

All Amen.

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

