

# 14<sup>th</sup> June 2020 – Morning Service

## Bold Mission in Adversity

Rev Alan Combes

### Call to Worship

Wherever we come from, whatever we are doing, however busy, distracted, lonely, sad or isolated we may be... Lord help us to put aside all these things, so that today, here, right now, in this moment - we choose to pause, to be still, to focus on you. Paul prays in Ephesians that our minds may be opened to see the light of Jesus, so that we will know the hope to which he has called us, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, and how very great is his power at work in all who believe. Wonderful God, come amongst us here, in our online church and our homes. Send the Holy Spirit to witness to us the truth of Jesus Christ, move in us, that our spirits may be fanned into flame again, full of praise for you – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### StF 407 – Hear the Call of the Kingdom

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| 1) Hear the call of the kingdom,<br>Lift your eyes to the King;<br>Let his song rise within you<br>As a fragrant offering<br>Of how God, rich in mercy,<br>Came in Christ to redeem<br>All who trust in his unfailing grace.   | <i>Ch) King of heaven, we will answer the call.<br/>We will follow, bringing hope to the world,<br/>Filled with passion,<br/>Filled with power to proclaim<br/>Salvation in Jesus' name.</i>  |
| 2) Hear the call of the kingdom<br>To be children of light<br>With the mercy of heaven,<br>The humility of Christ;<br>Walking justly before him,<br>Loving all that is right,<br>That the life of Christ may shine through us. | 3) Hear the call of the kingdom<br>To reach out to the lost<br>With the Father's compassion<br>In the wonder of the cross,<br>Bringing peace and forgiveness,<br>And a hope yet to come:<br>Let the nations put their trust in him. |

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### Reading: Psalm 150:1-6

Praise the LORD! Praise God in his Temple! Praise his strength in heaven! Praise him for the mighty things he has done. Praise his supreme greatness. Praise him with trumpets. Praise him with harps and lyres. Praise him with drums and dancing. Praise him with harps and flutes. Praise him with cymbals. Praise him with loud cymbals. Praise the LORD, all living creatures! Praise the LORD!

### Prayers of Adoration

We come to worship Jesus Christ,

- The first and the last
- The one who is, who was, and is to come (Rev. 1:8).
- The one who rules justly (2 Samuel 23:34).
- The faithful witness of God
- The Good Shepherd who protects us
- True Vine upon which we grow in faith (John 10:11, John 15:1.)
- Eternal Word, Great I AM (John 1, John 8:58).
- Wonderful Counsellor, Prince of Peace! (Isaiah 9:6.)
- We come to worship Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords! (Rev. 19.16.)

Lord Jesus, You are the light of the world. Open our eyes - through our worship here today, that we might see you, both as mighty and eternal King - but also as our friend - who welcomes us in to faith and friendship and calls us to follow. Lord we humbly come to praise you. You who became poor, you who set aside your heavenly glory that we might see God in human form. You who lived to show us how to live. You who died that we might live forever. In our worship, unite us by the Holy Spirit that through your bond of peace we may encourage one another and grow together as your church in the world.

### Prayer of Confession

Lord, we confess to you today, not like the Pharisee on the street corner, in full public view, but quietly, humbly, knowing our own faults and weaknesses that we so often try to hide. We want to say sorry - today - because we realise and we know that we are not perfect. That we often let you down through our lack of faith, our action and inaction. We lay ourselves and our lives before you - O God - knowing that you love us and through Jesus offer us forgiveness. Forgive us Lord in his name... (silence)

May almighty God, who is faithful and just assure us of our pardon and peace. May we know this pardon in our hearts and lives today. **Amen - thanks be to God.**

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the  
glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are  
yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

### Song – For God so loved the world

*Ch) For God so loved the world  
That He gave His only Son  
And whosoever believes will not perish  
They shall have eternal life*

1) I shall hold to the cross  
I shall hold to God alone  
For His love has salvaged me  
For His love has set me free

2) I shall wait upon the Lord  
I shall wait upon His word  
And by His grace I am released  
And by His grace I am redeemed

Br) By His precious blood  
I have been set free  
For the glory of Jesus' name  
I surrender all  
Now to Christ the Lord  
In Jesus I am saved

### **Reading: Acts 4:23-31 - The Believers Pray for Boldness**

After they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard it, they raised their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them, it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant: 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers have gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.' For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

### **Reading: Matthew 16:13-18 - Peter's Declaration about Jesus**

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And 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, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

### **Reflection – Mission in Adversity**

We have travelled through Lent, seeking to see the reality of ourselves before Holy and perfect God, seeking to engage with the true gravity and precious sacrifice of Holy Week and Good Friday. We have come through the glorious news of Christ risen on Easter Day and survived the in-between times, rejoicing in Jesus's appearances, perhaps uncertain when he is absent. All this compounded by the wonder and fear of Christ's ascent into heaven. We have hidden in doubt and uncertainty once again, before finally rejoicing at Pentecost with the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church. And last week, as is church tradition, we celebrated the wonderful mystery that is the interplay of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, our creator, saviour and sustainer.

So here we stand, just like the early church cast out into the world. We have heard Christ give the Greatest Command (Matthew 22:35-40, Mark 12:28-31, Luke 10:25-28, John 13:31-35) guiding us in how to live by loving God and our neighbour. And we have been given his Great Commission telling us to go out and make disciples of all nations (Matth 28:16-20 and (Mk 16:14–18; Lk 24:36–49; Jn 20:19–23; Acts 1:6–8).

So here we stand – I wonder what happens next?

Christ's command is clear and we are his people. But you might say to me; Alan in the midst of the COVID-19 why on earth are you preaching on mission, why on earth are you talking about inviting people to church, when we are stuck in our houses and our churches are shut? Surely this is crazy, irrelevant at this time? But then I find myself thinking again about the early disciples in those days after Pentecost... They had no church buildings, they had no church structures or organisation and whilst they didn't have COVID-19 they were instead persecuted and threatened even to death for their new belief and ways. I sense that they had far more reason than we do to shelter in their homes, to give thanks for what they had received and not to go out to invite people to something that doesn't exist and risk their lives doing it?

In Acts chapter 4 we find Peter and John, who have been arrested by the Sadducees, warned to speak no more to anyone about Jesus and then amazingly released. Verse 21 says: 21 After threatening them again, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because of the people, for all of them praised God for

how Peter and John had cured a lame man at the temple. It's difficult for us to imagine the tension of those days, the very real risks that these disciples took in seeking to share the amazing good news of Jesus Christ and what it means to believe in him and follow him.

Immediately after this ordeal they met with their friends. They praised God as sovereign of heaven and earth and they recalled a Psalm of David - Psalm 2 saying: In this city - the major leaders - Herod and Pontius Pilate AND the Gentiles AND the peoples of Israel, have gathered together against your holy servant Jesus. In the face of this kind of onslaught of oppression from all sides it would've seemed quite reasonable for them to decide to be quiet, to step back, to go elsewhere, to try to witness in a new place.... No one would've blamed them. Yet - despite all this – what did they do? What did they ask God for? They prayed for boldness! Absolutely incredible! They said; Lord look at their threats and in the face of these threats grant to us your servants the ability to speak your word with all boldness.

When Jesus, in Matthew 16 speaks to Peter - this is the first time in the entire new Testament story that the word 'church' is ever used. It's another example of a call to boldness. Jesus says: '18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.' The word Jesus used in Greek was: ekklesia, and its root is 'kaleo' - meaning "called out or summoned." The bible does not refer to a building or meeting place, but always to people, the ones "called out" of this world's society by God into His service. The Church of the Bible is not a building, but a group of people chosen by God.

I wonder - when we see that the first church was born in adversity, but the first church prayed for boldness to speak out and that the first church had no buildings to invite people to and yet still invited people - perhaps we begin to see similarities to our situation today. Perhaps it isn't so crazy after all to think about mission and invitation at this very moment?

At this point in virtual church, we will be seeing a humorous video about someone not quite getting around to asking a neighbour to church – the Christian is afraid to ask but in fact the neighbour would love to go but is waiting to be invited – and is very confused about why he is not being invited! This highlights the most common problem many of us face when thinking about inviting someone to church. And that is, that we imagine what other people are thinking! We imagine that people won't want to hear, aren't interested and won't want to come. In fact we have that whole conversation in our head and give up before we have even started. The truth is we have no idea what other people are thinking, where other people are in their private and personal spiritual journey, or what other people's needs may be in terms of friendship and fellowship, extended family or a desire to belong, to find meaning and purpose in life. All of which God offers, perfectly and wonderfully in the example and way of Jesus Christ.

But still I hear you say to me – Alan we have no church to invite people into! And I understand that dilemma. And it makes me wonder - what our own prayer for boldness should be about? Perhaps the disciples in acts are our best example.... Their invitation was simple and straightforward. It wasn't so much an invitation to come to church, as it was an invitation to become church. To join, to belong. They called people, they invited people to meet with God through Jesus the son.

Come, lets us together pray for the boldness to say to our neighbour in this time of great crisis – would you like to know the love and comfort of God in your life? May we trust to God as to what happens next... Amen

## StF 405 – Great is the darkness

- 1) Great is the darkness that covers the earth,  
Oppression, injustice and pain.  
Nations are slipping in hopeless despair,  
Though many have come in Your name.  
Watching while sanity dies,  
Touched by the madness and lies.
- 2) May now Your church rise with power and  
love,  
This glorious gospel proclaim,  
In every nation salvation will come  
To those who believe in Your name.  
Help us bring light to this world,  
That we might speed Your return.
- Ch) *Come Lord Jesus,  
Come Lord Jesus,  
Pour out Your Spirit we pray.  
Come Lord Jesus,  
Come Lord Jesus,  
Pour out Your Spirit on us today.*
- 3) Great celebrations on that final day,  
When out of the heavens You come.  
Darkness will vanish, all sorrows will end,  
And rulers will bow at Your throne.  
Our great commission complete,  
Then face to face we shall meet.

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### Response of Commitment

Please stand if you are able... Together we are called as heralds of Christ's kingdom. Together we ask Lord God almighty: Guide us and equip us to proclaim the gospel in word and deed, as agents of your purposes of love. Sister and brothers: Will you today seek to serve the community in which we are set, sharing God's love in Christ and answering the needs and hopes of our local community. **With God's help I will.**

Will you seek out the poor and weak, the sick and lonely and those who are oppressed and powerless, reaching into the forgotten corners of the world, that the love of God may be made visible.

**With God's help I will.**

Will you accompany those searching for faith and bring them to baptism and growth in discipleship. Helping them to seek nourishment from the Scriptures and to be faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God's Kingdom among us. **With God's help I will**

In the name of our Lord, we remember the greatness of the trust in which we share: the ministry of Christ himself, who for our sake took the form of a servant. We remember always with thanksgiving that the people among whom we minister are made in God's image and likeness. In serving them we are serving Christ himself, before whom we will be called to account. We cannot bear the weight of this calling in our own strength, but only by the grace and power of God. We therefore pray earnestly for the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to our need - that our faith may be sustained and our hearts may become evermore attuned to God's way shown to us in Jesus. **Amen**

### Prayers of Intercession

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, we bring our prayers to God... We pray for the health and wellbeing of our world – for those affected by COVID 19 directly and indirectly, for those marginalised because of the colour of their skin, their nationality, their sexuality, age or disability. At the same time we pray for so many people and planet issues lost and forgotten because of this crisis. And we pray for peace in places like Korea, the middle east and Afghanistan. And we pray for the unity of all.

L: Lord when you call: **R: Grant us boldness to respond**

We pray for the church – your church Lord. Big and small. That amidst this crisis we may be bold in showing your love in our compassion and sharing your love by inviting people to meet Jesus. We pray for our circuit and for those who guide us - that they may hunger for truth and thirst after righteousness. And that we may together serve God in truth and love.

L: Lord when you call: **R: *Grant us boldness to respond***

We pray for all those who are sick and suffering, for the aged and infirm, for the lonely and neglected, and for all who remember and care for them,

L: Lord when you call: **R: *Grant us boldness to respond***

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

L: Lord when you call: **R: *Grant us boldness to respond***

### **StF 418 – We have a gospel to proclaim**

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| 1) We have a gospel to proclaim,<br>Good news for all throughout the earth;<br>The gospel of a Saviour's name:<br>We sing his glory, tell his worth. | 4) Tell of that glorious Easter morn:<br>Empty the tomb, for he was free.<br>He broke the power of death and hell<br>That we might share his victory. |
| 2) Tell of his birth at Bethlehem -<br>Not in a royal house or hall,<br>But in a stable dark and dim,<br>The Word made flesh, a light for all.       | 5) Tell of his reign at God's right hand,<br>By all creation glorified.<br>He sends his Spirit on his church<br>To live for him, the Lamb who died.   |
| 3) Tell of his death at Calvary:<br>Hated by those he came to save,<br>In lonely suffering on the cross,<br>For all he loved his life he gave.       | 6) Now we rejoice to name him King:<br>Jesus is Lord of all the earth.<br>This gospel-message we proclaim:<br>We sing his glory, tell his worth.      |

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### **Closing Prayer/Blessing**

Go into the world to serve rather than be served. and in the power of the Holy Spirit, share Christ, the cross and the Kingdom. And if suffering comes your way, take courage for he suffered too, have faith, follow Him. May God Bless you and keep you, and make his face to shine upon you, and grant you peace.

**Amen**