25th October 2026 – Morning Service

Walk in Newness of Life

Rev Andrew Roberts

Call to Worship: based on **Psalm 90** (from Roots for Churches)

Before the earth was formed, God was.
For all time, God will be.
Through the generations, God is our refuge and strength.
This is God, to whom we come now in awe and worship.

StF 45 – Earth's creator

1) Earth's creator, everyday God,
Loving Maker, O Jesus,
you who shaped us, O Spirit,
recreate us, come, be with us.

2) In your presence, everyday God,
we are gathered, O Jesus,
you have called us, O Spirit,
to restore us, come, be with us.

3) Life of all lives, everyday God,
love of all loves, O Jesus,
hope of all hopes, O Spirit,
light of all lights, come, be with us.

10) Our beginning, everyday God,
our unfolding, O Jesus,
our enduring, O Spirit,
journey's ending, come, be with us.

11) Alleluia, everyday God,
now and always, O Jesus,
alleluia, O Spirit,
through all ages, come, be with us.

Bernadette Farrell *© 1996 Bernadette Farrell*

Prayers

Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest!
Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest!
To God be glory for ever!
To God be glory for ever!
Alleluia! Amen.
Alleluia! Amen.
Alleluia! Amen.
Alleluia! Amen.

Peruvian traditional chant collected by John Ballantine

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify, your holy name; Through Christ our Lord, **amen.**

Liturgical text from The Alternative Service Book, 1980

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.**

CCL No. 526980

StF 161 – Speak O Lord

1) Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.

2) Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.

3) Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend © 2005 Thankyou Music

Reading: Romans 6:1-14 (NIV)

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

StF 303 – I know that my Redeemer lives

1) I know that my Redeemer lives —
what joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
he lives, my everlasting Head!

2) He lives, to bless me with his love;
he lives, to plead for me above;
he lives, my hungry soul to feed;
he lives, to help in time of need.

3) He lives, and grants me daily breath;
he lives, and I shall conquer death;
he lives, my mansion to prepare;
he lives, to lead me safely there.

4) He lives, all glory to his name;
he lives, my Saviour, still the same;
what joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!

Address

Paul wrote many of his letters in response to questions from the communities that he was writing to or addressing issues that had arisen amongst them. Scholars suggest that Romans 6 is a chapter in which Paul is doing both these things.

The great New Testament scholar CK Barret suggests that 'In the opening verse [of chapter 6] the style of the diatribe reappears'. A diatribe being a style of writing in which the writer includes rhetorical questions or the questions they have heard being asked, in order to have a dialogue, or less politely an argument, with an opponent who is not present.

As far as the issue being addressed in Romans 6 is concerned, Barrett and John Stott suggest that Paul was addressing a heresy known as antinomianism – which has nothing to do with garden ornaments – but rather a heresy that said if sinning leads to an experience of grace and forgiveness then let's sin more so we can have more grace and forgiveness. A heresy that has had some famous advocates throughout the ages. One such being Grigori Rasputin – who's fame was celebrated of course in Boney M's big hit Ra Ra Rasputin.

Rasputin, who knew himself to be a sinner, had a quasi-religious experience at a monastery, and set himself up as a faith healer. He so enjoyed being forgiven that he went down the route of antinomianism merrily sinning more and more in the hope that he would experience more and more grace. This, as Boney M reminded us, included becoming the lover of the Russian Queen Alexandra, the wife of the Tsar, Nicholas the second. Perhaps Rasputin should have paid more attention to Romans 6:23 where Paul states that 'the wages of sin are death' for that proved to be literally true for Rasputin, who was assassinated by a group of conservative Russian noblemen who opposed his influence over the imperial family.

So back to Paul and Romans 6. John Stott suggests that the basic theme of the first half of the chapter is 'that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not only historical facts and significant doctrines, but also personal experiences.' Experiences that are the antitheses of antinomianism.

We'll come on to the personal experiences in a moment but just to affirm what Stott says that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are both historical facts and significant doctrines. Facts and doctrines that Paul has explored in painstaking detail already in Romans. So painstaking, that even CK Barret – who argued that Paul was the greatest ever theologian – said this;

> 'Paul labours to set out his argument. He does not find it easy to set it out in suitable language'.

So, if you find Romans a bit dense and difficult at times don't despair – it seems that even Paul himself may have found it so.

John Stott suggests that Paul constructs much of his argument in legal terms. This he suggests is particularly true when he talks about being dead to sin in Romans 6. 'We have died to sin' Stott argues 'in the sense that through union with Christ we may be said to have borne its penalty'.

And here is the really good news. And it is encapsulated in that phrase 'in union with Christ'. A union which is signified by our baptism for to be baptised into Christ in Romans 6 means to enter into union or relationship with Christ and to share in the blessings secured by both his death and resurrection. The blessings of grace, forgiveness and new life.

I do wonder sometimes if we focus so much on the death of Jesus that we fail to fully appreciate the wonder and indeed the importance of celebrating and living the new life, the resurrection life that is the ultimate gift secured by the death of Jesus on the cross.

To be fair to Paul he can't be accused of doing that in Romans 6. Listen again to what he says;

> Verse 4: We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that we too may live a new life.

Verse 5: if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Verse 8: if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Verse 11: count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

There's a lot of life here. And a lot of personal experiences to be lived out to demonstrate the reality, wonder and power of the grace exemplified in Jesus' self-giving forgiving love on the cross.

Life is for living.

This week Shona and I have been to two events that demonstrated that. Last Sunday we went to a service of reflection and thanksgiving at St Thomas' Church in Stourbridge to commemorate the Stourbridge Wildfires. It was a very moving occasion although I did wonder a bit about the selection of Guide me, O thou great Redeemer as a hymn containing as it does the line 'Let the fiery cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through'.

Amongst the recollections at the service of the horrors and heroism of that time in August, there was also the recognition that the burnt fields are now turning green again. Of the cycle if you like of death and resurrection that is woven into the fabric of creation. And there was also a real sense amongst those who spoke, including the Chief Fire Officer, that having been spared what could have been even worse consequences – miraculously no-one died and no-one was seriously injured in the face of flames that we could see from our garden that were taller than the houses and trees – that we need to live more thankfully, more carefully, more caringly.

That was Sunday, and then on Monday we went to listen to the BBC's International Editor Jeremy Bowen speaking about *Truth Under Fire* and his career as a journalist. Just as in Romans 6 there was quite a lot of reference to death in Jeremy's talk. In his case literal physical death and in particular the death of countless innocent people in far from innocent wars. He told of the occasions in which he had come very close indeed to being killed by bullets and bombs but also made it clear that for him life is for living and that he wants to continue to tell the truth through the stories of others so that they too might be able to live well.

Life is for living. As followers of Jesus life is for living in a way consistent with the grace and forgiveness we have received. A lot of that has to do with our minds and our attitudes. Commenting on verse 11 where Paul says 'In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus', John Stott suggests that 'the major secret of holy living is in the mind'. A fair argument but as Paul goes on to say in the following verse what we think needs to be seen too in embodied grace as to quote verse four; we walk in newness of life. May it be so. Amen.

StF 728 – O Lord you search me and you know me

1) O God, you search me and you know me.
   All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
   When I walk or lie down you are before me:
   ever the maker and keeper of my days.

2) You know my resting and my rising.
   You discern my purpose from afar,
   and with love everlasting you besiege me:
   in every moment of life or death, you are.

3) Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
   you have known its meaning through and through.
   You are with me beyond my understanding:
   God of my present, my past and future, too.

4) Although your Spirit is upon me,
   still I search for shelter from your light.
   There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
   even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

5) For you created me and shaped me,
   gave me life within my mother's womb.
   For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
   safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Bernadette Farrell *© 1992 Bernadette Farrell*

Prayers of Intercession from the Methodist Worship Book

In faith let us pray to God our Father, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. God of love, we pray for the life of your Church throughout the world… May every congregation be a community of love and every Christian a witness to your grace. Renew all who worship in this place that we may be a living fellowship in your Spirit and serve our neighbourhood.
Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.**

God of mercy, we pray for the life of the world… and for those who exercise power… Show us how to live as members of the human family; to reject the ways of war; to bear each other's burdens and to work together for justice and peace.
Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.**

God of compassion, we pray for those who are ill or anxious at home or in hospital… We pray for those whose lives are filled with fear and despair… Draw near with your saving love and bring healing and hope.
Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.**

God of glory, we rejoice in the communion of saints; we remember all who have faithfully lived and all who have died in Christian hope, especially… Help us to follow their example and bring us with them into the fullness of your eternal joy.
Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.**

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding; pour into our hearts such love towards you that we, loving you above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

StF 313 – Thine be the glory

1) Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment
rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes
where thy body lay:

Ch) Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won.

2) Lo, Jesus meets us,
risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us,
scatters fear and gloom;
let the Church with gladness
hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth,
death hath lost its sting:

3) No more we doubt thee,
glorious Prince of Life;
life is naught without thee:
aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors
through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan
to thy home above:

Edmond Budry

Blessing: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

CCL No. 526980