

May 10th 2020

**Dear Lord, in this time of lockdown we still gather in your name,
listen to us we pray and bring us peace.
Be our rock and our refuge, that we may be made strong;
let your face shine upon us, that we may show your love. Amen.**

Sing or read

- 1 I heard the voice of Jesus say :
'Come unto me and rest ;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,
weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.
- 2 I heard the voice of Jesus say :
'Behold, I freely give
the living water ; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream ;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.
- 3 I heard the voice of Jesus say :
'I am this dark world's Light ;
look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun ;
and in that light of life I'll walk,
till travelling days are done.

Horatius N. Bonar (1808–1889) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 248

**We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven. In your mercy, Lord, forgive us.
May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by the Holy Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ Our Lord. Amen.**

John 14: 1-14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen

me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Word for this week

This passage from John’s Gospel is familiar to many of us. A segment often of it is often read at funeral services and at other times when reassurance is needed. It contains promises that are deeply comforting. However, we need to understand that this text is not only about life after death, but is a text that has everything to do with our lives here and now.

The setting for this passage is the upper room and the last supper with the disciples. Jesus has washed their feet and has explained to them what this means (13:1-20). He has forecast his betrayal by Judas, and Judas has crept out into the night (13:21-30). He has told his disciples that he will be with them only a little while longer (13:33). He has also foretold Peter’s impending denial (13:36-38).

No wonder the disciples are anxious! Who wouldn’t be? Jesus their teacher is leaving them, one of their own has turned against them, and Peter the steadfast leader among the disciples is said to be on the verge of a great breakdown of loyalty. Everything is changing and this is hard for them to get to grips with.

Jesus responds to the anxiety of his disciples by saying, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me”. Jesus calls them back to this basic relationship of trust and assures them that he is not deserting them. Rather, he is returning to his Father, which is good news for them. Jesus assures his disciples that this is also their destination. There are many dwellings in his Father’s house, and he goes to prepare a place for them, so that they will be with him and dwell with him in his close relationship with the Father.

When Jesus says that they know the way to the place where he is going, Thomas, who is notorious for asking questions and wanting proof, takes Jesus quite literally and wants directions, a road map to this place. Jesus responds by saying that he himself is the way: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” This statement by Jesus is a promise, a word of comfort to his disciples. Jesus himself is all they need; there is no need to panic, no need to search desperately for a secret map. Jesus adds, “If you know me, you will know my Father also”. So that there can be no misunderstanding, Jesus adds, “From now on, you do know him and have seen him”.

This is the whole of Jesus’ mission, to make known the Father, to reveal who God is. If we want to know who God is, we need look no further than Jesus. All the words that Jesus has spoken, all the works that he has done, come from God and show us who God is.

This passage has everything to do with life here and now because Jesus commends his mission to his disciples.

“Very truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it” (14:13-14).

Yet here is where Jesus' promise becomes a little hard to swallow. Greater works than these? Really, Jesus? Greater works than healing the blind and raising the dead? And you will do whatever we ask in your name? We have all known the pain of praying for healing that did not come, of feeling powerless in the face of disease and death. How can these promises be true?

Possibly our problem is that in hearing these promises, we expect to do these greater works in the same way that Jesus did them -- with miraculous power that immediately resolves the problem at hand. Yet even miracles are not guaranteed to produce faith. Many in John's Gospel who witness the "signs" that Jesus performs have trouble seeing the work of God right before their eyes.

Therefore the dwelling place is not just in the future life to come, but more importantly in the here and now. Through His resurrection this has already happened, we are dwelling with Christ today. Can you appreciate that your current dwelling place is where God is dwelling too, with you right now?...there is no need to wait until the 'here after'!

After reading this service I invite you to sit and close your eyes. Make sure you are comfortable and relaxed. In your mind's eye take a walk around your home. Going into each room and if you have one into your garden too. In each space imagine Christ is in that place with you. You may like to imagine Him walk from place to place with you. Or just appearing in a location. Whatever works for you. Take a moment or two in each area, no need to rush. What is Christ doing? i.e. sitting, standing, laying, being present, waiting to listen to you, or just being there with you in some way. How near do you feel Him, is he very close or simply nearby. Reflect on how you feel. There are no rights or wrongs, this is your time knowing that you are dwelling with Christ.

"No one has ever seen God. It is Jesus the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (1:18). Jesus has made known to us the heart of God, and he has entrusted this mission of "making known" to us. Where might we see Jesus' work and presence in our midst? How might we show others the very heart of God?

Prayers of intercession

In a world where there are so many changes with the pandemic, many have had their lives and livelihoods destroyed; many grieve for loved ones who have passed away.

We pray that they may know your strength and peace, loving God:

be for them a rock and a stronghold.

In a world where many people are alone; many do not know where to look for comfort and encouragement; many see no purpose or future; some cannot see the point of anything.

We pray that they may know your strength and peace, loving God:

be for them a rock and a stronghold.

In our lives when we struggle and doubt; when we don't know what to say or do; when life overwhelms us and we turn to you.

We pray that we may know your strength and peace, loving God:

be for us a rock and a stronghold.

In the name of the living Lord Jesus, our Saviour and companion. 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.
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.**

Sing or read

- 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 !

Samuel Medley (1738–1799)

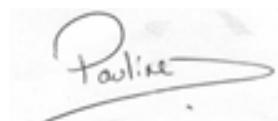
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Romans 1:11-12

For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Thank God for all the way we are able to keep in touch with one another during this lockdown. On this Lord's Day, pray for the Lord to direct you to call to speak to one particular person, maybe from Church. Pray for a good conversation about dwelling with God and that you would both be encourage and reassured.

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pauline". It is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small heart-like flourish at the end.

