

## Service for Sunday 7 June 2020

Revd Pauline Crispin

**O God, you are at the heart of creation. Your word brings life into being; your peace gives living its fulfilment; your Spirit unites us into your Son. We draw near, seeking your love in our hearts; your wisdom in our minds; your power in our lives. Receive us with grace, in the name of your Son. Amen.**

Take a few moments to be still close your eyes if that helps. [Relax! Take your time to do this.](#) God is always with us, but so often we are not attentive to Him being present. Try and picture yourself in the midst of God. Maybe you can imagine Him in front of you, or perhaps you are being held by Him. Or possibly you are aware of your spirit and His Spirit intermingling and merging as one. Try to imagine what that looks and feels like.

*Let us pray*

**Forgive us, Lord, when we only see doubt as negative, when we judge those honest enough to ask questions, and when we are afraid to own our doubts.**

**Forgive us, help us to live with mystery and paradox and draw us closer to you. God of love I thank you that I am loved and forgiven. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

- 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

What would you like your last words to be? Something witty, profound, loving, encouraging? Or something else? For some people, the last thing they ever say turns out to be their most memorable, while, for others, their last words are disappointing or mundane. Here are just a few examples:

"I'm bored with it all."...Winston Churchill

George Orwell's last written words were, "At fifty, everyone has the face he deserves." He died at age 46!

"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!"...Joan of Arc

John Wesley. Grasping the hands of those who loved him, he repeatedly told them farewell. At the end, when nearly all his strength was gone, his reported last words were: The best of all is, God is with us.

George Floyd's last words, as many of us would have seen on the news were, 'I can't breathe.'

But why are anyone's last words so important? What is it about someone's final words that fascinates us, that makes us sit up and take notice?

Is it because we believe that a person's last words are expressions that give us an insight right down into the centre of their heart? Of course, with George Floyd it was a matter of life and death.

Consider this. If you knew that you only had a few moments left on this earth, what would you want to say to those around you? What words would you have for your friends, your spouse, your children, family, colleagues, neighbours? What would be your last words? Who would you want to be there?

Would you open up your heart? Would you say those things you had always wanted to say, the things you know you should say? Would you want to leave the folk around you with the thoughts that are most important to you? About your hopes, desires, prayers for each of them?

Matthew 28:16-20: <sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Here are the eleven followers, seeing Jesus again, raised from the dead. Verse 17 tells us that "when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted." The situation was so amazing that there was a mixed reaction to the experience of the risen Jesus.

Notice though these famous last words, of Matthew's Gospel and observe what they uncover to us about the heart of Jesus. What matters to Jesus? There in these words is a clear emphasis on the continuation of His mission. They are a set of marching orders, to carry out and carry on the most important work in the world.

These famous last words, these words that reveal the heart of Jesus, are all about what we are supposed to be doing as His followers.

Do these words shape your whole life? Millions of people, maybe every day, in some way, ask the question, "Why am I here? What's the purpose of my life?" I imagine that many Christians ask that question, and I think we come up with many different answers. I'm here to be fulfilled." Or, "I'm here to somehow make it through the 'minefield' of life, while committing as few sins as possible along the way." Are these things totally wrong? No, but they are incomplete and a perhaps lead us off track.

I believe that there are many churches ask that question as well: "Why are we here?" And I think they too come up with many different answers. "Why are we here? We're here to get

people saved.” Or, “We’re here to help people solve their problems and deal with their baggage.” Or, “We’re here to help better our communities...or to give people a theological education...or to provide people with a worship experience, or to help people feel close to God, or to protect people from the world’s corruption...or...we’re here because this church has always been here...it’s just what we do.” We need to think again about the reason each of us is here, as part of the circuit and churches in this area. We need to carefully consider the commission Jesus gave to us. If you go back to Matthew 28:16-20, what do we learn here about this mission that has been entrusted to every follower of Jesus, to every church? What do we discover here about these famous last words that should shape all our lives?

When we consider the whole Bible, we see that Jesus is simply using a cultural concept that was familiar to his hearers in order to communicate something God had said before in the Old Testament. Maybe God's command in the book of Leviticus expresses it best: "Be holy, for I am holy." (11:45) God was saying, "I want you to be like me." And Jesus would later say, "Come follow me."

Jesus says, "Make disciples of all nations." That means all of us are invited to follow, it doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, what you once believed, or what you've done.

So, what does this mean for us? I think it means that we need to make sure that our purpose as a church is God's purpose for The Church. No matter what a church's mission statement declares, it's easy to slip into other purposes as God's people. We can make church primarily about relationships, or good Bible studies, or social action, or great praise music, but the famous last words of Jesus make our mission clear.

It also means that we need to think carefully about how we should carry out this mission. We first need to acknowledge that becoming a disciple and growing as a disciple involves many informal aspects. God uses casual conversations, difficult trials, times of prayer and reading, relationships, opportunities to serve others, things we see, and things we listen to. God uses all of these everyday things to make us more like Jesus.

You can imagine the questions and fears and doubts that those eleven men must have had when Jesus told them to “go”. I think we have or will have similar feelings. And I think we absolutely should admit the truth: this is not something that we can do, this is not a mission we can carry out in our own strength and wisdom.

But did you notice the reassuring words of Jesus: Verse 18: And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Verse 20: And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. "The power and presence of the risen Jesus is our confidence in the work he called us to do. What a comfort that is. That should inspire us to step out in faith, shouldn't it? Are you living in the light of the famous last words of Jesus Christ?

Loving God, where there is conflict between nations and within nations,  
where people live in fear of the bullet and the bomb,  
when parents weep for children who have been killed:  
God of peace, **may your peace be known.**

In homes filled with anger, cruelty and neglect,  
where there are no safe places, where poverty and addiction bring suffering and pain:  
God of peace, **may your peace be known.**

To those whose minds are tormented by depression;  
to those whose hold on life is fragile; to those whose lives are filled with stress:  
God of peace, **may your peace be known.**

To those who are nearing the end of life; to those who love and care for them:  
God of peace, **may your peace be known.**  
**May your peace be known to us, and may we be bearers of your peace in our world. 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:

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| 1 | Take my life, and let it be<br>consecrated, Lord, to thee ;<br>take my moments and my days,<br>let them flow in ceaseless praise.  | 4 | Take my silver and my gold,<br>not a mite would I withhold ;<br>take my intellect, and use<br>every power as thou shalt choose.         |
| 2 | Take my hands, and let them move<br>at the impulse of thy love ;<br>take my feet, and let them be<br>swift and beautiful for thee. | 5 | Take my will, and make it thine ;<br>it shall be no longer mine ;<br>take my heart — it is thine own ;<br>it shall be thy royal throne. |
| 3 | Take my voice, and let me sing<br>always, only, for my King ;<br>take my lips, and let them be<br>filled with messages from thee.  | 6 | Take my love ; my Lord, I pour<br>at thy feet its treasure-store ;<br>take myself, and I will be<br>ever, only, all for thee.           |

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836–1879) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic  
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**May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be my strength, wherever I go;  
may the love of God be my joy, whatever my circumstances;  
and may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be my inspiration, whatever I do. Amen.**

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**

