

5th Sunday of Easter & Christian Aid Week

Words of Welcome

Welcome to our worship on this Fifth Sunday of Easter, which also marks the beginning of Christian Aid Week. I hope that many of you listening in this morning will have received an envelope from me so that you can make a donation to Christian Aid. If you haven't then just go on the Christian Aid website and make a donation there.

In our gospel this morning we hear Jesus promising to prepare a place for everyone – it reminds us of the generosity, welcome and hospitality we find in God. Today we pray for the work of Christian Aid and their desire to show generosity, welcome and hospitality to our world's most vulnerable people, as they work towards the day when everyone finds a place of love and safety prepared for them.

Opening Responary

Our rock and our fortress, we come to find a safe place in the shelter of your presence
in you we seek refuge.

Faithful God, incline your ear to our worship and let your face shine upon us
in you we seek refuge

Our times are in your hands, lead us and guide us by your steadfast love.
in you we seek refuge

The Collect

O Christ our Lord,
who came in homelessness that you might find a home in us,
and that everyone would find a home in you.

We bring before you all in exile or suffering,
and those who have nowhere to call home.

Grant them the sense of being held fast in you
and enable us to strive together for a world
which shall be closer to the Kingdom.

A world in which all may live together, caring for creation
and caring for each other
for the sake of peace.

Amen.

A reading from John's gospel

Jesus said: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?"

The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

Reflection by Anne

Today's gospel, at the beginning of Christian Aid week, encourages each one of us, in our own unique way to be generous. Generous with our time, our possessions, our attitudes, as we reflect on God's generosity to us.

Our generous God offers a welcome to all and Christian Aid strive to replicate this in the work that do.....showing generosity and offering welcome and hospitality to our world's most vulnerable people. It's work each one of us can do too in these challenging times.

In the gospel we find Jesus offering reassuring words to his friends, words of comfort as he prepared to take his leave of them. Words to remind them that a place was prepared for them, that nothing could separate them from his love.

That same love, reaches out to everyone, no one is excluded, there is room for all in the generous heart of God. All are offered the same welcome and hospitality. It wasn't, or isn't just for those closest for Jesus, it isn't just for those whose faith is strong. It's for everyone, regardless of their faith, or lack of it. God is prepared to welcome all.

In that passage from St. John we find Thomas who, as has happened before, has a question. But rather than calling him doubting Thomas we could see him as courageous Thomas or honest Thomas. He was the one to say what everyone else was thinking. He had the courage to ask the awkward question – and that question drew from Jesus one of his most beautiful and profoundly comforting sayings. “We don’t know where you’re going, how can we know the way” asked Thomas, to which Jesus replies “I am the way and the truth and the life”

In other words, I am everything for you, and more besides.

The words Jesus spoke to Thomas are spoken to each and every one of us today. Words to calm our fears. Words to encourage us to look outside our own little world and our own four walls to see the wonderful world God has created and the people in it. Reminding us to see the wideness of God’s mercy for us and for our sisters and brothers, especially those who need comforting and consoling today.

This Christian Aid week please pray for the work they do, please give a donation, either on line or by sending a cheque. And as you do remember the God who has prepared a place for us, and wants to use us to prepare a better place, a better life, for some of our world’s most vulnerable people.

May God bless us in our giving and in our praying and may all of us this week draw closer to Jesus, our way, our truth and our life. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

In the power of the Resurrection we offer our prayers to God.

Let us pray.

Remember, O Lord, in your love:

your Church responding to crisis throughout the world.

all who minister to others in their confusion and loss.

those who seek prayerfully to discern your word to us today.

May your whole Church know your power and be a sign that Christ is risen.

Lord, hear us:

Lord, graciously hear us.

Remember in your love the world you have made:

those who seek a fair and gentle use of the earth’s resources.

those who strive for peace as the legacy of remembrance.

all who work with Christian Aid for justice for the world’s poor.

May the whole earth be transformed by mercy and rejoice in hope.

Lord, hear us: **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Remember in your love this parish and its people:

those who work in our hospitals, surgeries and care homes.

those who offer loving service to their neighbour.

all who reach out to the lonely and the stranger.

May our locked down lives be open to the promise of life in all its fullness for all your children.

Lord, hear us:

Lord, graciously hear us.

Remember in your love those who suffer:

those living with sickness or infirmity.

those struggling with isolation and fear.

all whose hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain.

May those in need find comfort, strength and freedom in the living Christ.

Lord, hear us:

Lord, graciously hear us.

Remember in your love those who have died:

those who have confessed the faith,

and those whose faith is known to you alone,

especially Jack Bryan, Jean Peacock, and the names we hold dear.

May all your children receive grace and light according to their needs
and come at last to share with all the saints in life eternal.

Lord, hear us:

Lord, graciously hear us.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ,
our risen Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

We join all our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

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.

Closing responsory

When the darkness of poverty fills our view

We will lift our heads to see your light

When our joy is silenced

We will fill the earth with a song of praise

When we see change as an unachievable miracle, rather than our daily responsibility

**We will look to you to keep our hope alive,
and to fill us again with your love for our sisters and brothers**

Let us pray

Eternal God, whose son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life;

Grant us to walk in his way,

to rejoice in his truth,

and to share his risen life;

who is alive and reigns with you

now and for ever.

Amen.

Blessing

May the God, who is the way, the truth and the life,

bless and empower us all to be living stones,

building bridges in our community

and taking down barriers of exclusion

that all may know the place of love

that God has prepared for them.

And the blessing.....

Hymn

Praise we now the world's creator (*Tune: Praise my soul*)

**Praise with joy the world's Creator,
God of justice, love, and peace,
source and end of human knowledge,
Force of greatness without cease.
Celebrate the Maker's glory,
power to rescue and release.**

**Praise to Christ who feeds the hungry,
frees the captive, finds the lost,
heals the sick, up-sets religion,
fearless both of fate and cost.
Celebrate Christ's constant presence:
friend and stranger, guest and host.**

**Praise the Spirit sent among us,
liberating truth from pride,
forging bonds where race or gender,
age or nation dare divide.
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure:
foolishness none dare deride.**

**Praise the Maker, Christ, and Spirit,
one God in community,
calling Christians to embody
oneness and diversity.
Thus the world shall yet believe, when
Shown Christ's vibrant unity.**

(Words: John L Bell & Graham Maule © 1987, WGRG)