

**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 14 MAY 2023- 6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**COLLECT**

God our redeemer,  
you have delivered us from the power of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Psalms 66.7-18**

- 7 Bless our God, O you peoples; ♦  
make the voice of his praise to be heard,
- 8 Who holds our souls in life ♦  
and suffers not our feet to slip.
- 9 For you, O God, have proved us; ♦  
you have tried us as silver is tried.
- 10 You brought us into the snare; ♦  
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.
- 11 You let enemies ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and water; ♦  
but you brought us out into a place of liberty.
- 12 I will come into your house with burnt offerings  
and will pay you my vows, ♦  
which my lips uttered  
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
- 13 I will offer you fat burnt sacrifices  
with the smoke of rams; ♦  
I will sacrifice oxen and goats.
- 14 Come and listen, all you who fear God, ♦  
and I will tell you what he has done for my soul.
- 15 I called out to him with my mouth ♦  
and his praise was on my tongue.
- 16 If I had nursed evil in my heart, ♦  
the Lord would not have heard me,
- 17 But in truth God has heard me; ♦  
he has heeded the voice of my prayer.
- 18 Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, ♦  
nor withheld his loving mercy from me.

## Acts 17. 22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring."

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

### Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

**Alleluia!**

### The Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 14, verses 15 to 21

### Glory to you, O Lord

John 14. 15-21

### The Promise of the Holy Spirit

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## ***A Reflection from Hannah...***

What did you think of the Coronation?! It's an interesting exercise to set our reflections alongside Paul's words at the Areopagus in Athens. He uses the opportunity to commend the seriousness of the local people in their spiritual search for meaning, noticing the altar to 'an unknown God'. He then goes on to make known God in Christ- to use the things around him, and the culture of the times, as a medium through which to proclaim the Gospel and draw people into the truth of the living God who, as he notes, is no human-made creation of gold and glitter; but is with us and always inviting us into a deeper relationship of love.

Well, there was plenty of gold and glitter at the Coronation last week... possibly only topped by Eurovision this weekend! But behind the symbols was the stuff of the Gospel- the symbols themselves are just the signpost, not the reality- each of them pointing to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's disciples, in ways that bless, heal and redeem our world. Take, for example, the sword (wielded so magnificently by Penny Mordant!). When that was presented, these were the words that explained its significance:

*'With this sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God and all people of goodwill, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order: that doing these things you may be glorious in all virtue; and so faithfully serve our Lord Jesus Christ in this life, that you may reign for ever with him in the life which is to come. Amen.'*

That's just one example, but the point is that the symbols were means of speaking about the very practical realities of living in God's ways, as a servant of the Gospel- as King Charles, and all of us, commit to do. That was what St Paul did as well, and it's the creativity of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts and minds that enables us to speak the Gospel using the resources at our disposal, and with reference to the culture we live in.

This Thursday is Ascension Day, and then we begin the season that has become known as Thy Kingdom Come- ten days of prayer in anticipation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Perhaps we can pray for wisdom to creatively commend the Gospel in our time and place, and to spot the signs of God at work in the world... to be thankful for that love which sustains us, and to join in!