**BENEFICE YOUTUBE SERVICE 16TH MAY 2021**

**SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION - NOVENA**

**Welcome** **and Opening Prayer– Revd Mark Poole**

Christ is risen. Christ has ascended on high. He reigns for ever. Alleluia.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Welcome to our service on this Sunday after the ascension of Christ.

Ascension Day marks the first day of Thy Kingdom Come - an annual invitation to prayer called by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Lasting for eleven days between ascension and Pentecost known as Novena, the focus is specific prayer in churches, households and as individuals for friends, families, communities and countries to come to know the saving love of God in Jesus Christ, and for ourselves that empowered by God’s Spirit we would grow in confidence to show and tell of God’s love.

**Let us pray,**

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your kingdom: inspire us with your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your Word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Hymn – Love Divine All Loves Excelling**

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down;
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;
All thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation;
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit,
Into every troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit;
Let us find that promised rest.
Take away our bent to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its Beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
'Til in heaven we take our place,
'Til we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

**Confession and Absolution – Victoria Beale**

**Confession**

**Psalm 51:1-4**

Have mercy on me, O God,
    according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
    blot out my transgressions.
**2**Wash away all my iniquity
    and cleanse me from my sin.

**3**For I know my transgressions,
    and my sin is always before me.
**4**Against you, you only, have I sinned
    and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
    and justified when you judge.

**Absolution**

May the God of love

Bring us back to himself,

Forgive us our sins,

And assure us of his eternal love

In Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Reading – John 17:6-19 – Andrew and Susan Wilson**

“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. **7**Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; **8**for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. **9**I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. **10**All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. **11**And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. **12**While I was with them, I protected them in your name that[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17%3A6-19&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26761a)] you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17%3A6-19&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26761b)] so that the scripture might be fulfilled. **13**But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17%3A6-19&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26762c)] **14**I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. **15**I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17%3A6-19&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26764d)] **16**They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. **17**Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. **18**As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. **19**And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

**Song – Before The Throne of God Above**

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect Plea
A great high priest whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me

My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end to all my sin

Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb
My perfect spotless Righteousness
The great unchangable I am
The King of glory and of grace

One with Himself, I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ, my Saviour and my God
With Christ, my Saviour and my God

One with Himself, I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ, my Saviour and my God
With Christ, my Saviour and my God

**Homily** - Revd Mark Poole

***‘In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.’***

The Gospel passage gives us a window into the final scene of Jesus’ farewell meal with his disciples on the eve of his death. We hear Jesus praying to His Father for the disciples. The intimacy, mutuality and love between Jesus and His Father is astonishingly palpable.

Jesus’ opening words encompass His entire earthly ministry. He says to His Father, **“I have made known your name..”** Making known the name of God is like saying ‘Your Kingdom Come.’ It is what brings transformation, revival and healing.

The word ‘name’, “onoma” is not used here in a narrow sense to refer to a particular name for God. Rather, Jesus means he has made known what the true nature and heart of God is like. It’s another way of saying “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” But there’s more.

When Jews spoke of ‘the name of God’ they meant the sacred four-letter symbol, the tetragrammaton as it is called, IHWH, pronounced Yahweh. That name was considered to be so sacred that it was never uttered by anyone, except by the High Priest when he entered the inner temple. Ordinary people were not even supposed to know it, far less to speak it, for God was the transcendent, almighty, invisible King. So, no wonder Jesus’s ministry was considered scandalous. Jesus is saying “I have brought God so close that everyone can take His name upon their lips.” But is goes deeper still.

Last weekend, with popcorn and beer, I watched “Rocket Man” on Netflix. The film recounts the early life of Reginald Dwight, otherwise known as the fabulous Elton John. It is deeply moving and portrays the heartache, pain and tragedy of a fantastically talented pianist, composer and singer who was spectacularly launched into fame and fortune and yet it wasn’t enough to give him what he deeply yearned for. And that was simply to be ***loved***. To be loved, by his family and his friends, for nothing other than just who he was. No strings. Just unconditionally loved. ***That***, is what Jesus meant when He said, **“I have made known your name.”** God became human in Christ, emptied Himself of love to reveal the unconditional love for each and every one of us.

Elton’s story moved me to tears. Many years ago now I remember my own time of darkness and depression. Different life, different circumstances to Elton, but the same dis-ease. Inner turmoil and battles, harbouring deep seated fears, inadequacies, insecurities; strivings to prove myself, to prove I was good enough, worthy enough until completely exhausted, to the extent I needed to be in hospital for a 48-hour period that lasted six weeks. What happened? I slowly came to realise that the only thing that was truly important was knowing that I was utterly, totally, and unconditionally loved for nothing other than just being me. The name of God was made known to me. I was Transformed, revived and healed.

Jesus’ prayer for His disciples continues with asking God to sanctify them as He sends them out into the world. For what? To make known the name of God. To make known the unconditional love of God for those who do not yet know it.

And Jesus sends us to do the same. This is His mission with which we are entrusted. Through our living, our loving and our praying. And especially our praying. In this period known as Novena, between ascension and Pentecost, the global Church encourages us through the ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ initiative to pray for those we know who do not yet know what it means to know the name of God. I encourage you to do this. Someone prayed for me, and someone has most certainly prayed for you.

Jesus said, ***“I have made known the name of God.”*** It is this that brings transformation, revival and healing.

Thanks be to God.

**Amen.**

**Thy Kingdom Come Video and Song – We Seek Your Kingdom**

We seek your kingdom throughout every sphere. We long for heaven’s demonstration here Jesus your light shine bright for all to see Transform, revive, and heal society Before all things, in him were all things made Inspiring culture, media, and trade May all our work serve your economy Transform, revive, and heal society Peace, truth, and justice reigning everywhere With us be present in our public square Fill all who lead with your integrity Transform, revive, and heal society Forgive us Lord, when we have not engaged Failing to scribe your heart on history’s page Make us again what we were made to be Transform, revive, and heal society Faithful to govern ever may we be Selfless in service, loving constantly In everything may your authority Transform, revive, and heal society

**Prayers of Intercession – Nikki Gladstone**

“I have made your name known to those you gave me.”

As part of “Thy Kingdom Come” we are encouraged to pray each day for 5 people, that they would know God's love for them in Christ.

So, in our prayers this morning, we’ll be praying for those five people, using our fingers.

As we begin, let’s hold our five people before God. These might be people we’ve already been praying for, or they might be people we are thinking of right now. Let’s take a moment and name them quietly to ourselves.

First of all, I invite you to look at your thumb. A thumbs-up sign usually means that something is good. Let us therefore recall something good about each of our five people. Either a good memory, a good time that we have shared, or something about them that makes us smile for some reason.

Let’s take a moment to thank God for all of these happy times.

God of love, as we pray this morning, we thank you for love and for laughter. May those for whom we pray be blessed this week with moments of well-being and happiness.

**Thy Kingdom come… thy will be done.**

Now let’s consider our first, or index finger. This is a finger which we often use to point the way. Let us think about where each of our five people are. Where they live, or a particular place that they spend time, their workplace, or perhaps somewhere that they like to be. Maybe even somewhere that they need to be, like a hospital.

We hold before God all these places.

God of direction, we pray for everything that our five people need to do this week, for their work, for their errands, for their appointments. This week we pray that they will be blessed with safety, security and peace.

**Thy Kingdom come… thy will be done.**

Next comes our middle finger, usually the tallest finger. Let us think about the influences on the lives of our five chosen people. The people who affect and direct them. The people upon whom they depend and the people who depend on them. Their employers, teachers, carers, colleagues, students, clients, patients, children. The friends who have most effect on their lives. Any relationships which may be problematic, damaging or hurtful.

We hold all these relationships before God.

God of love, we pray for everyone who surrounds our five people, that their relationships may be blessed with your love and kindness.

**Thy kingdom come… thy will be done.**

Our fourth finger, which we sometimes call our ring finger, is generally the weakest finger. We ask God to bless our five special people where they are weakest. If they are ill in body, mind or spirit, for all areas of their lives where they may be feeling afraid or anxious.

We hold before God all the burdens which they carry.

God of healing, you see the things which most trouble us, and everything that we keep hidden. We ask for your comfort and peace this week for those for whom we pray.

**Thy kingdom come… thy will be done.**

Finally, we think about our smallest, most vulnerable finger. Let’s remember before God that we ourselves are vulnerable and that we need other people. We think of all those ways in which we learn from others, especially from those people that we particularly pray for.

And once again, we hold before God each of our five people.

God of compassion, we pray for the insight and grace to accept and cherish those gifts which are offered to us by other people.

**Thy kingdom come… thy will be done.**

*As our Saviour taught us so we pray,*

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.

**Sending and Blessing – Revd Nick Bird**

We have gathered in worship and prayer,

committing ourselves once again to pray for

the transformation, revival and healing of society.

To do anything, but especially this work in obedience to the will of God,

we need the divine blessing:

May the God of peace,

who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,

that great shepherd of the sheep,

through the blood of the eternal covenant,

make you perfect in every good work to do his will,

working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight;

and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all this day and for ever more.

Amen.

**Hymn – All Heaven Declares**

All heaven declares
The glory of the risen Lord
Who can compare with
The beauty of the Lord

Forever He will be
The Lamb upon the throne
I gladly bow the knee
And worship Him alone

I will proclaim
The glory of the risen Lord
Who once was slain
To reconcile man to God

Forever You will be
The Lamb upon the throne
I gladly bow the knee
And worship You alone

Songwriters: Richards Noel William, Richards Patricia Lilian

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