

# Sunday Morning Worship

## 23 August 2020

From the United Reformed Churches at Morpeth, Widdrington and Gt Bavington.

### Opening Words

#### Hymn: Sing Praise to the Lord!

Sing praise to the Lord! Praise him in the height;  
rejoice in his word, blest angels of light;  
High heavens adore him, by whom you were made,  
and worship before him, in brightness arrayed.

Sing praise to the Lord! All people on earth,  
in tuneful accord, sing praise for new birth;  
Praise him who has brought you his grace from above;  
Praise him who has taught you to sing of his love.

Sing praise to the Lord! all things that give sound;  
each jubilant chord, re-echo around;  
loud organs his glory, forth tell in deep tone  
and sweet harp, the story, of what he has done.

Sing praise to the Lord! Thanksgiving and song  
to him be outpoured all ages along;  
for love in creation, for heaven restored;  
for grace of salvation, sing praise to the Lord

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#### Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
Light of the World,  
we come before you today  
to offer you our thanks and praise  
for the ways in which you  
light up our lives.

As the summer sun that shines on our communities, we  
give praise to you, God's Son, that shines on our  
communities today. We thank you for light of your  
wisdom and the heat of your love that is showered  
upon us day by day.

Sometimes Lord, when the day is grey and overcast,  
we are tempted to believe the sun has disappeared,  
and that the summer will never return.  
So too Lord, we have days when the clouds of suffering,  
loneliness and despair, obscure your light from shining  
in our lives.  
Remind us Lord, that like the summer sun, you are  
always there, always shining, and that we will feel again  
the light of your presence in our lives.

As we gather today to hear your word, help us to listen  
to the Spirit that speaks to us. Help us to hear in the  
scriptures your message for us today. May your light

shine upon us as we bask in your presence today.

Amen

### Reading: Matthew 5: 13-20

#### A Story

Several centuries ago in a mountain village in Europe, a wealthy nobleman wondered what legacy he could leave to his townspeople. He made a good decision. He decided to build them a church. No one was permitted to see the plans or the inside of the church until it was finished. At its grand opening, the people gathered and marvelled at the beauty of the new church. Everything had been thought of and included. It was a masterpiece.

But then someone said, "Wait a minute! Where are the lamps? It is really quite dark in here. How will the church be lighted?" The nobleman pointed to some brackets in the walls, and then he gave each family a lamp, which they were to bring with them each time they came to worship.

"Each time you are here" the nobleman said, "the place where you are seated will be lighted. Each time you are not here, that place will be dark. This is to remind you that whenever you are not here, some part of God's house will be dark"

Edward Everett Hale put it like this:

I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something;  
And because I cannot do everything  
I will not refuse to do the something I can do.

Our readings today remind us just what important parts each of us has to play in the church. We are to be lights of the world. Lighting the church as a beacon on a hill for others, and taking that light ourselves into our communities.

As the lockdown eases, and people start to return to church, this passage and that story of the church on the hill, seem particularly relevant. And I look forward to a time when our places of worship might be lighted again by the light you bring with you.

But the gospel reminds us that we are lights for the world, not just lighting the church, but taking that light into our communities so that by our words and actions we might glorify our Father in heaven.

#### Hymn: As a fire is meant for burning

As a fire is meant for burning  
with a bright and warming flame,  
so the church is meant for mission,  
giving glory to God's name.  
Preaching Christ and not our customs,  
let us build a bridge of care,  
joining hands across the nations,  
finding neighbours everywhere.

We are learners; we are teachers;  
we are pilgrims on the way.  
We are seekers; we are givers;  
we are vessels made of clay.  
By our gentle loving actions,  
we would show that Christ is light.  
in a humble, listening spirit,  
we would live to God's delight.

As a green bud in the springtime  
is a sign of life renewed,  
so may we be signs of oneness  
mid earth's peoples many hued.  
As a rainbow lights the heavens  
when a storm is past and gone,  
may our lives reflect the radiance  
of God's new and glorious dawn..

Ruth C. Duck  
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### **Sermon**

In today's gospel reading Jesus tells us not that he is the Light of the World, but that we ourselves are the light of the world. And I wanted to reflect on this idea this morning as we consider what that means for each one of us.

For those of you who enjoy dancing, and perhaps have spent many a happy evening on the dance floor, you may well be familiar with the Mirrorball. This is a spherical object coated in tiny mirrors that hangs above the dance floor. It rotates, so that when a light is shone onto it, that light is reflected in a myriad of different directions around the room.

And I think this is my favourite image when I consider what Jesus says about us being the light of the world. Because each of us, don't shine with our own light, but instead reflect that one light, God's light, that shines on us.

Gerard Kelly in his book Church Actually talks about the Church being a mirror ball and about these "little squares of light [that] being to move around the room, finding their way into every corner, poking every dark nook and shadowed cranny." He goes on to say,

"The central mirror-ball is organized and crafted. It has structure and intentionality....the little squares of light are dispersed and creative. They find their way to different places."

It is when we gather together as church, we are able to bask in that light that shines upon us and we are transformed. But it is by being dispersed, by going to the dark and shadowy corners of our community, that we are able to reflect this light and so transform others.

We cannot be a community that gathers together, and is totally focussed on what we do together. But we gather together so that we may be dispersed and do God's work in the world.

Gerard Kelly again says:

"It is about our ordinary everyday lives being infused with the light of God. Everywhere you go God's light can shine as you go. Every person you encounter can be caught in the wonder of that light. Every task you undertake can be illuminated by God's presence."

I am looking forward to our church being open again, and a time when we can gather again to worship. That image of the church on the hill is another important image for me, one where everyone brings their own torches, and the church is only fully lit, when the community is gathered and none are missing.

And during these past few months, when we have not been able to meet together in a physical space, the church has had to seriously consider what it is about, and many have come to the conclusion that the dispersed church is what its all about and there is no need to meet together.

But it has to be both. There has to be a meeting together so that we may be dispersed. There has to be a transformation in us, so that we can transform others. There has to be a meeting together as church, as well as a church that is dispersed throughout the community. There has to be a coming together in the light of God, so that we may then reflect that light to others around us.

I like the Message version of the passage that Joann read for us today:

"You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a lightstand. Now that I've put you there on a hill, on a lightstand - shine!"

We are there to be light , bringing out the God-colour in the world.

When white light shines through a prism, that light is split into its different wave lengths and a rainbow of colours emerges from the other side. If the church is a prism, then God's light shines on us, and we, in all our diversity, are sent out into the world. We each bring colour to the world around us.

And just as that church on the hill, needs to have everyone there in order to be fully lit. So too do all the colours need to be shining to create that original white light. If we are, in our diversity, each bringing colour to the world, it is only when the church is fully present in all its diversity that we can reflect clearly that original light.

When Jesus says in our gospel today that we are the light of the world, it is a reminder to us that as a church we are here to reflect God's light to others. That each of us is able to take that light and reflect it into the corners of our community in which we live and work. But it also reminds us that our purpose is to bring God-colours to the world. That it is only when the church is fully present, it is only when the church truly reflects the diversity of God's people, that we might be a true reflection of that light which is the light of the world.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord, you call us to be lights for the world.

We pray,  
that we may reflect your light  
into the darkness of this world,  
so that people can see better ways  
of overcoming problems,  
May we reflect your light into confusion  
so that people can see new ways forward,  
May we reflect your light onto us,  
for we are part of the darkness.  
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, you give us peace that the world cannot give.

We pray  
that we may take that peace  
into our governments and councils,  
so that peace may be the  
goal and method of their work.  
May we take that peace into the heart  
of our community in which we live  
so that others may believe in you.  
May we take that peace into our own hearts  
as we try to live as citizens of your kingdom.  
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, you are the Vine whose branches we are.  
We pray for those who are part of our church

community, whom we have lost contact with over these past few months. We pray that through you we may remain connected and be channels of your love and grace.

We pray for those who we know who belong to this part of the vine, but at this moment, are facing difficulty for whatever reason.

We pray for them know, and place their names on our lips in this silence.....

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We place before you today all those on our hearts and minds, and ask you to shine your light of love upon them.....

We offer all our prayers in Jesus name, who taught us to say together....

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **Hymn: Longing for light, we wait in darkness**

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light!*

*Shine in our hearts.*

*Shine through the darkness.*

*Christ, be our light!*

*Shine in your Church, gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us.

Make us your living voice.

*Christ, be our light!....*

Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.

*Christ, be our light!....*

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us your building, sheltering others,  
walls made of living stone.

*Christ, be our light!...*

Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong .

Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

*Christ, be our light!.....*

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