

Sunday 1st August 2021

WELCOME

The God whose ways are not our ways welcomes us to worship today as we welcome one another. Paul tells us that *“What what seems to be God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom what seems to be God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”* Throughout the Bible we hear of God turning the world’s ways upside down as He seeks our help in bringing His kingdom here on earth. Our first hymn reminds us of what His kingdom will look like.

HYMN 473 Thy Kingdom come on bended knee

Thy kingdom come on bended knee the passing ages pray
And faithful souls have yearned to see on earth that Kingdom’s day

But the slow watches of the night not less to God belong
And for the everlasting right the silent stars are strong

And lo already on the hills the flags of dawn appear
Gird up your loins ye prophet souls proclaim the day is near

The day in whose clear shining light all wrong shall stand revealed
When justice shall be throned with might and every hurt revealed

When knowledge hand in hand with peace shall walk the earth abroad
The day of perfect righteousness the promised day of God

Frederick L Hosmer (1891)

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Almighty Sovereign God, great and wonderful, all powerful, all loving, all good, all forgiving – we bow before you in the quiet worshipping you.

Remind us of your mighty acts across the years, and the most mighty of all that of your Son Jesus our Lord coming to earth transforming the lives of all He met.

Your Spirit comes to us in our day and age reminding us of your faithful love which reaches into all corners of the world and into all hearts that are receptive to you. You promise each one of us mercy, forgiveness for the things that we do that are wrong, your promise us power, the power which changes as light changes darkness, as hope comes from despair, as companionship comes from loneliness.

Almighty God you are to be worshipped and adored three in one God.

Forgive us for losing the sense of awe that we once had in your presence, forgive us for forgetting how great you are, forgiving us for trying to make sense of you by bringing you down to our level rather than allowing you to bring us up into your presence. Forgive the smallness of our vision, the feebleness of our worship the weakness of our faith. Renew in us a sense of wonder before you and as a token of our willingness to be your people here in our world we bring you our offerings. Please use them and us to bring your kingdom of love and peace here on earth. In Jesus name we pray saying together the words He taught 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.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

READING **2 Samuel 7:18-29**

Read by Iona MacNeill

¹⁸ Then King David went into the Tent of the LORD's presence, sat down and prayed, "Sovereign LORD, I am not worthy of what you have already done for me, nor is my family. ¹⁹ Yet now you are doing even more, Sovereign LORD; you have made promises about my descendants in the years to come. And you let a man see this,^[a] Sovereign LORD! ²⁰ What more can I say to you! You know me, your servant. ²¹ It was your will and purpose to do this; you have done all these great things in order to instruct me. ²² How great you are, Sovereign LORD! There is none like you; we have always known that you alone are God. ²³ There is no other nation on earth like Israel, whom you rescued from slavery to make them your own people. The great and wonderful things you did for them^[b] have spread your fame throughout the world. You drove out^[c] other nations and their gods as your people advanced, the people whom you set free from Egypt to be your own. ²⁴ You have made Israel your own people forever, and you, LORD, have become their God.

²⁵ "And now, LORD God, fulfill for all time the promise you made about me and my descendants, and do what you said you would. ²⁶ Your fame will be great, and people will forever say, 'The LORD Almighty is God over Israel.' And you will preserve my dynasty for all time. ²⁷ LORD Almighty, God of Israel! I have the courage to pray this prayer to you, because you have revealed all this to me, your servant, and have told me that you will make my descendants kings.

²⁸ "And now, Sovereign LORD, you are God; you always keep your promises, and you have made this wonderful promise to me. ²⁹ I ask you to bless my descendants so that they will continue to enjoy your favor. You, Sovereign LORD, have promised this, and your blessing will rest on my descendants forever."

REFLECTION

How many of you like film franchises say the likes of the Star Wars series who put out several films and then decide on prequels. Well that's what's happening today. The reading that Iona has just read to us is the end of our readings for this coming week, an end which is a gloriously uplifting, energising, faith filled reading and prayer of David's which is focused on God and His choices, His ways bringing hope for the present and on into the future. There are however twists and turns till we get not just to the end of this week's readings but till we get to the end of time and the promise of Jesus the King over all kings coming back to rule supreme forever.

The stories this week are mainly about Saul as the first king of Israel and David. There are several similarities – they both came from the smallest tribe of Israel – a reminder that God uses the small and the weak in working out how to share His loving plan for the world with others. Both knew for a while beforehand that they would become king perhaps giving them time to prepare, maybe like an engagement before the marriage. Often God leads us one step at a time allowing us to wait in faith till the right time for His plan to come into being. And we will discover that the title bad king good king is a title which can be applied to both of them as they swing from good to bad and back again.

There's one verse though that sticks out for me and I want to explore it for it has great significance for us, for all Christians, for all time to come.

You will read in 1 Samuel 10:6 that Samuel tells Saul that **“The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you will be a different person.”**

The following chapters make it clear that this was not an assurance of an automatic divine endorsement of Saul's every action. One commentator says this, “Sometimes we assume because a person has clearly been chosen by God and used by God they have a continuous and permanent ability to make right decisions and to take right actions. We can even feel that to question the words or the behaviours of such a person is to question God. Saul is a living example of the fallacy of this assumption.”

Over the coming week we will see the way in which God's Spirit prompts heartfelt prayers like Hannah's which God answers, God responding to the people's request for a king with sadness as He knows that this will lead to heartache and disaster but gives the people what they demand, such is His love for them, two kings appointed starting out with such enthusiasm and integrity only to falter later on. They will know however that God's Spirit is at work in them.

As Christians we are assured by Jesus that He will give us the gift of His Holy Spirit to help us. Just as the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus at His baptism, bringing Him the assurance of God's love and pleasure the Holy Spirit today comes to us to assure us of the same: God loves you and He is pleased with you. If you take nothing else away from this reflection then please hold onto this especially if times are hard for you.

He is promised to everyone who asks Jesus to be their friend and Saviour.

He makes us different people by changing our focus which normally rests on ourselves and our lives. The Spirit will turn us to focus on looking to God and His way of living.

He helps our brains to function in a godlike way.

He makes us different people by changing our hearts. The prophet Ezekiel has God saying, **“I will give you a new heart and a new mind. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart.”** ²⁷ **I will put my spirit in you and will see to it that you follow my laws and keep all**

the commands I have given you. (36:26). From being hard hearted and un-compliant we become people who have hearts filled with God's love for us which enables us to have love for God, love for others and indeed love for ourselves. We are enabled to obey the command of Jesus to love God and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves – the last phrase of that is equally important as the first two.

The Holy Spirit makes us different people by helping us to become more like God – He brings out the family likeness in us by providing us with His fruit – **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self-control. (Galatians 5:22)** The change doesn't happen overnight indeed it takes us a life time but people will begin to see changes in us and that will give them the opportunity to ask why the difference.

Accepting gifts of course matters. That is something we choose to do As we accept the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives we turn to do what pleases God rather than ourselves. He helps you to know what that is as you are guided and led by His Spirit.

You will read about David finding the Spirit leading Him to dance and worship before God in a way which made him look foolish in his wife Saul's daughter's eyes. God's ways are not the world's ways and it may well be that some of the things we as Christians do appear foolish to those around. Think of Jesus when the crowds said, "Isn't He the carpenter's son in disbelief at the miracles and teaching He was doing? Think of the disciples on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came upon them and some of the crowd said, "They are drunk and it's only nine o'clock in the morning" Paul makes the comment that we read at the beginning of the service about God's seeming foolishness being wiser than human wisdom.

All of us are called to have a good and godly influence on those God has placed round us. We are called to be salt and light in our communities. As we know salt is unseen while it works and light by its very nature is seen. Navigating how and when we work in our communities can prove difficult yet with God's Spirit within He will prompt us what to do and when to do it. As we'll see in our readings people led by God's Spirit make mistakes – sometimes inadvertently sometimes deliberately. Yet the Holy Spirit reminds us of the forgiveness that is on offer to us. David is a great case in point though that is for next week!

Change is a part of life. Some of us thrive when change happens. For others, change produces anxiety and stress. But no matter how we respond to change, one thing always holds true. When God is involved, we are always changed for the better.

Romans 8 says this, ⁵ **Those who live as their human nature tells them to, have their minds controlled by what human nature wants. Those who live as the Spirit tells them to, have their minds controlled by what the Spirit wants.** ⁶ **To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace.**

¹⁴ **Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's children.** ¹⁶ **God's Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God's children.** ¹⁷ **Since we are his children, we will possess the blessings he**

keeps for his people, and we will also possess with Christ what God has kept for him; for if we share Christ's suffering, we will also share his glory.

Our life's prequel is that God has known us and loved us since and has chosen us to be His child since before we were born. He has loved us and invited us to be his child, part of the great family of God, which stretches from before the beginning of time, into time till the end of time and beyond time into the new life to come lived in God's loving Presence forever. He has already been working in our lives and through our lives whether we realise it or not. May we know the strength, comfort and peace that He brings us as we live for Him day by day. Let us pray Holy Spirit living breath of God breathe new life into my living soul. Amen

HYMN Holy Spirit living breath of God

Holy Spirit, living Breath of God.

Breathe new life into my willing soul.

Bring the presence of the risen Lord

To renew my heart and make me whole.

Cause Your Word to come alive in me;

Give me faith for what I cannot see;

Give me passion for Your purity.

Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within;

May Your joy be seen in all I do-

Love enough to cover ev'ry sin

In each thought and deed and attitude,

Kindness to the greatest and the least,

Gentleness that sows the path of peace.

Turn my striving into words of grace.

Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

**Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
Giving life to all that God has made,
Show Your power once again on earth;
Cause Your church to hunger for Your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise .
Lead us on the road of sacrifice
That in unity the face of Christ
Will be clear for all the world to see.**

Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God.

Words and Music by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend, © 2006 Thankyou Music

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Jane Peers

Prayers 1st August

Almighty Father God,

We come in awe and wonder before you. You bestow gifts and promises on us and we are grateful though like David we don't understand. He thought you were promising a great earthly dynasty, yet Jesus is not just our king here on earth, but throughout the world and eternity. Even when we see your greatness and power, we see only the little we can understand. So we bring our requests to you knowing that in love you will do so much more than we ask or can imagine.

We bring before you our own needs and hopes.

In all our struggles, we are not alone, may we trust you and find your leading and love, picking us up when we fail and encouraging us in your service in your world.

We remember before you those we know who are struggling through illness, bereavement or life's problems.

As you loved King David and you love us, you love them. May they find hope and know your loving presence.

We thank you for Margaret, John and Heather. We ask your blessing on them as they minister to us and our local communities. May we support and cherish them and minister your love to them and to our neighbours.

As Holiday Club starts on 9th August, we ask your blessing on all the children and volunteers who will take part. We ask for safety in a different setting, for fun and exploration, for your love to shine in our hearts and be shared and celebrated together.

When Solomon was a young king he asked for wisdom, a discerning heart to govern and distinguish between right and wrong. So, we pray for our political leaders. Give them discerning hearts to seek justice for all and not favour the rich and powerful at the cost of the poor and vulnerable. As Nathan the prophet spoke to King David and was heard, raise up prophets for today to speak truth to those in authority, and to be heard.

We ask our prayers in the name of David's son, Jesus our King eternally, in the confidence of your everlasting love.

Amen

HYMN 470 Jesus shall reign

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun

Does His successive journeys run

His kingdom stretch from shore to shore

Till moons shall wax and wane no more

People and realms of every tongue

Declare His love in sweetest song

And infant voices shall proclaim

Their early blessings on His Name

Blessings abound where Jesus reigns

The prisoners leap to lose their chains

The weary find eternal rest

And all who suffer want are blessed

Let every creature rise and bring

The highest honours to our King

Angels descend with songs again

And earth repeat the loud Amen.

BENEDICTION

The Spirit of the living God give fire to your faith, breathe new life into your worship and bring new power to your witness.

Go, knowing the presence of Almighty God Father, Son and Spirit at work in your life and through your life today and everyday.