

SUNDAY DEVOTIONS
10 MAY 2020 – EASTER 5

OPENING PRAYER

O God, we thank you and praise you for this day and for the opportunity you have given us in this good land to worship you without fear. Most Holy God, we pray that you would be with us in this place of praise and prayer, wherever it may be, and that through the ministry of your Holy Spirit you would form the minds of your faithful people into a single will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that, amid all the changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found and that our every action might show forth the light of your Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, he who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

SONG [Way maker](#) CCLI 7115744

PSALM 31:1-5, 15-16

In you, O LORD, I have sought protection
do not let me be humiliated, in your faithfulness, deliver me.
Turn your ear toward me, rescue me quickly, O LORD.
Be a mountain of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.
You are my rock and my stronghold.
For the honour of your name you will lead me and guide me.
Deliver me from the net which they hide for me
for you are my refuge.
Into your hands I entrust my life;
pay the price for my safety, O LORD God.
My future is in your hands —
rescue me from the hands of my enemies and my pursuers.
Let your face shine upon your servant
save me in your lovingkindness.

PRAYER OF ADORATION

Our Way:
you call us
to celebrate your peace
in a world which worships war;
to celebrate your freedom
in the face of oppression;
to celebrate the seed of faith
planted in the doubts of our hearts.

Our Life:
you would have us
celebrate the safe ground of hope
emerging from the flood of our tears;
celebrate those who love us
in the midst of hurt and hatred;
celebrate our salvation
as we struggle with sin.

Our Truth:
you teach us
to celebrate our new life
in the gift of the Risen Lord;
to celebrate the grace of your heart
which melts our fears;
to celebrate that all our moments
are cradled in your hands.

Our Way, our Truth, our Life,
we lift our prayers to you. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Hear the brokenness of our lives, Precious God. We cover our ears so we cannot hear the cries of those in need, or you urging us to respond. We rush together to defend every issue that matters to us, but quickly disperse when you would call us to be your holy people. We shout as loud as we can to cheer on our sports teams, but can manage only whispers when it comes to sharing the good news.

Forgive us, our Eternal Guide, and do not hold our sins against us. We lay the garments of our foolishness at your feet, so you might clothe us in grace and hope. We would feed on the spiritual food which flows from your heart so we might be strong enough to follow Jesus as he leads us in the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Do not let your hearts be troubled.
Trust in God. Trust also in Christ whom God has sent,
for whoever trusts in him will not be put to shame.
Our cry for help has been heard.
Now we are God's people and have received mercy.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
Be at peace.
Your sins are forgiven.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

SONG [Cornerstone](#) CCLI 6158927

BIBLE READINGS

[Acts 7:55-60](#)

[1 Peter 2:2-20](#)

[John 14:1-14](#)

SERMON [Jesus: The Way, the Truth, The life](#) [sermon.mp3](#)

SONG [The way](#) CCLI 7089024

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Glorious God, open your will to us. Teach us of your love. Keep us from drawing lines between ourselves, lines of prejudice and fear, distrust and even hatred. Bring us back to your all-inclusive grace for all people and help us to pray for your guidance in our lives. (Acts 7:55-60)

Faithful God, our Rock and our Fortress, shield us and all people from persecution and affliction. Look into those places where injustice and violence reign and bring your peace. We pray especially for the people in the Holy Land, in Africa, in China and Korea, in Pakistan and India, and in homes everywhere where anger and danger rule. O Lord, you are our deliverance from enemies and all persecution. Be present now. (Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16)

Merciful God, our Cornerstone, you have called us to be your faithful witnesses in all the lands. You have entrusted us with revealing your will to the nations. Raise us up as faithful priests among your people, not causing anyone to stumble, giving our time and talents for the up building of your Church, so that all people will be drawn to you, their true life and salvation. (1 Peter 2:2-10)

Good and Gracious God, you do not want our hearts to be troubled, yet we long for peace and healing for ourselves, our friends and our loved ones who suffer, as well as for all people in pain. Bring your healing touch upon...

Today, we pray especially for...

Take us unto your self; prepare a place of wholeness and healing, and come again in mercy to claim us as your own. (John 14:1-14)

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG [One way](#) CCLI 4222082

WORD OF MISSION AND BENEDICTION

You are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood,
a holy nation.
Therefore go out as God's own people
to proclaim the mighty acts of God in Christ.

And may God be your rock and your refuge;
May Christ Jesus take you to himself and be with you always;
And may the Holy Spirit open heaven wide before you,
that you might see the glory of God in all the things of earth.
Amen.

The story is told of a man who fell off a cliff. On the way down he manages to grab a tree limb. Peering into a deep canyon, he calls out, "Help, please. Is anyone up there?"

After an unbearable silence, a voice answers, "Yes, I am here."

"Who are you?" the man shouts.

"It's me, the Lord!"

Greatly relieved, the man says, "Thank you. Have you come to rescue me?"

"Yes," says the Lord. "Let go. I will catch you."

The man thinks for a second, then asks, "Um...Is there anyone else up there?"

There are times in our life when it seems that we are falling off the edge of a cliff—times when our hearts are troubled with uncertainty and fear. In our desperation, we cry out for help—we look for someone or something to save us—to show us the way through to the high ground—to a safe place. Yet so often, we look in the wrong place. Jesus calls out to us to let go and he will catch us. I guess we can't blame the man for not wanting to let go, but the reality is, there is no-one else up there—only the Lord, who wishes us to let go so that he might save us.

If there is one thing that the world needs in today's uncertain times, it is a remedy for troubled hearts. In the midst of wars and rumours of wars—school kids running around with guns—rampant terrorism—fear of the corona virus—it's no wonder that people today have troubled hearts. What is it that people fear? Is it the possibility of an early or violent death? Is it that somehow they will be cut off in their prime, unable to fulfil their life's dreams. Or is it that they will be caught up in the continuance of a kind of pseudo-life that goes on in an ever-quickening and ever-reducing spiral downwards—like falling off a cliff—a life that is sham-packed with dishonesty, hatred, pain and violence—a life that exhibits little satisfaction and even less meaning.

I believe that it's not so much the fear of death, that concerns people today, it's the fear of life—it's the fear that comes by not knowing how to cope with all these things that confront us day-by-day—not knowing where to turn or where to run when the garbage dump of life comes crashing down around your ears. How can a person cope in a world wracked by sin and degradation? It would seem that there certainly is a market for either a way out or at least a way through. That's why so many people today are buying self-help books, books on popular psychology and New Age or eastern mysticism. The book shops are full of them.

The disciples, too, knew about troubled hearts. They had just spent the better part of three years revelling in the wonder and glory of Jesus as he travelled around Israel—teaching wonderful things about God and the Kingdom of heaven—seeing and experiencing the miracles of healing and changed lives. But now, a cloud of impending doom had settled over them. Jesus had just predicted his own death for the second time and had declared that even his disciples—even Peter—would desert him. Their world was crashing down around them.

As Jesus looked at his disciples, he knew what was going on in their minds and in their hearts. He knew just how disturbed and upset they were—and he knew what was causing it. What's more, he knew the remedy for it. Jesus knew that these men were afraid.

They were afraid of death, afraid that they, with him, were going to be executed by the Jews. They knew of the opposition which had developed against them in Jerusalem, the bitter hatred of the

Pharisees—their determination to eliminate Jesus and all his disciples. They knew they were in danger, and so their hearts were deeply troubled as they gathered here with him.

But more than the physical danger to themselves, they were aware of his words about leaving them. It is this that had struck so much terror into their hearts. They were afraid that even though they might survive, might escape death, they would have to go on living without him, and that was unbearable to them. They could bear to die with him, but they could not bear to live or die without him. So as he gathers them around, he says these words to them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

The remedy for a troubled heart is contained in the two phrases which follow—“believe in God, believe also in me.” “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” How? “Believe in God”—God, who is still in control, who knows what he is doing, who is capable of exercising infinite wisdom, infinite power, and infinite love—and, “believe also in me,” Jesus said, who is the means by which all that wisdom and resource and power of God is made available to you. That is the answer to a troubled heart.

Jesus strove to impress upon his disciples the fact that there was something hidden in the remarkable relationship between him and his Father: “Believe in God, believe also in me.” For between the Father and the Son there is a relationship which is so important, so foundational, so fundamental, that everything else grows out of it.

Their basic fear was that he was going to leave them, and that they would have to face death, and life, without him. His reassuring word is, “I am *not* going to leave you, I am coming to you again, and you will go to the place where I am going.”

First, the Lord is going to come again in person to end their fear of death, so that death need hold no terror for them (as it need hold none for us).

Secondly, he is going to come again by the Spirit to end their fear of life. He promises to be with them in all the difficulties and problems of their life—in a living relationship based upon his relationship with the Father. “I will not leave you desolate;” he says, “I will come to you.”

But here, there arises some confusion among the disciples. Jesus tells them that they know the way—that they know where Jesus is going. But Thomas shook his head and said, “No, Lord, we don’t know the way. We don’t even know where you’re going.” And Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. That’s what I meant, Thomas. You know me; therefore you know the way. For I am the way.”

For all of us who travel life’s journey, especially those who have troubled hearts for one reason or another, there are three things that will make that journey more meaningful and more enjoyable—a clear direction for your life’s journey, an accurate understanding of your surroundings and the context in which our life is lived, and the freedom and ability to have a fulfilled life. These three things are summed up in Jesus’ words, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” “If you want to want to come to the Father, you must come through me. If you want to know the Father, you can only know him through me.”

While the world and unfortunately many churches, teach that there are many ways, many truths, many lives, Jesus teaches that there is only one: one way, one truth and one life. Jesus is not one way among many ways. He is not one truth among various truths. He is not one life, among

numerous kinds of lives. He is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. He is the only way to God the Father, the only Truth who guides us into the truth by His Word and Spirit, the only Life that conquers death and brings eternal life through His suffering, death, and resurrection.

Jesus is the Way. Thomas didn't understand that. "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Thomas needed to know where he was going before he could know the way. But Jesus does more than show us the way, He is the Way. He is the path to the Father.

Jesus is also the Truth. Truth is more than an abstract concept or idea. Truth is real. Jesus is the Truth. He is the Truth about ourselves, the Truth of who we are—rebellious, self-centered, hateful, angry, greedy.

Jesus is also the Truth about God. He reveals the Father's love to us. He shows us who God truly is. Jesus speaks the words the Father gave Him to speak. He does the works the Father gave Him to do. He shows the Father's heart, His will to save us. To see Jesus is to see the Father. To know Jesus is to know the Father. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the Father. There is no revelation of God, no vision, no dealing with God in His mercy and love apart from Jesus Christ.

Philip wanted to divorce Christ and the Father, to see the Father apart from the Son. "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Philip here speaks for every religion and every philosophy in the world that seeks to find God apart from Jesus. But Jesus directs Philip, and us, back to Himself. Jesus is our Truth, guiding us and sustaining us on our way to eternal life.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is *the Life*. Life in Christ is a life of fulfilment and meaning. He brings us to the end of our earthly life and gives us His eternal life. Jesus came that we might have life. To believe in Him is to have life even though we die. We chase after all sorts of things that offer life—all the things that the world has to offer. But only He is the Life. Only His death conquers sin, death, and the grave.

Do you want relief for your troubled heart? Are you looking for the way? Are you looking for truth? Are you looking for life? Well, Jesus is the Way. He is the Truth. He is the Life. He is the only Way from death to life, from hell to heaven. He is the only Truth that overcomes the lies that the world would have us believe. He is the only Life that is eternal life. All roads, except One, do lead to the same place—death and destruction. One road leads to eternal life with God— Jesus. Walk on Him by faith. Learn Him. Live Him. He is your Way, your Truth, and your Life.

Let us pray...

Our Father, we thank you for your tremendous reassurance to us as we face the unknown. As we face death, as we face life, we have these marvellous words of Jesus to rest upon. "Let not your hearts be troubled. I will come again. I will come again at death; I will come again in life." And in all ways, Lord, your presence will be with us. We thank you for that. Help us to live on this basis today, in this present 21st century hour, and to demonstrate the quality of life that Jesus lived. We ask in his name, Amen.