



Pentecost 17

27 September 2020

**... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,
for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work
for his good pleasure.**

Philip. 2:12-13

Deep within our lives lies the testimony to the authority of the Christ
There we find the fruit of God's grace,
the freedom to live renewed lives,
and ultimate healing for all.

This is the Christ, the chosen one.

In every time and place is planted the Cross,
symbol of hope from the beginning of time itself
through the struggle won for humankind,
life defeating death, resurrection affirmed.

This is the Christ, the chosen one.

Rising before all of history is this sign of God's enduring faithfulness.

**Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ
Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count
equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself
nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the
likeness of men.**

**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming
obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

**Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the
name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory
of God the Father.**

Philip. 2:12-13

This is the Christ, the chosen one.

Come into our lives this day, O God.
Come with the integrity of the Christ,
the creativity of the Father
and the mystery of the Holy Spirit.

Be found in our midst this day, for this is our most earnest prayer.

Amen

Hymn 256

*From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served, but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.*

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

*There in the garden of tears,
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours', he said.*

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

*Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.*

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

*So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're are serving.*

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

Confession and Assurance

O God, who knows us in the depths of our being, who is never deluded by our pretensions and never scorning of our humble and fearful approaches; we bring to you the reality of our frail journeying in the tumults and uncertainties of our living at this time.

We would love to be those who never betray our calling and our responsibilities but we cannot hide from the many occasions when we try to rest on past good deeds and better intentions rather than being prepared to grasp the nettle of the present moment and its often daunting demands of us here and now.

Forgive us, O God and face us with the truth that alone will lead us into the fulness of the life into which you are calling us to be your faithful people now.

When we give support to those who exercise leadership with power that has not been earned and authenticated by respecting and caring for those beholden to them or which is primarily about their status rather than about ethical life:

Forgive us, O God and face us with the truth that alone will lead us into the fulness of the life into which you are calling us to be your faithful people now.

When we are tempted to curry favour with those who have such power and seek through them to enjoy privilege and favour at the expense of those without advantage or influence

Forgive us, O God and face us with the truth that alone will lead us into the fulness of the life into which you are calling us to be your faithful people now.

When we allow the church to become nothing more than a community based on rules and doctrines rather than the authority of sacrificial love and compassion of the Christ

**who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality
with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing,
taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
And being found in human form, [who] humbled himself by becoming
obedient to the point of death**

Forgive us, O God and face us with the truth that alone will lead us into the fulness of the life into which you are calling us to be your faithful people now.

The divine life in Jesus the Christ is ever constant in its faithfulness and compassion and love, always offering grace upon grace, always staying with us in our failures as well as in our times of good. So, then, are we forgiven

for it is God who works in [us], both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philip. 2:13

We thank you, O God, that we can trust our experience of your life in the world in the Christ even when the world itself seeks to deny this. We know you do not mock us with words of religious piety when we long for authentic love. We thank you that all those who claim to carry your Holy name in truth are those who will not harm the vulnerable but who always add grace to the world like the blossoming of flowers of hope.

Thanks be to you, O God. Amen

Hymn 240

*All go to God when they are sorely placed:
they plead to him for help, for peace, for bread,
for mercy, for them sinning, sick or dead.
We all do so in faith or unbelief.*

*We go to God when he is sorely placed,
find him poor, scorned, unsheltered, without bread,
whelmed under weight of evil, weak or dead.
We stand by God then, in his hour of grief.*

*God comes to us when we are sorely placed,
body and spirit feed us with his bread.
For everyone, he as a man hangs dead:
forgiven life he gives all through his death.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Reflection

As we explore our faith in our worship so **to will and to work for God's good pleasure** we turn from the words of the twentieth century martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his unswerving commitment to faith in opposing Naziism to the questioning faith of the ancient Israelites on their journey to new life with their God in the Sinai Desert after leaving Egyptian slavery. Their trials and tribulations had them wavering in faith and commitment and even looking back to their former life as perhaps to be preferred and questioning their relationship with the God who would lead them to new life in the desert wilderness. Hear, then, the Hebrew Scripture for Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet:
a light to our path.

Exodus 17:1-7

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarrelled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord? But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst". So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarrelling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

In this is the word of the Lord for us.

Gospel Matthew 21:22-32

And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom

of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

Jesus clearly had an authority that transcended mere words and demanded to be taken seriously, not questioned in order to be ignored or by-passed. If there was one thing which Jesus made palpably clear in his ministry and teaching it was that those who would genuinely commit to him and be his disciples would be those whose actions spoke of faith and commitment rather than any belief systems or such constructs. It is not those who piously say “Lord, Lord” who will be the faithful of God’s kingdom but those who live kingdom lives, feeding the hungry, freeing those whose lives are restricted in any and all sorts of inhibiting ways because of the attitudes and actions of their fellows. Do not ask me for my credentials to justify your positions of assumed authority and superiority for to do so makes you no better than a disobedient son whose recalcitrant brother does his father’s will even though he has at first flagged disobedience.

St. Paul’s great affirmation in spelling out to the Philippian Christians what it truly is to identify with Christ in a world that so often is about claiming and asserting authority in order to oppress others and manipulate them is the true measure of the resurrected ‘man for others’ who is to be known and seen and worshipped in the community of the faithful to which we, of the Church, would lay claim:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians. 2:5-11

Hymn 571

*Forth in your name, O Lord, I go,
my daily labours to pursue,
you, Lord, alone to know,
in all I think, or speak, or do.*

*Each task your wisdom has assigned
still let me cheerfully fulfil,
in all my works your presence find,
and prove your good and perfect will.*

*You may I set at my right hand,
whose eyes my inmost substance view,
and labour on at your command,
and offer all my works to you.*

*Give me to bear your easy yoke,
and every moment watch and pray,
and still to things eternal look,
and hasten to your glorious day;*

*For you delightfully employ
all that your bounteous grace has given,
and run my course with even joy,
and closely walk with you to heaven.*

Prayers for Ourselves and Others and Lord's Prayer

Be with us in each moment of decision, Lord Jesus Christ. Show to us who we are and who we can be

***Give to us the authority of integrity, O God, founded on
changed lives and transforming activities of grace.***

Make real your life in us through the Christ as we relate to the world with our humble attempts at love and justice in every new situation whatever its demands on us personally.

Lift up hope among all who struggle for justice and compassion.

Let the gospel be proclaimed with grace by godly people within your church, O God.

***Give to us the authority of integrity, O God, founded on
changed lives and transforming activities of grace.***

As we look at the world around us in these troubling and challenging times, we bring you our prayers for myriad others with special needs for your compassion and love and grace.

And give to us the inspiration of your Holy Spirit and the honesty of the Christ as we try to respond, as we are able, to those whose cries now sound in our hearts and minds.

And so we pray in the words that Jesus taught us

***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 for ever.
Amen***

Benediction

May the whole earth honour its Maker,
may the wind carry the gifts of the Spirit into every place
and the Christ be found in us as we engage in the world
with all those who look for new hope.

Amen

Reverend Graeme Kerr