



Chet Valley Churches
Last Sunday Praise
31 May 2020



Welcome

Welcome to Last Sunday Praise. In this file you will find links to the songs we have chosen for our worship. Click on the links to take you to each song.

Introduction

Our theme for this service is 'The Power of God to change lives'. We have reached the end of another month, and it's Pentecost, which must surely be a very good reason to sing praises to God. So let's start with some worship songs that we probably all know and love.

♪♪ *All the songs link to YouTube. Just click with your mouse on the link, which will take you to a song with on-screen words. You may have to skip a few YouTube adverts.*

♪♪ Come, now is the time to worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPWq8eM4lu8>

♪♪ Praise is rising

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAaQ5EEXidc>

♪♪ Restore, O Lord, the honour of your Name

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOSocMh4O_U

Pause for thought, and prayer...

This week we celebrate Pentecost, the time when Jesus's disciples first received the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Nobody can deny that the world needs renewal just now. We are faced with the fear and mistrust that will inevitably follow in the wake of the pandemic, coupled with the requirement to restore some sort of normality.

The prayer for today (the Collect) gives us a moment to pause and think about how the Holy Spirit can both gently and powerfully lead us onward.

Perhaps you might read the prayer aloud, line by line, stopping to think about each line as you do so.

The Collect—A Special Prayer for the Day

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
ignite in us your holy fire;
strengthen your children with the gift of faith,
revive your Church with the breath of love,
and renew the face of the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

♪♪ Everyone needs compassion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnXX8TbUX-E>

♪♪ O Church Arise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXNO-OGUGyU>

♪♪ Holy Spirit we welcome you

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5_eGsD3gj0

Pause for thought, and prayer...

As we recognise the power and love of the Holy Spirit in our worship, let us reach out to those around us and to family and friends whom we love. Let us hold them in our hearts, but also give them to our Lord, who loves us all more than we can possibly imagine.

Perhaps you might like to read aloud the following prayer that has been written for this time.

A prayer for this time

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.
In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light.
Be close to all of us as we worship today
in countless homes across the world;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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🎵 Build your Kingdom here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcSWpVKKMcs>

🎵 Power of your love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ga6Qtxzd6vk>

Bible Reading

Acts 2 verses 1-21 (selected verses)

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. —we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “‘In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
²¹ And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Talk

Paul Mizen has written this reflection.

Firstly, can I say thank you to David for inviting me to write this reflection.

Today is Whit Sunday or Pentecost Sunday, the day generally considered to be the Birthday of the Church. We've read some familiar verses set for today and I want to explore what they have to say to us today, especially in our current situation.

This church was almost in lockdown. They were meeting with some degree of secrecy, for fear of the Jews. In Acts 1 v4, Jesus had told them 'do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.'

Most of us don't really like waiting. We live in an 'instant' age, where we can't wait for anything. However, since our lockdown, we have had to learn to wait. I wonder what you are waiting for at present. Perhaps it is to meet up with family and friends in the flesh, rather than via Skype or Zoom. Perhaps you're waiting to go out somewhere. You may just be waiting for the chance to have a McDonalds! Of course, it's not entirely clear how and when restrictions will lift and if we ever will get back to 'normal.'

I'm not sure whether the disciples were entirely clear what they had to wait for. Jesus had told them in John 14 v16 'I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.' In v26, He says 'The Counsellor,

the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.' Whilst that may appear relatively clear to us today, given the disciples difficulty in understanding Jesus earlier teaching about His resurrection, they may have regarded the details as a little 'sketchy'. What were they waiting for? How long would they have to wait? Despite that, they were spending their waiting time in prayer.

However, as they met on that day of Pentecost, they could be in no doubt that what Jesus had promised had come to them. Firstly, there was the sound of a violent wind. After that, there was this visual sign which appeared like tongues of fire resting on each of them. Then they began to speak in other tongues (languages they hadn't learned) as the Spirit enabled them. So great was God's power to change their lives that they were immediately forced outside to tell the wonders of God to the many who had come to Jerusalem for the feast.

The gift of speaking in tongues has caused much discussion within the church down the years. I don't want to get into that here, although I will say that I know some who have this gift and greatly value it. It is a demonstration of God's power working through an individual. But I believe what happened next far exceeds that.

There were people in Jerusalem from many different nations and languages, yet each one heard the message of the wonders of God's love in their own language! If you've ever been abroad, there is something attractive and reassuring to hearing your own language being spoken. This drew everyone to where the disciples were to see what was going on. They could hear clearly what was being said.

We may not have to encounter language issues, but how clearly do we tell of what we believe. Towards the end of last year, I

was at a meeting in Norwich where we were considering how we communicated the Christian message with those without any church background, who knew little, if anything, of what we regard as familiar bible stories. Expressions we use, which might mean a lot to us, were meaningless to them. We need to communicate the gospel in ways that are clear to people today and to make sure they understand what we are saying.

We're told in v41 that 3000 believed and were added to their number that day and a few days later, a further 2,000. That was a real demonstration of God's power to change lives. Praise God for that.

Where does that leave us today, particularly in our present situation? We're told that we will need to get used to a 'new normal', whatever that means. I guess that's what the disciples had to get used to. Their normal was not going around listening to Jesus as He preached and performed miracles. It was them, empowered by the Holy Spirit going out and doing that same work.

I'm sure many will be desperate to get back into our church buildings, although how that will work with social distancing is uncertain. What is clear is that since churches started streaming services online, the number of people tuning into those is vastly greater than those who previously went into churches. Someone said that since lockdown, attendance in the Church of England has risen by 300%! Praise God if that's true!

That does mean that whatever the new normal looks like, it needs to include those who only have virtual contact with the Church. If we just go back to the way we were, we will have suffered much, but gained little.

We can however take comfort in the fact that the power of the Holy Spirit, so clearly demonstrated on that day of Pentecost is

still available to day, to help us, to empower us and to transform lives. It can even bring 'virtual Christians' through to a full and saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We have the promise in v21 that 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' Let's pray that we will see this happening to many in our land in these days.

♪ Oh to see the dawn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPFv-ywTY-c>

Time for prayer...

Let's take time to pray for:

- The leaders and decision-makers of our nation as we seek a way forward
- Other countries of the world facing the same dilemma
- The leaders and decision-makers of the church seeking a way forward that embraces all that we have learned during the closure of the buildings
- People we know who are ill, either with the coronavirus or other ailments
- People who are lonely or afraid
- Ourselves and our families, wherever they may be
- Awareness that Covid-19 is not the only news, and that this nation, and every nation is also dealing with many other social and political issues

You might want to pray aloud the prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples. Use whatever version or language you wish!

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

♪♪ **And can it be...**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu2uA6U4Fyg>

♪♪ **Men of faith rise up and sing**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUei3JMg2uA>

♪♪ **Hear the call of the Kingdom**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc>

A blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.
Amen