



Chet Valley Churches



Morning Worship
for the Seventh Sunday of Easter
16th May 2021

Welcome

Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Christ has ascended on high. **He reigns forever. Alleluia!**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord. Alleluia!**

We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.
We come boldly to the throne of grace.

♪ Hymn: All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall,
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him, crown him,
Crown him, crown him,
And crown him Lord of all.

Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
On this terrestrial ball,
To him all majesty ascribe,
And crown him, crown him,
Crown him, crown him,
And crown him Lord of all.

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at his feet may fall,
We at his feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown him, crown him,
Crown him, crown him,
And crown him Lord of all.



¶ Prayer & Confession

Almighty God, your Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence. Give us new hearts and constant wills to worship you in spirit and in truth: through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us give thanks to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

Before the world was made, God chose us in Christ,
that we might be holy and blameless before him.

Let us praise God for the glory of his grace, for the free gift he gave us in
his dear Son. To Father, Son and Holy Spirit give praise and dominion,
honour and might, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Jesus is our high priest, tempted like us, yet without sin. He lives forever in
heaven to intercede for us. Through him we approach the throne of grace
with confidence to confess our sins.

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:
Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:
Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:
Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins
and restore us in his image to the praise and glory
of his name through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn: Who Can Know

**Who can know
The mind of our creator?
Who can speak
Of wonders yet unseen?
Who can reach
The height of understanding?
To play the notes of Wisdom's melody?**

**Who has weighed
The dust of every mountain?
Who has walked
The mysteries of the deep?
Who has laid
The earth on its foundation?
And who conducts the waves upon the sea?**

**I stand in awe of you;
I stand in awe of you;
So glorious and true.
I stand in awe;
I stand in awe.**

**You have seen
The end from the beginning;
You have been
Before the world began.
You have reached
To me within my darkness,
And in the light of mercy now I see.**



First Reading: Acts 1:15-17; 21-26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred and twenty people) and said, ‘Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.

‘So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.’ So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

For the word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

Second Reading: 1 John 5:9-13

If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us

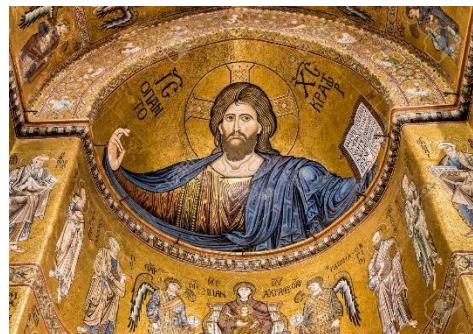
eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

For the word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

Hymn: Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

**Alleluia! Sing to Jesus;
His the sceptre, his the throne.
Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone.
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion
Thunder like a mighty flood;
“Jesus out of ev’ry nation
Has redeemed us by his blood.”**



**Alleluia! Not as orphans
Are we left in sorrow now.
Alleluia! He is near us;
Faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received him
When the forty days were o'er,
Shall our hearts forget his promise,
“I am with you evermore”?**

**Alleluia! King eternal,
Thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia! Born of Mary,
Earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne:
Thou within the veil hast entered,
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest;
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim
In the Eucharistic feast.**

Gospel Reading: John 17: 6-19

Jesus said: ‘I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and

they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

For the word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

Talk [Belinda]

'He was one of our number and had his place in this ministry'

One of the people we tend to forget all about at this point of the Resurrection story is Judas. Judas who had been one of the Twelve for three years, an essential member of the group, an active member of the small, hand-picked group of disciples. What a sad story his is, and how bitterly other members of the group must have felt it. When they mourned Jesus for those few days he must have been completely vilified by the rest of the group, but afterwards, after the resurrection, I wonder how they felt about him then? 'Alas for that man by whom he is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born,' as Jesus said to the disciples at the last supper.

There is a painting in the National Gallery of the agony in the garden, painted by Mantegna in about 1460. {See front cover.} If you look at it carefully you will see Judas in the background, leading a group of armed men towards the place where Jesus is praying. He is pointing to Jesus, but

in Mantegna's composition he is also pointing towards a tree, quite unwittingly pointing to the place where he will end his life. It's a tragic story, not least because forever afterwards a Judas is one who betrays what he or she holds dear. Having betrayed his friend to the authorities there was no going back. Whatever his motivation—and there has long been speculation about what his motives could have been (could it really have been for money?)—it couldn't be undone. Once the wheels were in motion the end was inevitable.

So here are the disciples now, one short, in the reading we heard from the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The Twelve represented the twelve tribes of Israel, which is why it was so important to make up the number again. Matthias is chosen and so the work of the early church can go ahead. But you can bet that many there would continue to be painfully aware of Judas' absence, and would be thinking over what had happened—perhaps even questioning whether they should have realised sooner, whether they should have stopped him, whether he had felt pushed out of the group: all the things that any of us feel when something bad happens. Could I have stopped it? Shouldn't I have known? It must have been an uncomfortable thing for Peter to contemplate too, knowing that he hadn't performed too well either, that he had denied knowing Jesus.

It must have raised all sorts of questions about trust within the group, making the remaining disciples determined to get it right this time, when they went through the process of seeking God's will in replacing Judas. They must have asked each other questions about it: how long had Jesus been aware that Judas was planning to betray him, to lead his enemies to him? Why had he let him go on? He kept Judas within the group with the knowledge that he really could not trust him. Did he have conversations with Judas to give him a chance, or did he realise the inevitability of it all—that it was all to do with fulfilling scripture? They couldn't know and nor can we, but in those days the disciples certainly saw the worst of human behaviour as well as the best.

I think it shows us that we are free to make our own decisions and that God gives each of us the opportunity to redeem ourselves, even those of us who are determinedly going wrong. In 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe', Edmund, the younger brother of the Pevensie family, shows some of the feelings that Judas may have experienced. He is a bit jealous of his older brother, he wants to find a role for himself and be admired for

himself, and of course the White Witch lures him in with that fatal offer of Turkish Delight, but, as C S Lewis tells us, deep down inside he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel. He leaves his brother and sisters at the Beavers' house and walks through the snow to find the witch and betray their whereabouts to her. Eventually he recognises that she is not the answer to any of his problems and—fortunately for him, it is a children's book after all—manages to get away and is reunited with his family. Aslan, the lion whom Lewis uses to represent Jesus, has a long talk with Edmund, and tells his siblings, 'here is your brother... there is no need to talk to him about what is past.' Sadly Judas himself never turned back and never was reunited with his family of Jesus' followers. For the rest of us, though, this is an option that remains open at all times, even when we may feel our actions place us beyond redemption. God's arms are always open to receive those who truly and earnestly repent. There is no need to dwell on what is past.

Was that an option for Judas? The Gospel writers are keen to point out that his betrayal fulfils scripture, notably Psalm 41: 'Even my friend whom I trusted, who ate at my table, exults over my misfortune', but knowing Jesus' attitude to those who have been caught out in wrongdoing, which Judas would have seen, he could have changed, he could have turned back. I wonder what was going through Judas' mind and how much he regretted the wheels he had set in motion by that fatal visit to the chief priests? He had bargained away Jesus' life and, it seems, having done that there was no other course he could take. At this point I must confess that there have been times in my life when I felt stuck on a particular course of action, long after I had realised it was the wrong thing to do. Perhaps you have experienced that too. It is one of the reasons why so many cold callers, whether in person or on the phone, are so successful—we tend to feel that having agreed to something, to go back on the agreement is impossible. Judas came to the point of no return. He had to go through with the betrayal—he knew it, and Jesus did too.

The road to hell is paved with 'if onlys'. If only I hadn't sent those clothes to the charity shop I would have a perfect match for this new blouse. If only I had bought that ____ when I saw it—never saw another! If only I had said something earlier. If only I had stopped and thought before I did it. If only I hadn't wasted all my opportunities. If only I had seen made up that argument before it was too late. If only I had apologised for being so stupid. If only I had realised that Jesus is always ready to listen. If only I had prayed

about it before I did it. If only I had listened to my prickling conscience and not just ploughed on. If only...

The one big thing we can learn from Judas is that we need to deal with those ‘if onlys’ before they become inevitable. It was too late when Judas tried to return the thirty pieces of silver. The die had already been cast: ‘I have brought an innocent man to his death!’ he said, but they replied ‘What is that to us? It is your concern.’ Terrible, heartless words.

Jesus’ life and teaching had shown that there is always a way back to God. There is not always a way of changing what has happened and we always have to live with the consequences of our actions, but God will never reject a repentant person. As Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees, there will be greater joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent. So let us pray that we shall be given the discernment to repent and turn back to the right path, at the right time, no matter what we have done wrong and that we may be welcomed back with those words that Aslan used, ‘there is no need to talk about what is past’.

As the writer of ‘The Cloud of Unknowing’ wrote in the fourteenth century, ‘In the twinkling of an eye heaven may be won or lost.’ Let’s make sure it is won.

And a last word on Judas—you may have read 40 words for 40 days this past Lent. This poem particularly struck me, used on the Saturday of Holy Week:

*In Mary's house the mourners gather
Sorrow pierces them like a nail.
Where's Mary herself meanwhile?
Gone to comfort Judas' mother.*

Love always trumps evil.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

♪ Hymn: Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun

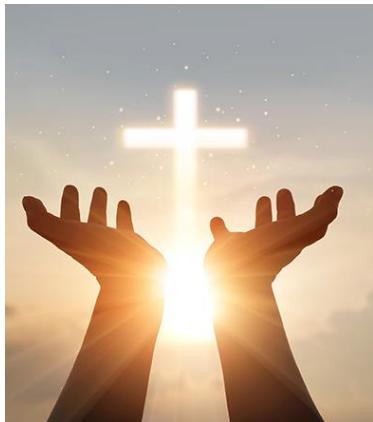
**Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
'Til moons shall wax and wane no more.**

**For him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown his head;
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.**

**People and realms of every tongue
Dwell on his love with sweetest song,
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on his name.**

**Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains;
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest.**

**Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honours to our King;
Angels descend with songs again,
And earth repeat the long Amen.**



Let Us Pray

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for in the ascension of your Son you have raised us on high and given us a glimpse of eternal life and the promise of your abiding presence. Blessed are you Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Risen and ascended Lord, you have promised to be with us always. Help us to rejoice in your presence and to proclaim you saving power. We ask your blessing upon all who preach the Good News, all who teach from the Scriptures and all who witness to you in their daily lives in this country and throughout the world.

Ascended Lord, King of kings, rule in our hearts and in the world.

Risen and ascended Lord, you are the King of kings. We pray for the time when the kingdoms of this world will be seen as your kingdom.

We ask your blessing upon all rulers, leaders and politicians, that at this time of suffering throughout the world, they may be guided by your rule.

We pray for all who are in captivity through injustice or tyranny remembering those suffering because of their faith.

Ascended Lord, King of kings, rule in our hearts and in the world.

Risen and ascended Lord, we rejoice that you are with us in our homes and in our daily lives especially, at this time of self-isolation.

May we be at home with you and know your presence with us, helping us to cope. We remember all who live in bad housing, squalor or deprivation. We pray for all who have been made homeless and for any who are suffering from broken relationships.

Risen and ascended Lord, **you are the King of kings.**

Risen and ascended Lord, we remember before you all who have lost hope and have no vision of glory. We pray for those who live mediocre lives and all who are caught up in crime, vice or drugs. We ask your blessing upon all who are ill from the virus in hospitals and care homes, and those who are ill for other reasons. We pray for your protection for all health workers and carers and we thank you for their dedication and skill.

We pray for those who are nearing death that they will not be anxious or afraid, and for those who minister to them.

Risen and ascended Lord, **you are the King of kings.**

Risen and ascended Lord, you have opened for us the gate of glory.

We rejoice in the fellowship of the saints and the faithful departed.

As we ask your blessing upon our loved ones departed from us, we commit this world, each other and ourselves to your unfailing love.

Merciful Father, accept our prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Lord's Prayer

**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.
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.**

♪ Hymn: King of Kings, Majesty

**King of kings, majesty, God of heaven living in me,
Gentle Saviour, closest friend,
Strong deliverer, beginning and end,
All within me falls at your throne:**

**Your majesty, I can but bow, I lay my all before you now.
In royal robes I don't deserve I live to serve your majesty.**

**Earth and heaven worship you, love eternal, faithful and true,
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls,
Brought this sinner near to your throne;
All within me cries out in praise:**

Your majesty, I can but bow...

Blessing

**Christ our ascended King pour upon you
the abundance of your gifts and bring you to rein with him in glory;
and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be upon you and those whom you love wherever they may be. Amen.**

