

Suggested Outline for Family Worship – Sunday 26th April 2020

Good morning everyone! I hope you're keeping well and thank you for joining us this week as we spend some time together as families and individuals in worship. We continue in lockdown, but the Lord has been kind to us with weather that enables us to get outside for some fresh air. There can't be many gardens that aren't in good shape by now – even I've been doing a bit! Please continue to look out for others, especially folks living close by who are on their own. And as you continue to remember everyone working in the health and social care sectors, including those who belong to us in Muckamore, please also pray for people who require urgent attention for other medical conditions and treatments for cancer, heart disease, kidney dialysis and so on.

If you've got internet access, here's a song to enjoy together – it's a great song of praise and thanks to God for his incredible love for us that's with us forever! It's "Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King" and you can watch/listen/join in by clicking this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGTZq3uCPm0>

If you don't have internet access, please play a suitable track from one of your CDs.

Please pray together, giving thanks for all his love and goodness to us and ask God to be with us as we read and think about what he says to us through the Bible passage we're looking at this morning.

Bible Reading: Matthew 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

If you have internet access, please click on the link which will take you to our Facebook page where you will find a video from Peter that includes the Devotion and a prayer. The video can be found here: www.facebook.com/muckamorepc

When the video is finished, please continue to worship together by praying for others and watching/singing along with the final song suggestion or a track from one of your own CDs.

If you haven't internet access, here's Peter's Devotion for you to read:

Ever since the current Coronavirus pandemic began, there's been a phrase that's been used again and again by politicians, journalists and broadcasters alike – "frontline staff". Who are they talking about? The health workers, social care workers – *everyone* involved in the treatment and care of patients and residents, especially those who have become ill from the virus. The word 'frontline', like many other words being used these days, has been deliberately chosen because of its association with war – we're *battling* against this dreadful and dangerous virus. Some of the pictures of staff working in intensive care units are reminiscent of soldiers protecting themselves against possible chemical or biological attack during conflicts in places like Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

War is such a terrible thing. It demonstrates all too clearly mankind's ability to treat one another in such inhuman ways – what we often describe as "man's inhumanity to man".

We're familiar with SASRA in Muckamore – the Soldier's and Airmen's Scripture Readers Association – and some of us have been following their "40 Days to Peace" devotionals which remind us that in just a few weeks' time, it'll be the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day – the day we commemorate the formal acceptance of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender by the World War II Allies on 8th May 1945. The conflict was over; the killing ceased; peace was declared – but an estimated total of 70–85 million people had perished, which was about 3% of the 1940 world population (est. 2.3 billion).

On the other hand, there are so many on the frontline in our hospitals and care homes these days who are proving how situations like we're facing at the moment can bring out the best in people as so many go above-and-beyond the call of duty to bring healing and comfort to others – some of their stories are being told on TV programmes from time to time at the moment. And we're also hearing about acts of kindness being done – like the 17 year old care worker, Kia Tobin, who gave 94-year-old D-Day veteran Ken Benbow a cushion with late wife's picture on it. Or the incredible fundraising achieved by another war veteran, 99-year-old Captain Tom Moore who completed 100 laps of his garden, walking with the aid of a frame, raising just short of £28million in the process at the time I recorded this! But you know what? Whether it's a war theatre or an intensive care theatre, from some of the images I've seen on TV, the frontline is a pretty hairy place to be — and the survival of everyone involved on these frontlines seems to depend on several crucial things: your commitment and devotion not just to duty but to your co-workers; having the right equipment and knowing how to use it properly; the quality of training you received and being able to put it into practice in the heat of the situation.

We, Christians, could do with taking a leave out of their book – sadly, very few of us even realise we've got anything in common with these folks – we lead very ordinary lives compared to them, typical 9-5 stuff with a bit of leisure-time involvement in church activities on a Sunday or during the week, sometimes – when we can spare the time. And yet, the reality is, Christians live on a frontline that can be every bit as demanding as any faced by a soldier on active duty in a war-zone or a health worker in an intensive care unit. Did you know that less than 7% of the population in the UK goes to worship on Sundays? And more and more these days, the 93% who don't go are becoming increasingly hostile towards Christians, not just on a church level but an individual level as well. And so we find ourselves on a frontline – living in what can be a hostile environment as we try to follow Jesus wherever we go, whatever we do, in whoever's company we are at any given moment in time. And we're here to make a difference.

Isn't that what Jesus told his disciples just before he returned to his Father? We call it the "Great Commission" – Matt 28:19-20 – *"go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"*. Jesus has sent us to make disciples – to take the message of forgiveness and restoration to others; to continue the work Jesus had begun on earth; to lead others to follow Jesus in the way we ourselves have learned to do. And this is something that applies to every Christian, man, woman and young person, not just for a few special people like missionaries. How do I know that? Through what Jesus says in the great commission. Sadly, most English translations of the Bible give us the wrong idea - "Go and make disciples" they say – not only do they make it an order but one that seems to imply a special 'mission' – whereas what Jesus originally says is "going" not "go" – for the grammar buffs among us it's a participle not an imperative! In other words, what Jesus is really saying is: *"as you go, make disciples..."*. It's about daily living. Jesus tells us we're to make disciples (there's the imperative) as we go about our daily lives; he's not setting up specialist

ministries for a chosen few – *every* Christian is to make disciples of people of all nationalities as a natural part of our *everyday* lives – wherever we go, whatever we do, in the routines of ordinary life, we are to make disciples. Do you see what that means? It means we're constantly living on the frontline; and on this frontline we're to make a difference. God has sent us to be salt and light; to bring some of the God-flavours and God-colours into an often bland and dreary world.

Wherever we are day by day, we're in a place to make a difference for God. Our country, our society, our community will only be transformed when Christian men, women and young people like ourselves put into practice in our daily lives the training we continue to receive through the preaching and teaching of God's Word in the life and worship of the church. One of the most encouraging things we can ever experience as Christians is when other people respond positively to us and the witness we give to Christ – not just *telling* others about Jesus but *showing* the difference he makes to our lives by the way we live. Sadly, of course, our witness can produce an *adverse* reaction in others, making them hostile to us and causing tension and friction that can lead to difficulties and even pain and distress for us in certain circumstances – sometimes in the extreme, as with our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world being persecuted and tortured for their faith. But, the positives far outweigh and outnumber the negatives and there's more encouragement than discouragement experienced through witnessing to Jesus.

People today are often made to feel as if we're not much more than a number, a statistic, a piece of data in a computer; a cog in some impersonal bureaucracy; a perpetual consumer helping to make someone else a healthy profit. Blandness, boredom, self-indulgence, mediocrity and compromise are the order of the day. Is there no escape? Is there nothing that can be done to change things?

Some religions claim to transform the lives of their followers by obedience to rules and regulations; others by mystical meditation, still others by unique spiritual knowledge. Only Christianity claims to do it by a personal relationship with someone who is as alive today as he was 2000 years ago, no longer with us as a living, breathing, human being but in spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. And as we welcome him into our lives, Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8 that the Holy Spirit enables us to live in the way he has called us to live – pointing others to him, making disciples “as we go” along the path he leads us at home, at school, in the workplace, in the local community – wherever we go, in fact! As long as there are people who haven't heard of Jesus; as long as people cry out for satisfaction; as long as people's lives are blighted by sin – their own and other people's; as long as people try to fill their lives with something other than God - as long as these things continue, so, too, does the mission Jesus began and handed on to his followers to continue: to make disciples *as we go* – frontline staff with a call to go above and beyond 'duty' with the help of the Holy Spirit to introduce the people around us to Jesus and the difference he can make to all of our lives.

Now watch/listen/sing along with this song in which we say: “Holy Spirit... bring the presence of the risen Lord to renew my heart and make me whole” – it's 'Holy Spirit, living breath of God' – here's the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDYjn-YdnD4>
If you don't have internet access, please play a suitable track from one of your CDs.

Please pray for others as you finish, perhaps picking up on some of the thoughts in the introduction above.

Activity for Children: (thanks, Hayley!)

When I think of amazing things, I remember all the times that something has made me say 'WOW', and this always happens when I got to do some scientific experiments at home. So today that's what we are going to do. For this experiment you will need some water with baking soda and in another cup you will need some vinegar, but please make sure that you do this with your children outside and also maybe wear some older clothes, just in case. *(this also works with fizzy juice and Mentos, but just whatever is in your house).*

Before you add in the vinegar, ask your children:

- 1) What do you think is going to happen?

Hopefully, if this works for you there will be an amazing overflow when you add the vinegar. We are going to use this amazing science experiment to help us think about another amazing gift that God has given us.

Last week it was brilliant to see many of you organising your own family relay race. As we passed on the baton we were remembering what we are 'to pass on' in our everyday lives, and that is the amazing truth that Jesus died for us because he loves us but that he rose again and showed that he is stronger and greater than anything else.

We know that this is an incredible thing that God wants us to do, but we can still often find it very difficult to do, and on our own strength we wouldn't be able to do it. Over the last few weeks we have thought about some of the things that God has given us to help us live for him, so that in everything thing that we do or say, people around us can know who God is, how much he loves them and how much they need him in their lives too.

- 1) When we painted our stones and made pebble pictures we thought about the church, the people that also love and follow God and God has given us these people so that we can support and encourage each other (also thought about this as we encouraged each other in our relay races)
- 2) When we built our forts, we thought about God's own words that he has given us in the bible so that we can read them and remember the truth that he tells us
- 3) As we created and designed our unique musical instruments, we were reminded that we are to worship God and there's many opportunities that he has provided us with so that we can do that, and we specifically thought about praising him through music.

The disciples were also told to go into the world and show and tell people about God and what he had done for them through Jesus in everything that they did and said, but they were feeling scared about it, as Jesus was going to be with his father in Heaven and would no longer be walking alongside them as man, but Jesus promised that he would be with them, even closer this time. Jesus gives us something else, and that is his holy spirit and we are going to read about this now *(at this point watch the video that has been posted of Hayley reading from the Jesus storybook bible – www.facebook.com/muckamorepc).* If you can't do this, please read John 16:12-15.

The disciples then went and used all the normal everyday things in their lives to 'pass this baton' of amazing news on to others because God had given them his holy spirit to live inside of them and they were so excited to tell everyone 'Jesus loves you'. God promises that he will always be with us, and this is because for those of us who love and follow God, he lives inside us, helping us as we are not strong enough to be able to do it on our own.

Ask your children:

- 1) How does it make you feel that God has given us his Holy Spirit to be with us all time?

Let's think back to our science experiment today, and how when the vinegar was poured into our cup, there was an incredible reaction and overflow, it helps us think about the incredible potential of God's power working in us. God's holy spirit enables us to do things which we cannot do on our own, but it also means that we are never on our own. Take time as a family to thank God for all the amazing things that he gives us to help us and especially that when we choose to follow him, he gives us his Holy spirit so that we are never on our own.

We look forward to seeing some pictures and videos of how your scientific experiments turn out this week. Send them through to Hayley (07598329604) and they can be posted up on the Church Facebook page.