

Suggested Outline for Family Worship – Sunday 3rd May 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. The 'stay at home' restrictions are still in place but we hope you'll have a sense of a shared experience with other members of the fellowship as we follow this outline in our various home settings. Please continue to look out for others, especially folks living close by who are on their own.

If you've got internet access, here's a song to enjoy together – it's a great song of praise that declares "The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!" You can watch/listen/join in by clicking this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3-C4jp7BNw>
If you don't have internet access, please play a suitable track from one of your CDs.

Please pray together, giving thanks for the world God has made and for his incredible love for us as people, asking him 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: Acts 2:22-41

"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence." "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

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

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

“About turn!” - Acts 2:1-41

Open air services are almost a thing of the past these days – you used to hear the voice of a preacher over a loudspeaker during the summer months at seaside towns like Portstewart but it’s ages since I remember that happening on the Prom! I suppose the last time I heard of open-air witnesses being held was when some of our young folks in Muckamore were involved in Worship Ireland with George Barkley as they travelled to different towns around Ireland during the summer to sing and speak and talk to people on the streets.

They were following in great footsteps, of course, because most of Jesus’ earthly ministry took place outdoors, in fields and open spaces around Galilee & Judea and in the streets and courts of the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was a master of his craft – often taking things that were going on around him or being said by the people in the crowd and weaving them into his preaching – just look at the many parables he told during his earthly ministry and you’ll see how true that is. But what about his disciples? Could they carry on where he left off? Did they have what it takes to carry on where Jesus left off? Judging from the book of Acts, the answer is ‘yes they did’ – take Acts 2, for example, and look at the way Peter spoke to the crowd in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost – the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples just as Jesus had promised before he’d left them. And what a change that made in Peter – this was the man who couldn’t even admit to knowing Jesus just a couple of months earlier yet here he was now, taking his cue from the hecklers who were accusing the disciples of being drunk! “So, you think we’ve had too much to drink, do you? Well, let me tell you, it’s only nine o’clock in the morning, and I can assure you we’re stone cold sober! What you’re seeing here today isn’t intoxication but inspiration! It was predicted years ago, centuries ago, by the prophet Joel...”, and so he goes on to drive his message home to them with powerful effect. What was that message? – v.36 tells us: “God has made this Jesus, whom the Jews crucified, both Lord and Christ”. Well, what’s so important about that? What has it got anything to do with their lives? With our lives? With anyone’s lives? Peter quite brilliantly begins to open their eyes to things they’d never seen before by focusing on two important facts – one concerning the fulfilment of things God said long ago; the other concerning the true identity of Jesus. First, he says v.16: “what you see this morning was predicted centuries ago by the prophet Joel”. God has kept his Word and the events of that morning are the proof of it. The prophet Joel had been speaking about God’s promise to bring his people back to life, so to speak, to make them alive to God once again and that revival would be marked by the coming of God’s Spirit, the Holy Spirit, into the world. Back in OT times, God’s Spirit had only been given to particular people, at particular times, for particular purposes. But now, all believers would be gifted in some special way by God through the power of the Holy Spirit at work within them. Signs and wonders were to accompany the arrival of the Spirit – but then, that’s what always happens when the LORD makes his presence felt in the world. Strange things happen; people act in strange ways; even nature and the natural elements are affected at times. Joel confirmed that by predicting there would be special events and activities that would clearly show that the Lord had come down among his people once again. And upon the Spirit’s arrival “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved”. The Gospel, the good news of salvation, is now a reality, not just a dream! “Yes”, Peter testifies to them, “God really can save”. Not only has he sent his Spirit into the world, but his promised Saviour has also come. Who is this Saviour? Who is this ‘Lord’ who will save everyone who calls on him? He is none other than ‘Jesus of Nazareth’, whom they killed, but whom God raised from the dead. Four facts stand out about Jesus. He was a ‘man’ – a living, breathing human being who was well known by everyone in Galilee and Judea at that time. Not only that, but he was a man whom “God publicly endorsed by doing miracles and wonders and signs through him” – something that was well accepted by the people who witnessed his power at first hand. It

was also common knowledge that he had been put to death as a result of some Jews seeing that he was nailed to a cross like a common criminal at the hands of the Romans. But Jesus had not remained dead, for “God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death”, and there were plenty of witnesses who could corroborate that claim. Death was no match for him. Death could not keep its hold on him, unlike the great David, the greatest King that Israel had ever known and who was still regarded as a legend by the people. But David was dead – his tomb was there for all to see. So he couldn’t possibly have been speaking of himself when he said in Ps 16 “you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay”. So there was only one possible explanation for it: he was speaking of the resurrection of the Christ, the Messiah, God’s appointed Saviour. He would not be abandoned to the grave, nor would his body see decay; God would raise him up and give him life. And that’s exactly what had happened – Jesus, God’s Saviour, the Christ, the Messiah, had been raised up from the dead.

But Peter realised that the next obvious question in the minds of the people listening to him at that time was “well, where is this risen Jesus? Why can’t he come here himself and tell us all this if he’s alive?” Peter pre-empts things by going on to describe how, having completed what he came to do, Jesus had gone back to the Father, received from him the promised Holy Spirit and had now poured out that same Spirit upon his people – which is what they were witnessing through the things they were seeing and hearing that morning.

Their response? “When the people heard this”, says v.37, “they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” For the first time in their lives, they truly recognised the reality of their condition before God; they were convicted of their sin. Peter knew that and so he tells them that what they need to do is to repent and identify themselves with Jesus in a public way by being baptised – the long-accepted method of showing people that you were turning over a new leaf; that you were turning from your old way of living to living God’s way.

This was no easy thing for them to do – it never is for any of us. It would mean swallowing their pride, admitting their shortcomings and recognising that the only thing they could do about their sin was to rely upon what Jesus had accomplished on the cross in order to secure forgiveness and salvation. The very person they’d rejected was the very person they’d have to embrace if they were serious about putting things right with God.

And so it for us – repairing our broken relationship with God takes more than just saying ‘sorry’ and promising not to do it again. It needs more than just a superficial papering over the cracks – it needs a root and branch change of heart. That’s what repentance is all about – not just feeling sorry for the wrong things we’ve done, but being prepared to leave behind our old self-centred way of life and embrace a new way of life that’s centred on Jesus - putting our trust in him instead of ourselves; learning how we ought to live from his example and teaching instead of following our own notions about how we ought to do it. And on top of that, trusting Jesus brings something into our lives that no one else ever could – the Holy Spirit – and when the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, he enables us to live in a way that’s pleasing and acceptable to God – dying more and more to sin, living more and more to Jesus. Has that been your response to the good news about Jesus? Have you turned from living life your own way to living it God’s way?

Now watch/listen/sing along with this song in which we say: “Jesus, be the centre... the reason that I live...” – here’s the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EG-l1kK-BpU>
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 thinking about people who’ve been advised to stay indoors for 12 weeks; who are receiving treatment for cancer and other illnesses; who are caring for family members with dementia/learning disabilities; who’ve been bereaved.

Activity for Children: (thanks, Hayley!)

Today, before we start our children's activity, a little bit of preparation will need to take place so that we can all have our own Treasure Hunts at home. This can be done either inside or outside and if you want to just hide items and get the children to find them, or if you want to set up clues beforehand, that is completely up to you. As you carry out your treasure hunt, ensure to focus on the fact that these objects are lost and that your children need to find them.

After you have completed your Treasure Hunt, gather around the screen and watch 'The Prodigal Son' by Saddleback Kids on YouTube. Whilst watching it, ask your children to be on the lookout for all the times that the younger son's life changes.

<https://youtu.be/DJgROx4wFKM>

(If you cannot access this for any reason, then you can find the parable in Luke 15:11-32).

In this story we see the younger son's life go through many changes.

Ask your children:

Where do we see changes happen in the younger son's life? (This could be in how he acts, how much money he has, who he is with, where he is and how he feels)

- 1) The son moves away from home and the people he knows, he has a lot more money in his pocket than he had before, he travels to a new place with new people & he spends his day very differently
- 2) He then finds himself with no money, no friends & working with pigs. He is hungry and feeling very alone. He starts to think about home and how even his father's servants at home were looked after far better than he was now. He starts to feel sorry.
- 3) He goes home to his father and he asks him to forgive him. He asks to be treated as one of his servants and he is so sorry for how he treated him.

At the beginning of this parable we meet a young man who wasn't happy with everything he had in his life, but he wanted even more. He wanted to be able to do whatever he wanted and he thought that would make him feel really happy. He didn't care how much he had hurt his father or even how his older brother who was still at home would feel.

When we see the younger son return home, we now see a man who wants his father to accept him back as a servant and that would be so much better than the life he found himself living by doing what he wants. What a change we see in this younger son! He is sorry, and we see that, but 'sorry' isn't just a word that he says but it is wanting to change the way that he has been living, which has been all about him. Now, he wanted a life that will be focused on his father who forgave him and who never stopped loving him and never stopped calling him 'son'.

'Found it!' I wonder how many times this phrase was shouted out today during your Treasure Hunt? That's what your children were doing, they were finding things, and now these objects are no longer lost to them, and it feels amazing, it brings us so much joy, even just in a DIY Treasure Hunt at home.

On Easter Sunday we remembered that without God our lives are empty, and it is only because of God and with God that our lives can be really full. God loves all of us so much and that is why he wants to have a relationship with us, but we need to be sorry for how we have done wrong things that hurt him and we need to ask God to forgive us. Just like the Son in story, this 'sorry' isn't just a 5-letter word but it means change. It means that we are

no longer lost, but now that we have been found, how we think about ourselves and who we are is to be different from how we were. The amazing truth is that because of God we can be different, so we need to want to be ready for change and start living the amazing life that God has planned for us.

I hope you enjoy the Treasure Hunt today as family and really take time to think about what changes happen in going from being lost to being found. We look forward to seeing your Treasure hunts so send pictures or videos through to Hayley (07598329604) and they will be uploaded to the Church Facebook page.