**Cranmer Group Sermon, Worship & Prayers**

**September 27th**

**The 16th Sunday after Trinity**

The Lord be with you **And also with you.**

**The Collect for The 16th Sunday after Trinity   
(Book of Common Prayer)**

O Lord, we beseech thee, let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour, preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.   
**Amen.**

**All My Hope on God Is Founded**

**Played by Deborah Davies**

All my hope on God is founded;

he doth still my trust renew,

me through change and chance he guideth,

only good and only true.

God unknown,

he alone

calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,

sword and crown betray his trust;

what with care and toil he buildeth,

tower and temple fall to dust.

But God's power,

hour by hour,

is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,

deep his wisdom, passing thought:

splendour, light and life attend him,

beauty springeth out of naught.

Evermore

from his store

new-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the Almighty Giver

bounteous gifts on us bestow;

his desire our soul delighteth,

pleasure leads us where we go.

Love doth stand

at his hand;

joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal

sacrifice of praise be done,

high above all praises praising

for the gift of Christ, his Son.

Christ doth call

one and all:

ye who follow shall not fall.

**Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 31:1-8 (New International Version)**

**Read by Pam Loughna**

***Joshua to succeed Moses***

*1 Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: 2 ‘I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The Lord has said to me, “You shall not cross the Jordan.” 3 The Lord your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the Lord said. 4 And the Lord will do to them what he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, whom he destroyed along with their land. 5 The Lord will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.’*

*7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, ‘Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. 8 The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.’*

**Gospel Reading: John 20:11-18 (New International Version)**

**Read by Rev. Tim Chambers**

***Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene***

*11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.*

*13 They asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying?’*

*‘They have taken my Lord away,’ she said, ‘and I don’t know where they have put him.’ 14 At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.*

*15 He asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?’*

*Thinking he was the gardener, she said, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.’*

*16 Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’*

*She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means ‘Teacher’).*

*17 Jesus said, ‘Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’*

*18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: ‘I have seen the Lord!’ And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

**Sermon: ‘Called to be…Hopeful’ – Rev. Tim Chambers**

“What are we waiting for?” “And what are we going to do about it in the meantime?” With these two questions, the theologian Tom Wright starts his book, ‘Surprised by Hope’.

Cast your minds back, if you will, to this last Tuesday. At 8pm, the Prime Minister gave his latest address to our country, telling us the grim news of the latest Coronavirus statistics, and formally announcing the introduction of new nationwide restrictions, most likely for months to come. Tuesday was also, it seemed, in practice the very last day of summer; a final evening on which I walked Ella across the fields in nothing more than a t-shirt and shorts. In all honesty, I was filled with a real sense of heaviness, at the return to colder, shorter days, and with the prospect of an increasingly torrid, Covid-preoccupied winter to come. How would I – would we – cope?

“What are we waiting for?” A vaccine – of course.

“And what are we going to do about it in the meantime?” Return – maybe partly, maybe fully - to the lockdown hardships that marked our spring, but without the commonality of purpose and spirit that marked those first weeks; with an increasing sense of frustration and resentment; and with a rising tide of economic pain and social distress.

Except that these two responses to Tom Wright’s questions are the answers *of the world*. They’re the answers of the atheist and the agnostic; of those who put their faith completely in the explanations of science *alone*; who choose *not* to entertain the possibility that there are answers that don’t *undermine* the science, but which *complement* it; which often answer very different questions – not just the “What?” or the “How?” of a situation, but the profound “Why?” underlying it as well.

The Christian story, it’s sometimes said, starts at the end, and works backwards from there. What, in Wright’s words, we’re *ultimately* *all* waiting for is nothing less, than the coming once again of Jesus Christ, at the end of time, as we know it. As St. Paul says in his letter to the Colossians, it’s the reconciling of all things, in and through the person of the resurrected Jesus, to God the Father. *This* is what we’re waiting for. This is what makes *all* the difference. In fact, if, in our Christian faith, we don’t have an engagement with, and understanding of, what’s called by theologians, “eschatology” – the study of end times – then, as rather more belligerent non-Christians (and Christians!) have said, we might as well just pack up and go home!

If Jesus Christ did *not* die on the cross, and did *not* rise again on the third day; did *not* ascend into heaven; and will *not* come to judge the living and the dead; then the Christian faith – as we declare it in these words in the Creed - makes no sense whatsoever. If there is no triumph over sin and death in the person of Jesus Christ; a triumph in which *we* can participate through faith in this same risen Jesus; / if there is no victory, then all the rest that we profess - however good or moral it may be - is, frankly, meaningless.

But if it *is* true – and the witness of Scripture, not to say the lives of countless millions of Christians since the time of Jesus lead us to believe that it is – then *everything* changes.

We read in the accounts of the four Evangelists how the followers of Jesus thought that all had come to an end that first Good Friday. The faithful women and John remained at the foot of the cross, but then they too dispersed; they went into hiding, fearful of the authorities, thinking that all Christ’s teachings and miracles from the previous three years had all been in vain.

Peter and John go to the tomb, and find it empty. Then we see Mary Magdalene, in this morning’s Gospel reading, first blinded from seeing the truth, by her grief, but then - as Jesus calls to her by name: “Mary!” – brought into a realisation that the man whom she’d see die on a cross three days previously, was standing before her once again now, more fully alive than ever; more fully alive than anyone before or since. As she rushes to tell her fellow disciples, “I have seen the Lord!”

We see the transformation of Christ’s small band of followers, throughout the Book of Acts, inspired by the Holy Spirit, into ‘an Easter people’; a group whose lives are transformed by the knowledge of where – thanks to the self-sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus - they are ultimately going. A people who, in the words of the late, great American pastor and theologian, Eugene Peterson, “practise resurrection”. A people of hope.

As the church, we are called to be a people of hope. Not the hope that the *world* knows. Not the sort of hope that writes in a birthday card, “*Hope* you have a great day!” without any real control over whether our friend’s birthday may turn out amazingly, or awfully. Not hope based just on wishful thinking.

Rather, we’re called to be hopeful in the knowledge of *absolute* certainty – the certainty that we see in the multiple Gospel accounts of witnesses to Jesus’s resurrection, and in which we can trust, knowing that - through our faith in the risen Jesus - we are *certain* of our ultimate destiny.

And we’re called to be hopeful, secure in the promises that God makes in the Bible to those who love and follow him; the truth of which speaks to us as much now as it did to them two thousand or more years ago. Certain, in times of hardship and struggle, of the *faithfulness* of God. As Joshua is called to receive the baton of leadership over the Israelites, the dying Moses reminds him of God’s promises to those who love Him: “The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

How then - perhaps especially now, in a time of such great challenge for us; personally, as communities, as a nation and indeed on a global level – how then are we to ‘practise resurrection’; to practise this hopefulness to which we’re called as the people of God?

I read in yesterday’s Guardian a report entitled, “Dreading a dark winter lockdown? Think like a Norwegian.” Perhaps surprisingly, psychologists have found that, the further north Norwegians live - and thus the gloomier and colder the winter conditions to which they’re subjected - the more likely they are to *embrace* the harshness of the weather, and not find themselves weighed down by it. It is apparently possible to cultivate a way of being, surrounded by winter gloom, through the mentality with which one approaches it.

I wonder whether it may surprise you, if I were to say that, in a not dissimilar way, living as people of hope is something that is necessary to *cultivate*. Yes, we have the Biblical assurances that God will never leave us and forsake us. Yes, we’ve seen this eternal hope that comes from the risen Jesus, at work in the lives of others, present-day or historical. But to be truly a *living* people of hope, let’s make that hope a lifelong spiritual discipline. The cultivation of hope is like that of love; it’s an intentional practice, which takes a lifetime.

Hope requires us to be engaged, even if that is, at times, only in tiny ways, which may perhaps seem insignificant to us. But God has a habit of using the smallest and weakest to give the greatest witness to His Kingdom. Find concrete ways of bringing about good in the world, to build hope within yourself, & in others.

Second, cultivate a spiritual practice. If you don’t do so already, read scripture and pray each day. Follow the Lectionary readings and reflections; or the Bible in One Year series; or the Lectio 365 app, perhaps, for those of you who are more tech-savvy. Find your place and your time where daily you meet with God in his Word, and in the quiet conversation of prayer. Find what works for you! And if you would like help to find something, do ask me!

And third, if you wish to cultivate hope in your life, and in the lives of others, don’t journey alone. There is an African proverb, “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”

But we are called to be hopeful, not just for ourselves, that we may find joy in our own lives, but we are called as the church to bring the hope that we find in Jesus, to *others*, to share it, that they might know the light of Christ shining in their lives.

Be an encourager. Build people up through your words. Give them hope that their efforts can, through the Spirit working in them, bear beautiful fruit. If this coming winter is going to be so tough, rather as many of us have just picked and stored and preserved nourishing fruits and vegetables from our gardens, to sustain us through the winter, do the same with your words.

Second, share the Good News of the Gospel with others, in deed and in word. Bring hope and gratitude through *acts* of service for others where you’re able (and receive them too!), but if we don’t share with others where our *ultimate* hope comes from, that gives us eternal security, then we risk becoming Social Care, not the church.

And, third, open up new possibilities. The Kingdom of God never stands still; the people of God are always on the move, journeying together where the Spirit leads us.

“What are we waiting for?”

The certainty that Jesus Christ will return once again.

“And what are we going to do about it in the meantime?”

Let’s each one of us – not only this winter, but perhaps *especially* so in this coming season - / let’s do all we can, *together*, as Jesus’ disciples; to follow in his footsteps, guided by the Holy Spirit, seeking to bring something of the Father’s Kingdom into the here and now, in the lives of those around us.

May each one of us be a light in the darkness; beacons of hope, bearing Christ’s promise of life & love to a hurting world.

In his holy name I pray, Amen.

**Intercessions**

**Led by Rev. Tim Chambers**

**Loving Shepherd of Thy sheep   
Played by Deborah Davies**  
Loving Shepherd of Thy sheep,

Keep Thy lamb, in safety keep;

Nothing can Thy power withstand;

None can pluck me from Thy hand.

Loving Saviour, Thou didst give

Thine own life that we might live;

And the hands outstretched to bless

Bear the cruel nails' impress.

We would praise Thee every day,

Gladly all Thy will obey,

Like Thy blessed ones above

Happy in Thy precious love.

Loving Shepherd, ever near,

Teach Thy lambs Thy voice to hear;

Suffer not our steps to stray

From the strait and narrow way.

Where Thou leadest we would go,

Walking in Thy steps below,

Till before our Father's throne

We shall know as we are known.

**The Lord’s Prayer**As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

**Lord of all hopefulness   
Played by Deborah Davies**

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,

Whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,

Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,

Your bliss in our hearts, Lord,

At the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,

Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,

Be there at our labours and give us, we pray,

Your strength in our hearts, Lord,

At the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindliness, Lord of all grace,

Your hands swift to welcome, Your arms to embrace.

Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,

Your love in our hearts, Lord,

At the eve of the day.  
  
Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,

Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,

Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,

Your peace in our hearts, Lord,

At the end of the day.

**A Closing Blessing**

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,   
defend you on every side,  
and guide you in truth and peace;   
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you & remain with you always.  
**Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**