

Informal Worship Tuesday 5th May 2020

We stand before the throne of God with countless crowds from every nation and race, tribe and language.
Salvation belongs to our God! Alleluia!

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet; praise him with the harp and lyre.

Praise him with tambourine and dancing; praise him with the strings and the flute.

Praise him with the clash of cymbals; praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

Please take a moment of stillness and silence.

The word of God is living and active. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. All is open and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we give account. And so, we confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Almighty God, long suffering and of great goodness: we confess to you with our whole hearts our neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments; our wrong doing, thinking and speaking; the hurts we have done to others, and the good we have left undone.

O God, forgive us, for we have sinned against you; and raise us to newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom which cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Song of Salvation

Behold God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my strength and my song: and he has become my salvation.

With joy you will draw water: from the wells of salvation.

On that day you will say: Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name.

Make known his deeds among the nations: proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing praises to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously: let this be known in all the earth.

Shout and sing for joy, you that dwell in Zion: for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Glory to the Father, and to the son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever. Amen.



Reading

Acts 11v19-29 New International Version (NIV)

The Church in Antioch

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Pause for Thought

One of the key phrases that keeps getting used is "we live in strange times" but looking at our reading from Acts it becomes very apparent that they were experiencing something that was far from normal.

Stephen's death was the first of a great wave of persecution that swept over the church in Jerusalem, and after his death, the early believers fled from Jerusalem to find safe havens from persecution. One of the places they scattered too in was Antioch a cosmopolitan and diverse city. But they did not forget to tell their new neighbours, their new friends and the people they met day by day about Jesus and His good news, and we are told that, "the power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord .

When the church in Jerusalem heard about this, I'm sure they were very curious, maybe even concerned so sent Barnabas to have a look. Now this could have been like an Ofsted inspection, to ensure that the church in Antioch was doing things the right way. So, they sent Barnabas a man they could trust – a godly and faith filled man to get the Antioch church under control.

Barnabas probably saw a lot of things during his visit, no doubt he also saw a lot of imperfection in these new converts. A church made up of people from such different backgrounds as those in Antioch was bound to have some irritations and conflicts. But rather than focusing on the imperfections and problems, Barnabas focused on God's grace in saving these people. Instead of slapping a bunch of Jewish rules on them, he rejoiced at what God was doing, and then began to encourage them to remain true to the Lord.

Barnabas was a man who had a reputation for being an encourager, in fact we are told elsewhere that Barnabas was just his nickname meaning "son of encouragement".

Barnabas' heart was to honour God through the building up of His church, and at some point, he began to realise that the work in Antioch was a big job, so he left Antioch and travelled the 100 miles to Tarsus to search for Saul. Barnabas was not threatened to bring this gifted man back to Antioch to share in the work with him. Eventually, he took a back seat to Paul's leadership in their endeavours for the church.

It's from this time of God's Spirit moving in Antioch that we see the beginning of a worldwide church, this is the first inclusive church welcoming Jews and gentiles, the first missionaries, and the first act of generous financial giving for another local church community, And it's here in Antioch that believers were first

named Christians, or “enthusiasts of Christ.” It maybe that this was used by the city folk in jest, the early believers embraced as a fitting title to describe their new identity.

So, in these days of lockdown how can we be Gods church, within these restrictions what can we do to serve God. The church in Antioch responded to God’s love by telling others about a God of who cares for them and wants them in His family, they accepted everyone and allowed God to mould and transform them into His ways - to display His fruits of the spirit. And the leaders set the example and taught them from God’s Word. The Antioch church were generous givers, they gave money to help care for others. trusting God to meet their needs.

What are some ways we can respond to help people? Well the answer is simple – Share Gods love, and we can always pray and sing to God as we respond to Him. We can be a beacon of hope to others, we can share what we have. We can show kindness to others, and we can be like Barnabas and be encouragers.

As we do church apart from each other at this time, let’s look forward to the day when we can do this together as a church serving our community as God intends for us to do.

Prayers

Dear God, we pray that we might be like the church in Antioch, sharing Your good news with those that we meet. Give us the confidence to reach out to our community in this way. Help us to reflect your goodness through our actions and the way we care for others. Help us to be generous in all we do. Help us to share your compassion and love for all. Help us to seek your justice and mercy as we deal with issues and problems. May we reflect you in the way we build relationships with all.

We pray for our Government, that they may seek your wisdom and guidance at this time as they work to overcome Covid-19. May they be an example of care and love for the weakest in our society. We pray for the medical researcher as they look for a cure, that they may know your knowledge and understanding into this area

In a moment of quiet we pray for those who are not well and need your comfort in body, mind and spirit, Lord bring your healing and care to those that need you at this time.

We pray for ourselves that we might continue to serve you with the love you have shared with us. May the church in Antioch inspire us to serve as your church in this place, may we be known as a church of encouragement and followers of you.

The 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 forever. Amen.

The Blessing

God of power, may the boldness of your Spirit transform us, may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us, may the gifts of your Spirit equip us to serve and worship you now and always. **Amen.**

Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ Amen

