

Bride Valley Telephone Service: Sunday 30th July 2023

A Service of Thanksgiving for the ministry of the Reverend Jane Williams BSc BA
Rector of the Bride Valley Churches

Welcome and Opening Prayers

Hymn: Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven
Feed me till I want no more.
Feed me till I want no more.

Strong deliverer, strong deliverer
Be thou still my strength and shield.
Be thou still my strength and shield.

Open thou the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream shall flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.
I will ever give to thee

First Reading: Ecclesiastes 3.1-8,11

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

He has made everything suitable for its time; more over he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Second reading: Ephesians 3.4-21

A reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known

to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him. I pray therefore that you may not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reflection

There is so much I want to say to you today that we would have been here a long time, so I've stuck with 2 things, and I have fallen back on St Paul.

One is a thanksgiving for all that you are, the other is a prayer for you as I leave.

In Colossians Chapter 1 verse 3, Paul says:

In our prayers for you we always **thank** God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for we have heard of your faith in Jesus and the love you have for all the saints.

Firstly, I want to thank you

- Thank you for allowing me to be me. Priests are formed by the people they serve. You have moulded me. A wise priest once said that a good shepherd smells of their sheep and knows them by name. I hope you feel that you have known me and that I am one of you.
- I will always thank God for your faithfulness. Thank you for your faith and for keeping the rumour of God alive in this place. It would just be great if others say of us that they have heard of our faith and how we serve others
- Thank you for everything that you do in our communities, you truly are salt and light here. You care for the saints (that is each other and for others) without even realising what you are doing and I absolutely love you for it. May you continue to bear fruit, living and telling the story of Jesus.

The second thing is that wonderful reading from Ephesians:

Paul prays for four things, and as I leave this is also my prayer for you;

- That the Spirit of God would continue to strengthen you with power
- That Christ would always dwell in your hearts
- That you will have the power to comprehend how wide, long and deep is the love of Christ
- That you may be filled with the fullness of God.

The word power occurs three times

In verse 16 'power through his Spirit'

In verse 18 'power to comprehend'

And in verse 20 'power at work within us'.

If you want to build up your bodily strength you go to the gym. Strengthening your inner resolve is more of a challenge. Self-discipline, the power of positive thinking are worthwhile but often don't seem to bring the strength that we desire. We need inner power from beyond ourselves and that is the power of God's Holy Spirit.

And that's is also my prayer for you.

I pray you have the power to comprehend the sheer scale of Christ's love. It isn't just with our heads that we need to get this, but with our hearts and our whole being. So Paul prays that the Spirit may give us the power to get it, to comprehend it and to be filled. Notice that it is not something that we can do on our own. 'Comprehend with all the saints' We need the insights and experiences of other Christians to add to our own limited understanding of Christ's love.

Later in Ephesians Paul urges the Christians to "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power and to pray at all times"

And so, I leave you with this insight, prayer changes things, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind about that. I have come across scientific evidence, but I have also witnessed it throughout my life. Pray to God, who knows everything about you and cares for you more than you will ever properly know.

Let us pray: We thank you God, for the power of your love, able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. Amen.

Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

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

Final Hymn: To God be the glory

To God be the glory great things He has done
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin
And opened the life gate that all may go in

Chorus

*Praise the Lord praise the Lord
Let the earth hear His voice
Praise the Lord praise the Lord
Let the people rejoice
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son
And give Him the glory
great things He has done*

2. O perfect redemption the purchase of blood
To every believer the promise of God
The vilest offender who truly believes
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives

Chorus

3. Great things He has taught us
Great things He has done
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son
But purer and higher and greater will be
Our wonder our transport when Jesus we see

Chorus

The Blessing

The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with us all now and always. **Amen**