

Virtual Service for the Linton Team of Churches The Fifth Sunday after Trinity 12 July 2020

Today we join in a celebration of Faith, Hope, Love and Community, which some of our number will be celebrating in the churchyard in an outdoor service at 10am. It is hoped this service will be on St Mary's Linton Facebook page as a 'Facebook Live video', which you can watch at the time, or afterwards. However, following this service in a written form also remains a very real way of being together in spirit with our fellow members of St Mary's.

You may like to have four candles ready to light during the Intercessions.

Grace, mercy and peace
From God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ
Be with us all. **Amen**

Hymn

1 Love is his word,
love is his way,
feasting with all, fasting alone,
living and dying, rising again,
love, only love, is his way.

*Richer than gold is the love of my Lord:
better than splendour and wealth.*

2 Love is his news,
love is his name,
we are his own, chosen and called,
sisters and brothers, parents and kin.

*Richer than gold is the love of my Lord:
better than splendour and wealth.*

3 Love is his name,
love is his law,
hear his command, all who are his:
'Love one another, I have loved you.'
Love, only love, is his law.

*Richer than gold is the love of my Lord:
better than splendour and wealth.*

4 Love is his law, love is his word:
love of the Lord, Father and Word,
love of the Spirit, God ever one,
love, only love, is his word.

*Richer than gold is the love of my Lord:
better than splendour and wealth.*

Prayer of Preparation

Let us pray:
**Lord, direct our thoughts,
teach us to pray,
lift our hearts to worship you
in Spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ. Amen**

A time of silence as we call to mind our sins and weaknesses, before we confess them to God.

Confession

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'
So let us turn away from sin and turn to the Lord,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

cf Matthew 4.17

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

May almighty God have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins
and bring us to everlasting life
Amen

Collect

Almighty God,
send down upon your Church
the riches of your Spirit,
and kindle in all who minister the gospel
your countless gifts of grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Reflection

We all know this lovely passage from St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians so well. It's often called 'The Hymn to Love'. But today I want to take words from the last verse as the basis of my reflection and reflect briefly on all three of those gifts, and our experience of them, in the times we have been going through: the words are, of course, : *'faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love'*

Faith: the word usually translated as faith in the New Testament can also be translated as 'faithfulness', so it means something rather more than simply that believing that certain things are true. The Bible talks as much about God's faithfulness, as about ours – so perhaps we could say that human faith is born or refreshed when God's faithfulness sparks ours, when he kindles and sustains faithfulness in us , because the

message of his love in Jesus touches our hearts, or we look back and see how he has been with us through even the tough times. In love and gratitude, we want to be faithful to him (and to each other). We want to put our trust in him and, so far as possible, with his help, mirror God's own faithfulness in how we live in the world.

Sticking-with-it is a big part of faithfulness: God sticks with us, even though we don't always see it; we may question it in crises such as the one the world is living through now. Yet the gift of faith, or faithfulness, wants to go on living the right way, the way that reflects what we know of God, trusting that although we can't understand everything, we can experience inside ourselves the truth that this is what we were made and called to do. Scientists may tell us why pandemics occur: historians can tell us what they have led to in the past; economists are predicting what the outcome of this one may be for the world. But faith, or faithfulness, keeps us seeking the true way, the right path, in all the choices, big or small, which lie before us, trusting that the decision to do this is not a waste of time or energy, and that God will vindicate any faithfulness we show.

This brings us to **Hope**, which is love and faithfulness looking beyond the horizon of the world as we know it, the world as it currently is. Christians have hope that through the love and sacrifice of Christ, all will ultimately be ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven. We do not see it now, but we have hope, which gives us energy to keep going. One of the common symbols of hope is an anchor. At the moment, we and all creation toss on a seemingly uncertain and dangerous sea, but the story of Jesus' death and resurrection gives us hope; it strengthens our faithfulness, it anchors our love in deeds of God which are beyond our understanding. God has done these wonderful things within history, and now we can trust that in the same way he will bring the whole of history to its fruition by the same extraordinary power of love.

And **Love** – what shall we say of love? Without love, our hope might be just selfish, our faithfulness might be nothing but obsessive. It is love that shows us that faithfulness often has to play-out in self-sacrifice, in big ways and in small; it is love which makes our hope wide enough to strive for the good of all people – and of creation itself. During the pandemic and the lockdown, we have seen a lot of love being shown in a neighbourly way; we have experienced a lot of people working to

make community real. We have seen faithfulness; we have seen active hope.

And so, we want to celebrate **Community**, which is both the nursery and the fruit of faith, hope and love. Our St Mary's logo declares that we seek to be 'Rooted in God' and 'Rooted in Community'. In the end, the two statements are the same, because the God we believe in is Community in himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit - Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of the world, One God. In the end, the simplest way of saying it is that God is Love, and we want to live his way, come what may, and have been trying to do that through the past four months; we will go on seeking this in the months and years ahead, by his grace, and in company with others.

Prayers of intercession

Please pray with thanksgiving for signs Faith, Hope, Love and Community which you have seen and experienced in the last months. You may like to light a candle for each of these gifts.

Pray for the light of Christ in situations known to you in which Faith, Hope, Love and Community are strained or broken.

Conclude your prayers with the words Jesus taught us:

Traditional

**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.**

Modern

**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 for ever. Amen.**

Thanksgiving

Living God, Father of light,
Hope of nations, Friend of sinners,
Builder of the city that is to come;
your love is made visible in Jesus Christ,
you bring home the lost, restore the sinner
and give dignity to the despised.

We give you thanks

We praise your holy name

In the face of Jesus Christ
your light shines out,
flooding lives with goodness and truth,
gathering into one a divided and broken humanity.

We give you thanks

We praise your holy name

With people from every race and nation,
with the Church of all the ages,
with apostles, evangelists and martyrs
we join the angels of heaven
in their unending song:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Hymn

1 Great is thy faithfulness,
O God my Father,
there is no shadow
of turning with thee;
thou changest not,
thy compassions they fail not,
as thou hast been
thou for ever wilt be.

2 Summer and winter,
and spring-time and harvest,
sun, moon and stars
in their courses above,
join with all nature
in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness,
mercy and love.

Chorus

*Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning
new mercies I see;
all I have needed
thy hand hath provided,
great is thy faithfulness,
Lord unto me!*

3 Pardon for sin
and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence
to cheer and to guide;
strength for today
and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine,
with ten thousand beside!

Chorus

Offering ourselves to God

One or both of the following may be used

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

After the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester

Eternal light, shine into our hearts,
eternal goodness, deliver us from evil,
eternal power, be our support,
eternal wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance,
eternal pity, have mercy upon us;
that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength
we may seek your face and be brought by your infinite mercy
to your holy presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Alcuin of York (804)

Blessing

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing;
and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

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