**25th April 2021** **10.30am**  **Hilary Chorley**

**Call to Worship** Psalm 24

**Hymn MP 467 Morning has broken**

Morning has broken

like the first morning,

blackbird has spoken

like the first bird.

Praise for the singing,

praise for the morning,

praise for them, springing

fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall

sunlit from heaven,

like the first dewfall

on the first grass.

Praise for the sweetness

of the wet garden,

sprung in completeness

where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight;

mine is the morning,

born of the one light

Eden saw play!

Praise with elation,

praise every morning,

God's re-creation

of the new day!

ELEANOR FARJEON (188l-1965) CCLI 150801

**Opening Prayer, Revd Jenny Mills, URC Secretary for Education & Learning**

Lord of life,
as we begin to step out along the pathway of easing lockdown,
be with us.
Help us to take it slowly and carefully,
heeding the encouragement to take care.
We have shown love to our neighbour through the restrictions we have followed,
may we not stop now.
In our desire for ‘normality’ give us patience;
let us not forget all that has been.
May we act wisely, show mercy and live love.
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Lord’s Prayer and Mission Prayer**

**Readings** Genesis 8 v 15 – 9 v 1inc.

Acts 2 v 1-4

**THOUGHTS**

Once again we are not able to meet together as we would want to BUT we are in a different place to where we were last time we could share together.

Have you noticed that the traditional British obsession with the weather is no longer the first thing people mention when they meet or speak on the phone? Even chatting (socially distanced of course!) to perfect strangers when out walking alone or with the dog one of the first things we say is “Have you had your vaccine yet?” It’s a personal question but one that is readily answered almost with delight. This has nothing to do with what I want to say I just find it quite funny!

Looking at the 2 readings it would seem they have nothing in common but as last time we could draw parallels with The Exodus and our coming out of this pandemic I think looking forward to Pentecost there are some things we could look at.

One major difference of course is that Noah was told what was to happen and what he had to do. Were are not told how long it took to carry out these instructions but we are told he had 3 sons when he was 500 years old and the rains started in his 600th.year.

God told him at the start it would rain for 40 days and 40 nights and it did BUT it took almost a year from the rain starting to the ground being dry enough to leave the ark.

They had been “In lockdown” together a very long time. They must have been overjoyed to get out. They could start again with all things brand new. God gave Noah instructions on what to do and what to eat then Noah sacrificed and gave thanks to God then got on with the job. (It’s telling that the first thing he planted was a vineyard!)

During His time with the disciples Jesus tried to prepare them for what was to come. After the trauma of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, the shock of finding an empty tomb, the joy of seeing Him in various locations even having breakfast prepared for them by Him AFTER He is risen and the total amazement of those who saw Him taken up to Heaven in front of them, they were still very afraid. They stayed together as much as they could. Jesus had said He would send a helper but they didn’t know what that really meant. They had to wait. Just like Noah (and us at this time!) they didn’t know how long that would be, but there the similarity ends, or does it?

Before getting on with life in the “New Normal “(it wasn’t normal for Noah and his family there were no other people or animals around) the first thing Noah did was give a sacrifice to God THEN God blessed him and he got on with what he had to do. God made a covenant with Noah that He would ever again destroy the world like that.

We know that as time went on people again turned away from God with disastrous results Once again God had to act. This time He sent a part of Himself .

Before Jesus could send The Helper there was a sacrifice, this time the sacrifice was Jesus. God didn’t wipe out the world with all our sin and wrongs, this time He wiped out the sins of the world.

When that was done He could bless them with the Holy Spirit. They didn’t have to sacrifice anything to receive this blessing it was already done. Once they were filled with the Spirit they were equipped to go and let people know there is another way to live, the way Jesus lived following the example He gave with 2 commands

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and your mind and all your strength AND love your neighbour as yourself.

After He paid for all our sin we are made new we are pristine clean in Gods eyes, now He can bless us.

As we wait for Pentecost we already know what happened then, we can celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to those disciples and because He has paid our debt we can freely receive this blessing too.

We have to wait for restrictions to be eased before we can go back to how we were but we don’t have to wait for Pentecost to receive God’s blessing it’s there for the asking.

The disciples didn’t know what form the helper would come in. Would it be another person? Maybe some still hoped the helper would bring an army to bring freedom from occupation. We know with hindsight that He came as a Spirit within each one but gave a physical sign of a strong wind and small flames of fire. This showed them something tangible has happened but the main point is what happened within each one of them.

 The Helper had come to change things, to bring freedom just not quite in the way they thought, and He recruited His army from among those who were willing.

We can receive that same Spirit who is bringing change and freedom still today like those early disciples we just have to be willing to join His army.

There is no entrance exam no physical fitness test no requirement at all just an open heart and an acceptance that Jesus is Lord and a willingness to share our love for the Lord with others. It doesn’t have to be anything fancy we just have to try to follow those two commands and it’s much easier to do that when we allow the Holy Spirit in to help us, we don’t have to strive to reach thousands in a day like that first day Peter spoke we just need to try to reach one person at a time.

With the Holy Spirit within us it’s like being connected to the mains like the plug sockets. Unconnected they looked fine and you knew they were plug sockets but they were not really very good. No-one can see the wires the connection but it makes a whole world of difference when they are connected and live.

Amen

People might like to read the words of the old hymn, I vow to Thee my country. The next to last line of the second verse reads

“And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase “

**Prayers of Intercession Neil**

Please use this Prayer for Christian Aid Week along with your personal thoughts and concerns.

***‘The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord’ Psalm 22:26***

Give thanks for all those preparing for Christian Aid Week. Pray for people to have a sense of anticipation and excitement as they pull together the practical and logistical plans. Pray that the story of Rose Katanu Jonathan walking miles to collect water and provide for her grandchildren will give us a renewed determination to tackle climate change and raise vital money this Christian Aid Week. Rose said: ‘I believe God gives me strength and helps me persevere. I pray that God will help people to help me.’ God of strength, May your spirit help us to persevere in our efforts this Christian Aid Week. Amen

**Hymn MP 456 Make me channel of your peace**

Make me a channel of Your peace.

Where there is hatred let me bring Your love;

where there is injury, Your pardon, Lord;

and where there's doubt, true faith in You.

O Master, grant that I may never seek

so much to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of Your peace.

Where there's despair in life let me bring hope;

where there is darkness, only light;

and where there's sadness, ever joy.

*O Master, grant that I ......*

Make me a channel of Your peace;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

in giving to all men that we receive.

and in dying that we’re born to eternal life.

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Advanced notice from Neil:

**CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2021 – 10 - 16 May**

Despite the pandemic Christian Aid Week 2021 will be going ahead this year. We praise God!

This year’s theme is again around the challenge of climate change. Can we help people in those parts of the world who are particularly affected by this awful crisis – well the answer is – **Yes we can!**

This climate crisis hurts us all. But people living in poverty fight the worst of it every day. From drought to flooding, climate change robs people of control over their lives. With a reliable source of water, people like Rose from Kenya (shown in the picture below) would be free from long, painful journeys to collect water.



They would be able to grow fresh vegetables to eat. And they would be able to protect themselves from the dangers of coronavirus. With such dire need, every last drop of water that falls in Rose’s community is precious. This Christian Aid Week, will you stand with people like Rose for every last drop and help them fight the climate crisis?

If you are able to put a gift in your Christian Aid Week envelope when it arrives with your weekly Worship Sheet in May, it could lead you to helping a community build an earth dam. So when the rains do come, they will have the water they need to live. A reliable source of water will help families withstand long drought or relentless rainstorms. We thank you sincerely for your prayers and support of Christian Aid.