



Sunday Worship at Home October 24th 2021 Bible Sunday

Opening Prayers:

O Lord, open our lips

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Reveal among us the light of your presence
that we may behold your power and glory.

Invitation to confession:

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

Lord Jesus, you came to earth to tell us how much God loves us:

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Lord Jesus, you came to earth to teach us how to say sorry:

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you came to earth so our sins could be forgiven:

Lord have mercy.

Lord have mercy

The Collect (Special Prayer for the day)

Merciful God, teach us to be faithful in change and uncertainty, that trusting in your word and obeying your will we may enter the unfailing joy of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Gospel Reading: John 5: 36b-end

But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent. 'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?' This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Reflection on the Gospel.

Have you ever had to contend with difficult conversations about being a Christian and why you read your bible? It helps to remember that **all** Scripture is inspired by God and carries divine authority. Our faith has stood the test of time but in this secular age, it is now under threat more than ever. It is important that Christians engage with difficult issues on how we interpret the Bible but it's not easy, and it won't satisfy enquirers and sceptics if we simply say we believe what the Bible teaches, because even Christians disagree about what the Bible teaches. So, what parts of our faith are non-negotiable? The Creed encapsulates the essentials of our faith, and most Christians can agree on that. But other issues are not so clear cut. Women bishops, homosexuality, transgender – there are equally sincere

Christians who hold opposite views. The danger is that the Church can become so bogged down in these arguments that it loses sight of its main purpose - to be part of God's mission in the world, pointing people to Jesus. Our job is to **express** the timeless, unchanging truths in the Bible in the kind of language that people of today will understand, and to seriously question whether there are aspects of the Bible that need to be reinterpreted for each generation as we wrestle to meet the challenges of faith in the 21st century. If we come together with humility, recognising that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, and we ask it to speak to us afresh, it will do so. It won't undermine the key message, of God's love for the world, and his supreme self-revelation and saving act in Jesus, but it will throw up new insights and perspectives as we seek to discern God's work in the world today. In our Gospel reading, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for being so bogged down in the Word of God that they can't recognise the Living Word himself, standing amongst them! Jesus is the Word made flesh. Sadly, throughout history, there have been Christians, who though they knew the Bible thoroughly, they didn't have "the love of God in their hearts" as Jesus says in this passage. Such people are still around, but no matter how much we claim to know the Bible, if we don't have the love of God in our hearts, we don't truly love and know Jesus, the Supreme Word Himself. I remember a time when I knew certain parts of the Bible but they didn't mean much to me. At best, I thought they were nice words but they had no personal impact on me. It was only when I started searching spiritually, or, maybe, God was searching for me, that it started to make sense. And as I read the Gospels in particular, Jesus became real in a way I had never encountered before as his words spoke to me personally.

Today is Bible Sunday, how has the Bible changed you and how do you use it to engage with our world?

The Bible Society produced statistics showing a low percentage of churchgoers read their Bibles regularly, yet in Third World countries people will walk for two days to get a copy of the Bible. Let us pray that we are people rooted in God's Word, filled with his Spirit, showing Jesus to lost generations. **Amen.**

The Creed

We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Be still, pray: Father God, direct my steps in the wisdom found in the bible, prevent me from stumbling and help me to live in a way that honours you. We give thanks for those who deliver bibles in all parts of the world and those who are sustained by it. Pray for comfort and peace for those who are ill or awaiting hospital appointments. Pray for the souls of those who have died, especially Andy Sherman from Great Houghton whose funeral takes place on Tuesday, give strength to Liz and his family who mourn his loss.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father who art in heaven **Amen**

The Blessing:

The God of all hope fill you with joy and peace in believing and the blessing of God the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you, and all those you love, today and always. Amen

Reverend Irene