

24th May 2020

## ***Hearsall at Home***

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home.

We hope that you listen to this service either on a Sunday morning, or at another time, and you will worship, sing, pray and reflect on the scriptures along with all of us.

A written copy of the service is also available as a download on our website, so if you know anyone who would like that please let us know.

Also available is an extra resource: Bible study notes for those who would like to go deeper into the main texts of the service.

If you can get online you'll find me in my Whereby room after the service: Bring your cup of coffee to [whereby.com/sutcliffechat](https://whereby.com/sutcliffechat) and see who's there. There's room for 12 and we only had four last week!

So sit down, be still, and prepare yourself to worship God with us.

OOS 24 5 20

**The times, they are a-changing**

Invitation to Worship

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:6

Song (WT 292)

Men of faith rise up and sing  
Of the great and glorious king  
You are strong when you feel weak  
In your brokenness complete

*Shout to the north and the south  
Sing to the east and the west  
Jesus, Saviour to all  
Lord of heaven and earth.*

Rise up women of truth  
Stand and sing to broken hearts  
Who can know the healing power  
Of our Awesome King of Love

We've been through fire.  
We've been through rain  
We've been refined  
By the power of His name  
We've fallen deeper  
In love with you  
You've burned the truth on our lips

Rise up church with broken wings;  
Fill this place with songs again,  
Of our God who reigns on high:  
By his grace again, we'll fly.

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.

### Thanksgiving

Lord for posties and refuse collectors, for shelf-stackers and cleaners, for carers and funeral directors, for delivery drivers and warehouse staff, for plumbers and electricians and for all who work humbly and faithfully to keep our society going, we give you our thanks.

Thank you Lord for nurses and doctors, health care assistants and medical researchers, for fire fighters and police officers, for teachers and teaching assistants and for all who serve us in so many different ways, we give you our thanks.

Let's take a moment and think of others for whom we may feel thankful this morning... For all such wonderful people caring for us in so very many ways we praise and thank you.

And now we thank you our great Lord; Father, Son and Holy Spirit; One God in Three Persons; for you created us, rescued us and filled us with your loving Spirit. Forgive us for our sins and help us to align our lives with your coming kingdom of grace, mercy, truth, justice and loving-kindness. Amen

Now quite often when I wake up I say a line from the Psalms before I do anything else. I say, sometimes aloud, *This is the day that the Lord has made. Let me rejoice and be glad in it!* It's a great way to start a day, and we're going to sing those words now.

### Song (WT 427)

This is the day, this is the day  
that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made;  
I will rejoice, I will rejoice  
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.  
This is the day that the Lord has made;  
I will rejoice and be glad in it.  
This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made.

Behind Closed Doors this week was written by Sandra Noel and is read by Louise Prue.

### Behind Closed Doors

I've got a confession to make—at this time when we have been told to “stay put” , I have travelled far—Around the world, I've journeyed to the Centre of the Earth ( thankfully a volcano spewed me out on land again) and also I have walked on the bottom of the sea. All these adventures were kindly arranged by author Jules Verne, a man with much knowledge and a great imagination.

Truly though, this “lock down”time has given me time to catch up on many things I’ve been meaning to do but never had time to do them. Like many folk, my cupboards are now orderly, tidy, and free from rubbish. My oven is sparkling inside and out . We’ll have to have “take aways” if I want it to stay that way.

One of the topics I have enjoyed doing is writing letters to my grandchildren Beth and Alice exploring how different my childhood was from theirs. The only trouble was it makes me feel so old.

For example—My Schooldays. I have some really scary memories of learning joined up handwriting with pen and ink. I was about seven years old at the time. In our desks we had a little hole in the corner where there was an ink well (like a little cup full of running ink)We had a pen with a pointed metal nib which you used to dip into the ink.You had to be very careful you didn’t let the ink run into a black nasty blot on your paper which would make your page look very messy. If that happened you would get the cane. It hurt a lot and sometimes we would cry. Thank goodness this doesn’t happen today.

I have spent time contacting many friends and relations especially those that I only send a Christmas card to. We’ve had many long enjoyable phone calls catching up on so much time. ( Derek wonders what the phone bill will be . Shock , Horror !!) I have written many letters too and I’m pleased that I bought a stack of postage stamps before the lock-down as I knew the price was going up . I have not many left now , but they have served a good purpose. Let’s hope we will keep up the closer contact when the lock-down is over.

Of course it has been difficult not seeing our children, but we keep in contact by phone. Ruth has kept us well nourished by ordering meat and fish on line. We have enough for at least another six weeks. Thankfully we have got a second freezer to store it all. Closer to home—our neighbours have all kept in contact by phone. Most of the neighbours in Nutbrook Ave are elderly like Derek and I , but we have one young couple who have been very helpful .

Carol , I’m sure will have developed angel’s wings as she phones up every morning to see if there is anything we need and has been back and fro to the chemist to get prescriptions many times. Then there is our wonderful Church Family . Derek and I miss seeing them very much . We are so grateful for all the work that goes into The Online Sunday Service . Thank you so much David and all the others that have taken part. We sit at the computer at 10.30, am and imagine the rest of the congregation around us. This helps us recognize one day of the week at least. Many of the others we have a struggle to realize what day it is.

And what a blessing the garden is. What a pleasure it is to sit outside in the sun , look at the plants (and the weeds) and listen to the birds singing . I wish I knew the different bird songs , but they are all wonderful. Obviously the CV19 virus hasn’t affected the squirrels as they amaze me at the way they race up the trees and jump from one tree to another always landing safely. How do they do it ?? Thank God for his creation.

How hard it must be to live in a high tower block with no green space around . I hold such folk in my prayers at this difficult time. The lock-down will have to continue for a considerable time if I am to achieve the many things I still want to do—practise the piano so that I can play as beautifully as Joan Cobb (that will take a life time ) ; finish a number of embroideries I have started, and get really up to date with computer technology ( I'm Special Needs at the moment ) So I've still got plenty to keep me occupied.

I have left my special bonus until last—the company of my wonderful husband Derek. The company we share together has meant that the lock-down has not been a chore but a blessing. So often we are both rushing from one place to another , visiting different groups, talking or taking services . These few weeks we've been together , not doing anything special, but sharing memories, jokes and just being there for each other —a great blessing indeed.

And so my friends —keep smiling and count your blessings , but hold in your prayers those who have lost loved ones, those who are worried about losing their jobs and give thanks for our wonderful N.H.S. Workers whose skills, compassion, and energy keep them doing the great healing task each day and night.

God bless you and hold you in His care  
Sandra

Thanks Sandra for your warm, wise and amusing words... And thanks Louise for reading them.

### Offering

Today I've asked our Treasurer Julia to give us a brief financial update:

Good morning. I have now completed the year end for Hearsall. This has meant that I have been able to provide a forecast for the year ahead. My biggest concern for the future is the lack of income from room hire, and the concern that even when our room hirers can come back, they may choose not to. Also the regular cash giving on a weekly basis - we are not getting that at the moment. So we are faced with a significant deficit next year. I appreciate times are difficult for many, and charities that we give to will be looking for more too. If you are able to increase your giving, or want to give through the bank here are our details:

Lloyds Bank, High Street Coventry.

sort code is 30 92 33

account number is 00036515.

And please contact me if you want a gift aid form to fill in. Thank you.

Thanks Julia. Let us pray.

And now O God we thank you for the joy of giving. If we are able, help us to be generous to church, to charity and to others so that we may support all who are in need. Receive the gifts we make to the church and please bless our continuing ministry and provide for the work you call us to do. If we ourselves as individuals are in need, help us to ask for support, and send others to assist us. In Jesus' Amen.

### Hymn

Great is your faithfulness, O God my Father  
You have fulfilled all your promise to me;  
You never fail and your love is unchanging,  
All you have been you for ever will be.

*Great is your faithfulness!*

*Great is your faithfulness!*

*Morning by morning new mercies I see;*

*All I have needed your hand has provided -*

*Great is your faithfulness, Father, to me.*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in eloquent witness  
To your great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin, and a peace everlasting,  
Your loving presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow -  
These are the blessings your love will provide.

### Intercessions

Anne Thompson

Thanks Anne for those thoughtful prayers. And now we hear from the Scriptures with readings from Isaiah and from Mark.

### Bible Readings

Isaiah 49: 8 - 18

8 This is what the Lord says:

‘In the time of my favour I will answer you,  
and in the day of salvation I will help you;

I will keep you and will make you  
to be a covenant for the people,

to restore the land

and to reassign its desolate inheritances,

9 to say to the captives, “Come out,”

and to those in darkness, “Be free!”

‘They will feed beside the roads

and find pasture on every barren hill.

10 They will neither hunger nor thirst,

nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them.

He who has compassion on them will guide them  
and lead them beside springs of water.

11 I will turn all my mountains into roads,  
and my highways will be raised up.

12 See, they will come from afar –  
some from the north, some from the west,  
some from the region of Aswan.’[a]

13 Shout for joy, you heavens;  
rejoice, you earth;  
burst into song, you mountains!  
For the Lord comforts his people  
and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

14 But Zion said, ‘The Lord has forsaken me,  
the Lord has forgotten me.’

15 ‘Can a mother forget the baby at her breast  
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?  
Though she may forget,  
I will not forget you!

16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;  
your walls are ever before me.

17 Your children hasten back,  
and those who laid you waste depart from you.

18 Lift up your eyes and look around;  
all your children gather and come to you.

As surely as I live,’ declares the Lord,  
‘you will wear them all as ornaments;  
you will put them on, like a bride.

#### Mark 1: 14 - 20

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

15 ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.

19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

#### Song (WT 37)

Beauty for brokenness  
Hope for despair  
Lord, in the suffering  
This is our prayer  
Bread for the children  
Justice, joy, peace  
Sunrise to sunset  
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives  
Cures for their ills  
Work for the craftsman  
Trade for their skills  
Land for the dispossessed  
Rights for the weak  
Voices to plead the cause  
Of those who can't speak

*God of the poor  
Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame*

Refuge from cruel wars  
Havens from fear  
Cities for sanctuary  
Freedoms to share  
Peace to the killing-fields  
Scorched earth to green  
Christ for the bitterness  
His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth  
Oceans and streams  
Plundered and poisoned  
Our future, our dreams  
Lord, end our madness  
Carelessness, greed  
Make us content with  
The things that we need

Lighten our darkness  
Breathe on this flame

Until your justice  
Burns brightly again  
Until the nations  
Learn of your ways  
Seek your salvation  
And bring you their praise

And now good Lord, as I have studied, pondered and prayed over these words for several days and then written and recorded them on Wednesday, may your living Word come to us all by the ministry of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Sermon

*The times, they are a-changing*

The fall of the Berlin wall... Neil Armstrong walking on the moon... VE Day we have recently been celebrating... Some events change the fabric of human history giving a new sense of possibility and often an invitation to create a better future.

At a personal level, reality can change in one day... A new baby is born... A new career is begun... A partner finally says "Yes"... A diagnosis is received.

The nature of our existence can turn, it seems, on a sixpence. With a world in lockdown, are we not now at such a time? Huge challenges to the old order are being thrown up. We face an economic downturn of catastrophic proportions... We suffer the loss of many lives... We contemplate the prospect of extensive and enduring restrictions on human freedom.

And yet fresh invitations to a new way of being are emerging. Are we simply going to create a new reality which is a kind of hobbled version of previous reality? Or are we going to sense a chance to create something that is actually much better than the old in many important respects?

About 25 centuries ago, Israel as a nation came, at last, to the end of their 70 years of exile. The leading families had been forced to live in Babylon so very long. But now, at last, they were coming home to a new reality. The prophet uses poetry to great effect to express how radically altered their new post-exile world would be.

You can feel the tension in the words as the poet strains language to express the extent to which now, at last, on this, the day of salvation, at this moment, a new order is beginning. Geographical restrictions like mountains in the way of their return will be flattened in an instant. The very earth, the heavens and the mountains will shout and sing for joy, celebrating the new emerging reality.

God's people would have been downhearted after their time of exile. Had God forgotten them? The poetic prophet casts around for an illustration from human experience to help them get it. Who is most tender and faithful? Oh... a nursing mother! And guess what, even

if a nursing mother were not faithful to her baby, yet I will never forget you. Your name is written on the palm of my hands. Think of the most faithful person you can imagine - and I will be even more faithful than her!

So, for those exiles coming home, reality has indeed turned on a sixpence. Everything has changed.

Elsewhere the oracles of Isaiah proclaim this new reality as good news - we might call that Gospel! In Luke's version of Jesus' life, the Saviour expresses his intentions, in a sermon at Nazareth, by quoting one of these Isaiah good news passages - and so we learn that his gospel is especially good news for the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, those who mourn, those whose lives have been ruined. In Isaiah and Luke at least, good news is a restoration most of all for those who are neglected in society, those who are hurting.

Our reading from Mark's terse gospel begins with Jesus also proclaiming a new reality. A tyrant has handed John the Baptist over to be imprisoned, much as Jesus would be handed over in Jerusalem - nevertheless, the bad guys will not have the day. Jesus comes in verse 14 proclaiming good news.

This good news probably carried all the freight of Isaiah's good news. Now in St Paul's writing, the good news is mainly about the death and resurrection of Jesus and the significance of that for salvation. Mark sees the good news in Jesus' entire career which embodied so perfectly God's desire to create a reality that is fair for everyone, and especially for all who have been neglected or abused.

It's verse 15 of Mark 1 I want to focus on. It gives four powerful statements we might learn from. The time has come! The kingdom of God has come near! Repent! Believe the good news!

First: the time has come. Those who like their Greek will guess correctly that the word for Time here is *kairos*, which means not so much time as measured by a clock, but an opportune moment. And this time has come - notice this is a spatial metaphor for time moving close. It carries the idea of coming to fulfilment or even fruition, and that the new reality we now are invited to experience is because this time has come, or is coming. We could express this little phrase the Time has Come along these lines: Now, after all that has occurred, is an opportune moment for changing history. This is a time pregnant with a new reality.

Second, The kingdom of God has come near. Cleverer people than I have debated long and hard about what this little phrase, 'Kingdom of God' might mean. Whatever it is, it's central to Jesus' ministry. But I think ordinary people just sense what it means. A king in the ancient world was a ruler. If God is King, then his way of doing things gets put into action. The kingdom of God has come near might mean something like this: God's way, which is the best way for people to relate to each other and to the world around them, is now something that can more fully happen in the way we actually live.

Third, Repent. There's a Hebrew word for repentance that basically meant turning round, or returning. It was used to express the idea of turning - away from sin - a bad way of living - and turning back to God - a good way of living. It's a way of turning away from being inauthentic or false to being authentic or true. In the New Testament the word for repentance is metanoia. Again, the root idea is of turning. Now in the biblical record, both words for repentance are often associated with a sense of sorrow for sin, but the core actual meaning is: change your way of thinking, change your way of acting. So repent: Undergo a personal revolution.

Fourth, Believe the good news. In Greek, the words for believe and trust are different grammatical forms of the same word. To believe the good news is not to have an opinion that the good news may be right. To believe the good news is to trust it: to live by it. So our fourth point could become: Trust your life to a positive way of hope and joy.

Roll together all my four statements and maybe we get something like this:

This is a moment in history with potential for change.

A way of living that is better and fairer is now possible.

Undergo a personal revolution in your thinking and approach to life.

Live in trust that something positive is happening here.

Simon, Andrew, James and John are asked by Jesus to follow him. Mark gives no background explanation for their behaviour. Jesus calls, and they leave behind the tokens of old reality: nets, business partners, even family, and enter a new world. The only explanation implied by Mark's account is this: They accept this personal revolution in their lives because it is Jesus who calls them.

\* \* \*

As churches, do we want to go back to all the old ways? Or are we up for a new way of being Jesus' followers? What have you discovered during this pandemic that you want to keep? I use the word 'discovered' deliberately. We are uncovering something that was really present all along, like treasure buried in a field, we dig it out, and Jesus once described the Kingdom of God that way.

I was talking with some friends and they and I suggested they must keep the following things:

1 A slower lifestyle Why? They have seen that the previous normal was squeezing out all time for the sheer tasting of life in all its fullness. For enjoying a good meal. For enjoying the company of those they may be living with, or the company they can share online. They have heard a deeper, slower, gentler rhythm and they find they like that. They like it very much indeed.

2 A delight in the natural world During this time, they listen to the birds singing, they notice the flowering of trees and the budding of plants. They see children digging in sandpits and gardens. People walk in their local woods; they notice the bluebells and cycle to their parks. Their lungs breathe clean air. It feels good. It is good. It is wholesome.

3 A deep sense of care for other people We are all finding that what really matters is the welfare of the other. When loved ones are at risk from the virus; when people need to isolate at home; when those we care about may be going hungry; when people need to receive medical care; when those we love are bereft and desire our prayer: the knowledge that another person needs our support becomes paramount.

Along and around all these things, this is also an opportune moment for spiritual growth. I think that through that slower rhythm, that love and that care for God's creation, many are finding in their hearts that they want to reach out to God. Not to a punitive, nit-picking God, but to a God of love who holds all people and all things within his tender care.

I wonder what you would add to my friends' and my list.

As a church community does God call us to do all we can to nurture this new vision of reality? I've only specified three or four things; there are many more. Does God not call us to reshape a church life that is less about buildings and driving and meetings, and is more concerned with pastoral care, community-shaping, a respect for the planet and a deep, deep sense that by doing less, by doing things more simply, by praying more deeply, by going more more slowly, by loving more deeply, we will experience the mystery of God all the more keenly.

Jesus' message from Mark 1:15 I creatively rendered this way:

- This is a moment in history with potential for change.
- A way of living that is better and fairer is now possible.
- Undergo a personal revolution in your thinking and approach to life.
- Live in trust that something positive is happening here.

Does God say something like that to us today? Are we as a church going to be ahead of the game this time, modelling and embracing a new version of reality? Do we see the potential for positive change? Can we trust that a new way of being human and of being Christian is being offered to us? Are we willing to change personally in order to embrace the coming revolution within our hearts? Can we retain a sense of hope that, in the midst of a pandemic which has brought very serious loss of both life and livelihood, we can find a fresh way of being God's people in our world today? And can we hope that, in doing this, we will be part of a global change toward a gentler, fairer, creation-affirming, justice-bringing world for everyone and everything in which all God's creatures and all God's people are treated with dignity and love, especially the small and the weak and the vulnerable?

The change on offer is, we know as Christians, rooted in the faithfulness of God. Our names are written on his hands. The very earth and sun and stars and trees and flowers strain toward this new reality. It's based, not on wishful thinking, but on the word of God, and on the love of a God who never forgets us.

Hymn (BPW 535)

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:  
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him,  
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
the love of God;  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all  
now and always. Amen.

Sung blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you  
wherever he may send you;

may he guide you through the wilderness,  
protect you through the storm;  
may he bring you home rejoicing  
at the wonders he has shown you;  
may he bring you home rejoicing  
once again into our doors.

*It's been wonderful to share in worship today; thank you so much for taking part. Have a  
think and a prayer about how life will be different, how it may even be better, as life recovers  
after this dreadful virus begins to subside.*