

6th June 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.

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 and see who's there. There's room for 12 and we only had five last week!

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

Morning Service for 6 6 20

Love Story

Invitation to Worship

The Lord our God is majestic and holy - and yet he gives humanity a place of great honour.
Let us gather to worship him.

Psalm 8

Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory

in the heavens.

2 Through the praise of children and infants

you have established a stronghold against your enemies,

to silence the foe and the avenger.

3 When I consider your heavens,

the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,

which you have set in place,

4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them,

human beings that you care for them?

5 You have made them a little lower than the angels

and crowned them with glory and honour.

6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands;

you put everything under their feet:

7 all flocks and herds,

and the animals of the wild,

8 the birds in the sky,

and the fish in the sea,

all that swim the paths of the seas.

9 Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Today is Trinity Sunday and we celebrate the nature of God as one God in three persons, a mystery incomprehensible to the mind yet experienced by the heart. Our great hymn *Holy, Holy, Holy* explores something of the glory of our Trinitarian God.

Hymn (BPW 51)

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!

God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,

casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;

cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
God ever living through eternity.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
thou alone art holy; there is none beside thee
perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Prayer of Adoration *A prayer by Mary Robins*

Giver of life,
Infinite God,
penetrating and containing,
gestating and birthing,
open our being to yours.

Bearer of pain,
Gracious Beloved,
seeded with Truth,
yearning, dying for new life,
open our being to yours.

Maker of love,
hungry and passionate,
refining and enlivening,
open our being to yours.

Holy Trinity, looking at one another,
earthing and impregnating,
evoking life between you,
open our being to yours.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name!
Your Kingdom come!
Your will be done
on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
And forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom
The power and the glory
Now
And always
Amen.

Well after last week's service I did have some complaints from certain disgruntled Hearsall cats who felt left out. To make amends I feel obligated to say that I hope Winston, Freddie, Lulu, Emily, Polyphony, Badger and Pushkin are all enjoying the service so far...

This week's Behind Closed Doors comes from our dear friend Jo Allmand who lives and works as a therapist in Coundon. I don't know whether or not she has a cat.

Behind Closed Doors

By Jo Allmand

In many ways my life in lockdown hasn't changed a great deal. As I already work self-employed from home, I'm quite used to being in my own house a lot of the time, and structuring my time to fit around whatever comes up. The difference is that obviously no-one is allowed to come into the house, and so I've been working out the best way for my therapy clients to be able to still meet with me. The shift from face to face working to online or phone work was initially quite a big undertaking. Working out the practicalities, the ethics and the technology, as well as making sure that my clients were still okay and safe, was a lot to work through very quickly – but now it has already become part of this 'new norm', and I've discovered that it can be a rich and supportive way of working. However, I still very much miss being able to be with people face to face, and I hope that some time in the future it will feel like a safe enough way to do therapy again. In the meantime, I'm investing in some better equipment and online training, to be able to develop this alternative way of working for the foreseeable future, whether that ends up being long or short term. I guess it's teaching me how to stay mindful of my own discomfort reactions around change, and how to manage those feelings in the best way I can.

Not all of my work has been able to continue, and so life is definitely a lot quieter than it was. I've started doing a few hours a fortnight at a new foodbank nearby, and that's helped me to fill my time and meet new people, whilst feeling I'm doing something useful. As many people have previously shared, finding a structure and routine to the days has been really helpful. I'm trying to keep to my same rhythms of getting up and going to bed, though it's not always kept to. The fact that my lodger still has to go out to work is probably helpful to give us both a routine and structure around time. I'm appreciating the fact that I have more time to exercise first thing in the morning at the moment. It definitely gives me more motivation and energy when I do, with all those 'happy hormones'. I really enjoy yoga, Tai chi and dancing – I love any type of dancing, and will do it whenever I can, whilst cooking or even whilst doing a jigsaw; I even find myself doing it during the Sunday morning podcasts! It's definitely a good thing that no-one's watching!!

I've realised that I'm not actually very good at sitting still. Perhaps it's something to do with avoiding thinking too much about the bigness of everything that's going on in the world at the

moment. The Hearsall Sunday service each week has been such an important thing for me to help me take time to listen, reflect and to learn. I find myself regularly asking God to help me to continue to do this every day – to listen and to learn from whatever I come across, and not simply get caught up in ‘doing stuff’. Imagining you all with me in the service brings a great deal of connection and joy, particularly when we share the peace and the sung blessing at the end. You are all very much in my thoughts. This lockdown has allowed me the chance to make new contacts within our church family, and to build on my relationships with many of you through email, phone calls, Whatsapp and letters. It’s felt like such a blessing to be able to do that.

We’re all having to be so creative to make up for the lack of real, physical presence. It’s amazing how much we do adapt, I suppose. One of my favourite photos that I came across the other week was on the BBC website. It was of a mother and daughter in Canada giving each other a hug through a ‘hug glove’ shower curtain that they’d made for a Mother’s day gift. The look on their faces was one of real joy. It’s nice that we’re able to start meeting more with Coventry friends at a safe distance, and I really hope to be able to do that more soon.

I’ve felt very privileged to have the neighbours that I do. Back in April, our little cul-de-sac had a few cinema nights in the street, singing along to ‘The Greatest Showman’ and ‘Mama Mia’ on a big projector, and we had a distanced VE day party last month. I’ve been able to get to know them all a little bit better, and that’s something I really hope to keep up once life gets moving again, and we all are a bit more ‘back in our own worlds’.

Thank goodness for the technology to keep in touch at this time. My family, and many of my friends, are spread out around the country and so we’re already used to not seeing each other very much, but we’ve definitely seen each other on screen more in the past few months than we would normally do. There’s something about the preciousness of seeing each other’s faces that lockdown has helped us to really appreciate. Seeing someone’s face tells us a great deal about how they’re doing and what they need. We bought my mum a tablet at Christmas, and had set it up so that we could remotely Skype her without her having to do anything technical at her end. We’re so glad that this was already in place before the virus hit. It’s been lovely to be able to see mum in this way. During the VE day celebrations, mum and I sang ‘We’ll meet again’ on Skype together. Definitely an apt song for our times too. Here’s hoping we’ll meet again soon too, in whatever form that might take.

And we thank Jo for her insightful thoughts and words this morning.

Offering

For the generous gifts you shower upon us each day, we give you our thanks. For sunshine and rain. For friends and family. For food and health. For money and possessions. Help us to give as freely as we receive and use the gifts we offer to church and to others to bear witness to your rich and constant love. Amen.

Our Lord plays many vital parts in our lives and our song Shout for Joy and Sing explores some of those. He means so much to us: our Creator, Deliverer, Redeemer, Lord, Healer, Provider, Shepherd, Guide and King... So, shout for joy and sing!

Song (WT 368)

Shout for joy and sing your praises to the King
lift your voice and let your hallelujahs ring
come before his throne to worship and adore
enter joyfully now the presence of the Lord.
You are my Creator,
you are my Deliverer,
you are my Redeemer, you are Lord
and you are my Healer.
You are my Provider,
you are now my shepherd and my guide,
Jesus, Lord and King, I worship you.

Intercessions

Nick Leonard

I note that in Philippians we are instructed to "not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God.". So....Let us Pray.

Dear Lord, there are so many people and circumstances that we want to bring before you for your peace, your love and your guidance. We start to try and think of things which we would want to bring to you; but then realise that this is an extremely difficult task, as you care for these people and situations far more than we could ever understand already!

Loving father, accept our attempts at praying for others - and never let us forget what a privilege it is to bring these prayers to you.

Dear Lord you made heaven and earth. We know that you care for your creation.

We pray for all those who are working towards making this planet a cleaner, greener place to live. We pray for those who have been given a deep commitment and love for your world and have dedicated their lives to preserving it.

We pray for all the people who have the responsibility to lead in these difficult times. We pray particularly for:

- those who have to make medical and political decisions about Coronavirus,
- Those leading and serving in countries where there are riots and violence flaring up – May you bring your peace to these situations my giving wisdom and generosity to world leaders

Dear Lord you have made us your representatives in this community. We know you care for your church.

Dear Lord we pray for the church and all faith communities worldwide. May they be ready to receive and act upon your guidance.

We pray especially for those in our own church and local community, especially those known to us as individuals, who may be:

- Anxious about the future or Coronavirus – may you/we give reassurance
- Concerned or worried about friends or relations – may they find Your peace
- Lonely or in need – show us how to recognise and fulfill each other's needs
- Suffering health problems – either mental or physical - please care for them with the depth that we never could.
- Finding it difficult financially and not being able to provide enough for their families
- Having difficult decisions to make for the future of them or their families
- Unable to cope with new technology to help them remain in touch with those they love.
- Plus others maybe just known to us personally whom we want to bring to you in our prayers.

Finally, we pray for your church here in Hearsall as we continue to do our best to follow you and to make the Lord Jesus relevant in these uncertain times. We pray that you will give us guidance and an insight and as to how we can respond to the new challenges which are likely to be before us post Corvid-19.

We offer up all these prayers in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Readings

Isaiah 40: 12 - 17 & 27 - 31

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,
or weighed the mountains on the scales
and the hills in a balance?

13 Who can fathom the Spirit[a] of the Lord,
or instruct the Lord as his counsellor?

14 Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him,
and who taught him the right way?

Who was it that taught him knowledge,
or showed him the path of understanding?

15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket;
they are regarded as dust on the scales;
he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

16 Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires,
nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.

17 Before him all the nations are as nothing;
they are regarded by him as worthless
and less than nothing.

27 Why do you complain, Jacob?
Why do you say, Israel,
'My way is hidden from the Lord;
my cause is disregarded by my God'?

28 Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.

29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

Matthew 28: 16 - 20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Our reading from Isaiah expresses both the majesty and the meekness of God. Our reading from Matthew promises Jesus is always with us. We sing two songs together now that help us reflect on these great themes.

Songs (WT 291 segueing into WT 482)

Meekness and majesty,
Manhood and Deity,
In perfect harmony,
The Man who is God.
Lord of eternity
Dwells in humanity,
Kneels in humility
And washes our feet.

O what a mystery,
Meekness and majesty.
Bow down and worship
For this is your God,
This is your God.

Father's pure radiance,
Perfect in innocence,
Yet learns obedience
To death on a cross.
Suffering to give us life,
Conquering through sacrifice,
And as they crucify
Prays: 'Father forgive.'

Wisdom unsearchable,
God the invisible,
Love indestructible
In frailty appears.
Lord of infinity,
Stooping so tenderly,
Lifts our humanity
To the heights of His throne.

Your are my hiding place:
you always fill my heart
with songs of deliverance
whenever I am afraid;
I will trust in you!
I will trust in you!
Let the weak say,
"I am strong in the strength of my God."

And now O Lord as I have prepared these words a few days ago, we pray that you take them and inspire us all, as we listen, to live our lives more fully aligned to your love. Amen.

Sermon

Love Story

Imagine a middle-aged woman on a ferry-crossing from Morecambe on the Lancashire coast to Douglas on the Isle of Man. It's Summer 2003. And it's warm and the sea is calm.

On a deck filled with holidaymakers, her four children gather around her and she reads aloud to them. Others hear her reading and a small crowd starts to gather, eager to catch the magic of the words she speaks into the sea air.

For Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix has just been published. The woman holds a copy of the new book in her hand and the children soak up the wonder of JK Rowling's tale.

Rowling first had the idea for Harry Potter while delayed on a train travelling from Manchester to London King's Cross in 1990. What if there was a boy who was a wizard, but who didn't know he was a wizard? The rest unravelled from there.

Well, back to my story... This, the fifth book in the series, was held in the hand of this woman on a ferry, her children around her. They had been planning to get hold of this precious book as soon as it was released on 21st June 2003 and now, she had it, she grasped it in her hands, and the moment was so special.

But breathtaking as it was to pick up this book, it was only when the words flew through across the air of the ferry's deck and lodged in the minds and hearts of the four listeners that everyone began to be satisfied.

The woman I am talking about is my late wife Ruth and those four children are our four children. She read all the Harry Potter books aloud to them. It was something of a mystery to me, because I'm not naturally drawn to the genre of fantasy. What use were these tales of wizards, and spells, and magical realms?

But I soon began to realise these stories were so much more than idle dreams. The tales of Hogwarts interwove with the stories of the lives of my children. Not so much how to defeat a Boggart; more how to deal with a bully. Not so much how to remain a part of the Order of the Phoenix; more how to stay true to your core belief when everything is crumbling around you.

These stories lived in the imagination of millions of children and adults. Is it too much to suggest that they shaped their lives, inspiring them, challenging them, giving them hope and resilience and teaching them the real cost of love?

The imagination and skilful writing of one woman took a vision from her head and planted it onto the pages of a book. And readers of the book allowed that same vision to dwell within them.

It's Trinity Sunday, a festival to crown all Christian festivals... Love always exists in the heart of God. In Jesus that love becomes a person. As we take the Spirit of Jesus into our hearts, that love now lives within us. It's the greatest of love stories. Like the story in the author's mind, like the story on the written page, like the story in the reader's imagination....

Now our text drawn from the stunning poetry of Isaiah 40 gives us a great sense of the journey that love has taken. We hear of the majestic greatness of God to whom the nations are like something to be swilled out of a bucket; the sky is like fabric to be folded against his chest; the islands of the oceans are so much negligible dust on a scales...

And yet within this majesty beats a heart of constant love. And the nations, a huge mass of permanent controlling presence to God's people as they waited as poor captives in ancient Babylon - those nations are dwarfed by the staggering greatness of God.

And so, in their exile, God's people are no longer told to yearn for a nation even greater than Babylon to arise as their Saviour - but to wait upon God himself.

Don't say, my cause is disregarded by my God! Don't conclude from the circumstances that God does not care.

No. Wait on God. Out of his eternal supremacy he will reach and touch the heart of the humble... He will touch the heart of the weary, he will enhance the power of the weak, he will renew the strength of those who stumble with exhaustion.

They'll enter the realm of the eagle! They'll fly! And when they run and when they walk, they'll persevere.

See the course of love's story! From the invisible, unapproachable, holy, invincible, uncontainable, inexpressible, awesome reality of the God who exists before time began... into the heart of the humble, the oppressed, the hopeless and the weary. This is love's story...

But there's a piece missing in at least this section of Isaiah's magnificent poetry, and it is Jesus! The Jesus who healed those with leprosy, who allowed women to be his disciples; who brought self-harming madmen who wandered naked in moonlit graveyards to be clothed and in their right mind; who raised up children who had died too young; who taught us that we find him by feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty and visiting the prisoner; who washed the feet of his own followers; who taught us to absorb violence rather than reflect it; who called us to love our enemies as God sends rain on our fields; who, though the very personification of goodness, allowed himself to be executed as a common criminal rather than choosing to visit anger upon us for our folly; who rose again on the third day and sent his Spirit to live in the hearts of humble people who trust in him; whose resurrection body sits forever at the right hand of the Father interceding for those who love him.

Who sends his followers to live out and to tell love's great story, calling people everywhere to be immersed in the perpetual reality of love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; literally in water baptism and actually in daily reality, calling people to live in the unending flow of divine love.

Like a great story in the heart of an author; a story on the written page; a story in the heart of the reader; like a great dance of love in which we are all embraced and have a part to play; like good news that encompasses all regardless of race, religion, gender, nationality or sexuality...

It's a story even richer than Harry Potter! For what lives in the life of the believer is not merely a story, as a conception, not merely the memories of Jesus as told in the pages of scripture, but the reality of God himself. The story is not merely mechanically repeated in the lives of his followers, the story grows. New chapters are written...

How shall we live in the perpetual love of God now, as we emerge from lockdown? What's it like to stay in love when your heart is broken or your grandmother has covid19 or your trip to see your sister in Canada has been suspended indefinitely, or your business looks like it may fold?

This is the story continuing. The love story of God. The fullness of love in your heart and all around you...

Two weeks ago we said there were three things we might want to keep: a connection with nature, a slower rhythm and a sense that loving people mattered most. And that's where we end today - with that last point. God has revealed that in our own hearts, underneath all the frantic demands of life and church, we know that, in the end, it's love that matters. Feeling it ourselves. Knowing love through God and one another. The Trinity is not an academic doctrine or a philosophical conundrum, but a daily experience of infinite Love.

As a family we are having to write new chapters in the story of love without the physical presence of that woman on the ferry who read so beautifully seventeen years ago. We have had a wedding and two new grandchildren in our story.

Love hurts It hurts to carry on loving now Ruth has gone. But that's love. It keeps on coming, Through all pain, disappointment and sorry, greater than all healing, success and joy, love's story goes on.

What chapter are we being called to write in this, the season of covid19? How shall we respond to God's invitation we believe we have heard. This is a special time. This is a kairos moment, a moment of opportunity and invitation. A vibrant call to turn, to receive the kingdom, to trust something good is happening... How shall we respond in respect of this new emerging value: the love of individual people is far more the thing than church programmes or political ideas. It's a Love Story. Let's get working on the next chapter.

Hymn (BPW 204)

My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me;
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I,
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men refused, and none
The longed-for Christ would know:
But O! my Friend,
My Friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend.

Sometimes they strew His way,
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King:
Then "Crucify!"
is all their breath,

And for His death
they thirst and cry.

Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
He gave the blind their sight,
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
Themselves displease,
and 'gainst Him rise.

They rise and needs will have
My dear Lord made away;
A murderer they save,
The Prince of life they slay,
Yet cheerful He
to suffering goes,
That He His foes
from thence might free.

In life no house, no home,
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb,
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heav'n was his home;
But mine the tomb
Wherein he lay.

Here might I stay and sing,
No story so divine;
Never was love, dear King!
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend,
in Whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

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.

Bible background notes 6 6 20

Isaiah 40: 12 - 17 & 27 - 31

Isaiah chapter 40 butts up against chapter 39 in your Bible, but there's a time gap of 160 years. During that gap, the superpower Assyria has collapsed and another one, Babylon, has arisen, Jerusalem has been ruined and the leading families of Judah have been exiled in Babylon.

In our present passage, Verses 12 - 17 emphasise the majestic greatness of God.

The oceans are held in his hands. As a seamstress measures cloth with her hand, so God measures the heavens with his. As a baker places bread in a basket, so God could gather all the substance of the earth in his basket. As a pharmacist weighs herbs, so God can weigh the very mountains.

The nations, so often a huge threat to Israel, are as nothing before God.

Verses 27 - 31

Verse 27 might have been a common complaint from God's people in exile. A sense of being invisible or disregarded by God is expressed. They had concluded from their circumstances that God did not care.

But this complaint is merely a launching pad for the gospel! Here is the gospel: Before God, all the nations - the powers of the world - are nothing! The forces that seemed to constrain the exiles in Babylon - before God, they are without worth.

The only word God gives to his people is to be still. The only hope is to renew their deep trust in God. That's where the real energy lies. That's where the ability to fly is hidden. Not in flapping like crazy but in resting on God's breath.

Perhaps at this current time in history God has given us a chance to learn this lesson. To be still, and so to thrive. To reconnect with God and so discover a fresh reality.

Matthew 28: 16 - 20

This very familiar passage concludes Matthew's gospel and includes a very trinitarian description of baptism. Matthew's gospel historically has been given great prominence. It

includes a great deal of Jesus' teaching and the standard theory is that it was drawn from both Mark's gospel and an unknown other source which it shares with Luke. In addition, Matthew had material Luke either did not have or did not use.

Matthew gives great attention to the Law - and has Jesus say that he came not to abolish it, but to fulfill it. If it criticises Jewish standards of righteousness it expects followers of Jesus to exceed them. Matthew includes the great Sermon on the Mount, presented as a complete 20 minutes message from Jesus himself, yet given very little attention by so many Christians, perhaps because of its insistence on non-violence, pacifism and complete freedom from anxiety - themes many consider impractical.

But it concludes with our present passage, often called 'The Great Commission'. Scholars are suspicious of the neatness of its formulations. It can be remembered by the four AAs.

All Authority - has been given to Jesus. His teaching - as in the sermon on the mount and the rest of Jesus' teaching on judgment (eg the sheep and the goats) and paradise as revealed in the parables some of which sound very harsh to modern ears - this canon of Jesus' message is given the full authority of God. Disciples must be taught to obey this teaching.

All Areas - (or all nations)- the message of Jesus is so authoritative that it is universally applicable. Everyone should be taught to follow the Jesus philosophy outlined in Matthew.

The AA is a **rescue service** in the UK - and Jesus is not just leaving his teaching, but sharing his very presence. He will be with his disciples always. This presence is symbolised and confirmed by baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Often Christian baptism in early sources was only in the name of Jesus. See for example Acts 2:38. Some might think that Matthew is importing later Christian practice of baptism in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and putting it onto the lips of Jesus. However, this baptism symbolises the idea that the disciple is submerged into the very life of God's fullness - that she or he becomes a part of the rich, internal loving unity of the Godhead.

The final AA is **Added Amen**... Some manuscripts add an Amen at the end of the book, some don't. This in itself makes a point - do we add our Amen to the message of Matthew and the Great Commission? Are we reporting for service and ready to go to all nations and preach the gospel?