



Sunday 26th April 2020

Notes from our Sunday Morning
Pre-recorded Worship

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this morning. However we're feeling today, I pray that you would lead us, you would guide us, you'd bless us, you'd encourage us to gather this morning. Amen.

Song

Rescuer

Chorus

He's our Rescuer

He's our Rescuer

We are free from sin forevermore

Oh how sweet the sound

Oh how grace abounds

We will praise the Lord our Rescuer

Verse 1

There is good news for the captive

Good news for the shamed

There is good news for the one who walked away

There is good news for the doubter

The one religion failed

For the good Lord has come to seek and save

Verse 2

He is beauty for the blind man

Riches for the poor

He is friendship for the one the world ignores

He is pasture for the weary

Rest for those who strive

Oh the good Lord is the way the truth the life

Yes the good Lord is the way the truth the life

Bridge

So come and be chainless

Come and be fearless

Come to the foot of Calvary

There is redemption for every affliction

Here at the foot of Calvary

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Hymn

Crown Him with Many Crowns

Crown Him with many crowns
The Lamb upon His throne
Hark how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own
Awake my soul and sing
Of Him who died for thee
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity

Crown Him the Lord of life
Who triumphed o'er the grave
And rose victorious in the strife
For those He came to save
His glories now we sing
Who died and rose on high
Who died eternal life to bring
And lives that death may die

Crown Him the Lord of love
Behold His hands and side
Rich wounds yet visible above
In beauty glorified
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight
But downward bends each burning eye
At mysteries so bright

Crown Him the Lord of peace
Whose power a sceptre sways
From pole to pole
That wars may cease
And all be prayer and praise
His reign shall know no end
And round His pierced feet
Fair flowers of paradise extend
Their fragrance ever sweet

Crown Him the Lord of years
The Potentate of time
Creator of the rolling spheres
Ineffably sublime
All hail Redeemer hail
For Thou hast died for me
Thy praise shall never never fail
Throughout eternity

Reading: 1 John 1: 1-4

The Incarnation of the Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete.

Talk by Mike Norris

We're starting a brand new series this morning and we're going to be looking at the book of 1 John under the title of the 'Big Family' which as you know, is really important to us. It's at the heart of our vision at St. Saviour's and we're seeking to be a family who journey together, who follow God together. A multi-generational diverse family who love and support one another as we follow God and seek to lead the lives that He wants us to lead together.

We obviously meet this morning in really weird times. We're in the midst of this unprecedented global crisis and it's throwing up all sorts of problems and challenges and many people are feeling frightened, uncertain and anxious. We're in lockdown in isolation. I don't know about you, I felt a bit gutted this week because even though I saw it coming, it seems like we're going to be in that place for quite a bit longer. We face a time of sickness and grief as people battle COVID, as people sadly have lost their lives to COVID. Some of you know people who've lost their life as a result of the virus and we are praying for you and our heart goes out to you. It's this odd time of stress and pressure. Care and concern for others, people we love. Care and concern for ourselves. Are we going to make it, can we cope? How do we respond in this situation?

I also want to suggest too, it's a time of opportunity. I know a number of you have talked about this and some of the good that is coming out of it. What is there to say though in this time of uncertainty where you make a plan and you have to rip it up a couple a days later because everything changes? What is there to say in this situation where we're really not sure how this is going play out? There are all sorts of tips out there, on stuff to do, for example, exercise and Joe Wicks is doing his thing in the morning. One of my boys has been doing that. There's all sorts of suggestions. Grow herbs, make pickle, do something creative.

What I want to do this morning is zone in on how we might respond as followers of Jesus, as Christians at this time and I want to think about our devotional life at this time based on these verses from 1 John. I think if we were to ask John, the author of this book, "what would be your tips, what would be your recommendations for this time?", I think he'd come up with these three things at the very least. I think the first thing John would say at this time, is be make sure that you focus on encountering Jesus as we journey through COVID-19. John was a fisherman, he had met Jesus. Jesus had called him to follow Him and he had this deep encounter with Jesus and rather wonderfully and bizarrely, he also met the risen Jesus after His death and resurrection.

Encountering Jesus is a great priority for John in all of his writings. You see in verse one, he writes this. "That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched. This we proclaim concerning the Word of Life."

There's a real sensory, tangible sense of an encounter with God, seeing, touching and looking at God. One thing I've loved in these times is our church reflections, daily reflections that members of the church family have been writing and I loved what Kirsten said on Friday. She picked up this theme of encounter in a very real, holistic way of Jesus and she talked about encountering God with our senses.

Encounter lies at the heart of our faith. I never realised that when I came to faith. I had a kidney operation when I was about 21. It was an eight hour operation and I came around in the recovery room and I remember feeling absolutely awful and thought 'what's happened to me?' I felt like I'd been run over and then I heard someone calling my name. I couldn't really focus or see them but I could hear them calling my name and gradually I came around and saw a nurse standing at the end of my bed calling my name and I thought, "whoa, who are you?" There's this sense that as we come to faith, we have this very real encounter like John did and I like what William Temple, one of the Archbishops of Canterbury in the 1940s said. He said this. "Knowledge of God can be fully given to man only in a person, never in a doctrine. Faith is not the holding of correct doctrine but personal fellowship with the living God."

I think John would recommend as we begin that we need to be people who encounter Jesus at this time. How do you encounter Jesus? Well maybe you've tuned in this morning but you wouldn't describe yourself as a Christian. We know there are all sorts of people joining us at this time, first things first, it's lovely having you with us and we're delighted you're with us. How do you encounter Jesus? Well we are going to be running a course called Alpha. It's a series of sessions which we'll do online and will explain some of the basics of the Christian faith. We want to help you with your spiritual journey, do what we can to answer your questions and support you. Do look out for more information coming soon on our website. We'd love you to join us and I have to say, if you're in that category, I feel really excited because starting this journey of encountering Jesus is phenomenal.

There was this guy called Augustine of Hippo and he was a bit of a wild guy, very wealthy, very privileged, party animal extraordinaire who came to faith in Jesus Christ and turned his life around. He said this. "To fall in love with God is the greatest romance. To seek Him is the greatest adventure. To find Him, the greatest human achievement." So if you are searching, if you are seeking, I feel really, really excited for you. We'll do all we can as a church family to support you.

How do you encounter Jesus if you've already come to faith and you've been with Him for a while, how do you encounter the risen Jesus? I think the primary way you do this is in prayer. There are all sorts of things that you can do, but I think the primary way is in prayer and I think we often think of prayer as intercession. Lifting up requests to God and people and situations and we have to be doing that at this time. Doctors, nurses, everyone who are ill, people worried about their businesses. We need to be praying like mad at this time and we're going to be holding more and more opportunities for prayer together over the next weeks. But here's the thing, I think prayer at its heart is simply this. It's simply being with God, that's what prayer is and I want to encourage us in this challenging time, in this time of testing to really be people who spend time with God. There's this technical term, abiding. It means just resting, being in Jesus' presence I would recommend. Whether you do that in silence or as you're walking, I would encourage you to be with God at this time.

I don't know how your prayer life is at this time, I don't know whether you are digging deep, I don't know whether you're really struggling, I don't know whether you're just bumping along or finding deep riches. I think I'd probably say yes to all those things. But do remember as you think about prayer, prayer is not about striving and effort. It's basically, at its heart about letting Jesus come into our hearts. That's what prayer is and I encourage you to do that because He will strengthen you, He will encourage you, He will comfort you at this time. If you are struggling in your prayer life at this time, do remember this, that He actually is praying for you. There are those verses in Romans 8 about Him

being seated at the right hand of the Father just praying for His people. So be encouraged and I think that's what John would say first of all, be people who are encountering Jesus.

I think the second thing John would say is don't just encounter Jesus but make sure during this weird COVID-19 time, this sad and challenging time, that you're experiencing His risen life every day. What do I mean by that? Well Jesus described Himself as the way, the truth and the life and He is the source of all life, He is life itself and John hadn't just encountered Jesus. He'd also personally experienced this life, this reality. He writes in verse two, "The life appeared and we've seen it and testified to it and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us." This obviously has echoes of the opening verses of John's Gospel but let's pause and just think about Jesus' life. What is this life that John is talking about? Well, a few quick things. The life Jesus offers is good, this eternal life He offers is good. John records elsewhere, Jesus' words. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:10.

So Jesus offers us this eternal life. It's about finding life, life to the full, it's good and I haven't always been a Christian. When I was digging in on the edges of wondering whether to come to faith or not, I remember thinking "is God good, is He trustworthy? What will happen if I become a Christian?" Well, good stuff will happen, that's what will happen. The life Jesus offers, this eternal life is also very different to physical life. We're alive physically. We are breathing, our body is functioning. Physically we're alive but this eternal life that Jesus offers us is of a different nature to that physical life. Physical life is a gift from God but this spiritual life Jesus offers is very, very different and we've got to be careful we don't separate the physical and spiritual or think one is better than the other, they're both good. But the eternal life that Jesus offers us is very different to just our normal physical life. The Greek word for eternal is 'aionios' which carries the idea of quality, not just longevity or quantity if you like. This life that Jesus offers us is different to physical life and it is about quality of life and depth of life.

I think it's worth reminding ourselves too that everyone can access this eternal life. It's open to all. Again, in John 3:16, John writes these words of Jesus. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." And John Henry Newman, he was a church leader some time ago. As you think about God's offer of eternal life, he wrote this. "Fear not that your life should come to an end, but rather that it shall never have a beginning." So we want to access this life, Jesus, the life who offers us eternal life and who can bring our physical life into a whole other depth and quality of life which is quite extraordinary. It's probably worth reminding ourselves that this life, this eternal life that Jesus offers can't be found anywhere else, you know? You can't find it in someone else or somewhere else. Only Jesus offers this life and so this is an extraordinary offer and it's open to everyone.

You might be sitting there thinking "well, I'm not sure about me" or you may be exploring spiritual things. God wants to fill your life with life. This eternal life too has radical consequences for the future, for your future and in John 6:40, John records this. "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life and I will raise them up on the last day." He's talking about when we come into relationship with Jesus, we actually find His life. Because Jesus has defeated death and risen from death back to life, we too experience His risen life and live on into eternity when we come into relationship with Him. So this life that John is speaking about, this eternal life that Jesus offers is quite extraordinary. Although it has a future dimension that is really quite remarkable, we have to remember in these challenging times, this eternal life is experienced today. It's not something we wait around for. We experience Jesus' eternal life every day and I like what C.S. Lewis said, "Where, except in the present, can the eternal be met? In other words, we experience this eternal life today.

Now I don't know how you're feeling about that little rant through eternal life. Why have I done all of that? Well the thing is we must not forget what Jesus has done and what Jesus has offered us. What we can access during this testing time. We have eternal life through Jesus Christ as we live and negotiate and journey through this time. I spoke to someone who had recently come to faith on Alpha and they said "You know, if I didn't have a God in my life, I just couldn't cope with this time." And so I'm just trying to remind us, as Christians we have these extraordinary things, these truths of God, this life of God.

So how do you respond to this gift of eternal life? I want to suggest we thank God with awe, with wonder and we rejoice in what we have been given at this time. Can I encourage you to hold onto this eternal life that Jesus has won for you? Paul writes about this to Timothy, he says this. "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses." 1 Timothy 6:12. I want to encourage us not to feel discouraged, not to think "I've got nothing in this situation". God has given you Jesus. He's given you His son and he's given us eternal life. We've got to take hold of that more than ever in these times, be encouraged by that and grab hold of it and there's this sense in those verses of fighting for it. There's a sense of battle and opposition as we follow Jesus, especially in these times.

I think John would say grab hold of the eternal life to which you have been offered in Christ Jesus. I think that's the second thing. I think the third thing John would say to us if he was here with us at this time would be make sure during these strange times during the lockdown that you focus on loving one another. I think we always need to be reminded that our faith, it's not an individual thing that we have an individual relationship with God and it's all just autonomous and everything. You see in these verses from John that the Christian faith is lived out in community, in fellowship with other people and in verses three and four, there's lots of language around the corporate nature of the faith.

Let me read verses 3 & 4, "We proclaim to you that we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us and our fellowship is with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete." There's a lot to dig into here but our Christian faith is always in the context of the body of Christ, in the context of others and why is that? Well, we follow a God who is three in one, Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus when he came to earth lived with other people, and John was one of those people. Basically we are called to journey together in the family of God as we follow Jesus and John uses this word fellowship. He says fellowship with us, and he talks about fellowship with the Father and with His son. This word fellowship in the New Testament is 'coinonia' and it signifies having something deeply shared with someone else, a very deeply shared experience and what is that experience? It's actually the experience we have of following God and walking with God. So, someone said "Fellowship is a mutual bond "that Christians have with Christ that puts us "in a deep, eternal relationship with one another."

The early church, John, Peter, James, the Disciples, Mary, Martha, they took this shared participation in God very, very seriously and having shared with God themselves, they actually shared in radical ways with one another. They built their family life as an early church together and I want to just encourage us in this time to think about our community life, our church life. It's been so great to see how you have supported one another, loved one another, prayed for one another and upheld one another. I think strangely, rather bizarrely, this time is an opportunity to go deeper into family life together. To build our Big Family in deeper ways despite the fact that we can't meet together and despite the lockdown and isolation. I think there's opportunity here to go much deeper. So, as a big church family, there's all sorts of stuff to think about. There's all sorts of stuff that we can be, that we can do, all sorts of people to pray for and support. But let's think about encountering Jesus together. Let's think about experiencing His risen life together day by day. Let's be people who

really love one another in this testing time, in this very, very strange time, but in this time that is also going to pass. We will get through this, we will actually eventually come to the other side of this and I'm so looking forward to being able to gather with you face to face as soon as we can.

Song

This I Believe (The Creed)

Verse 1

Our Father everlasting
The all creating One
God Almighty
Through Your Holy Spirit
Conceiving Christ the Son
Jesus our Saviour

Chorus 1

I believe in God our Father
I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit
Our God is three in One
I believe in the resurrection
That we will rise again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus

Verse 2

Our judge and our defender
Suffered and crucified
Forgiveness is in You
Descended into darkness
You rose in glorious life
Forever seated high

Bridge

I believe in You
I believe You rose again
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord

Chorus 2

I believe in life eternal
I believe in the virgin birth
I believe in the saints' communion
And in Your holy Church
I believe in the resurrection
When Jesus comes again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus

Prayers

Dear Father Almighty, Lord of this earth, we come before you today to praise you and thank you for your creation, for the beauty and freshness of springtime, for sunshine and new growth and new beginnings. But Lord, we are in dire straits, scared, bewildered, uncertain. Father, none of us understand why this Coronavirus pandemic has hit the world now and we hurt and we believe that you hurt for us and we look to you, our faithful and steadfast rock, our fortress for comfort, shelter and peace.

On the world stage, we pray that your Holy Spirit will move powerfully and bring cooperation instead of competition. A searching for common ground instead of mistrust. The will to allocate the world's resources more and more equitably so that the suffering of the poor and dispossessed may be relieved. We do pray especially for those who are alone, those who have no access to medical care like we have in the West and those for whom social distancing and sanitisation are a practical impossibility. We pray that world leaders will be moved by compassion and will renew commitment to caring for our planet, your creation even after a week when Earth Day, April the 22nd hardly made a single headline due to our focus on the Coronavirus.

Let us not forget the bigger picture, Lord. And Lord, bringer of healing and comfort, we want to thank you and to pray for all those who are working so hard, often putting themselves at risk to help us all and to keep the wheels of our society turning. So we lift up to you doctors, nurses, refuse collectors, carers, postmen, transport workers, managers and decision makers, prison officers, shop assistants, people working at food banks, farmers, the police and ambulance service. We are so fortunate to have such rich resources and wonderful people to help us through all this and we praise you and thank you Lord in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Father God, we want to bring before you today our community at St. Saviour's and we thank you for the richness that belonging to such a community brings. We pray for wisdom for Mike and the leadership team at this time in all their decision making. We pray that as a church, you might give us eyes to look above and beyond our current situation and try to understand your purposes at this time. We pray our dependency on you will grow despite our fears and that your Holy Spirit might move in a powerful way to bring good out of what seems a dark situation. We pray that our community here will somehow thrive and flourish throughout these difficult times and as we look outside to the services of our wider community, we pray your protection on all those vulnerable children in Surrey and beyond. For those subject to increasing domestic abuse during lockdown, for those confined to prison cells for long hours and for all the professionals and carers involved with them, give them we pray compassion and clarity to ensure the well-being and good mental health for all these marginalised groups. Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Father God, for us as we live in a somewhat altered reality with frustrated hopes and unresolved questions, we thank you that we can know that you, Jesus, walk with us day by day. Help us to be still and know that you are God. For any of us who from time to time feel fearful and abandoned, for those living in isolation and on their own, we pray we may be able to share our fears and sadness with you and invite you into the dark places knowing that you are there. Holy Spirit, we pray you will pour out the Spirit upon each of us and bring us peace. We pray too Father practically that each of us will in turn be agents of your peace and your love to our families, friends, neighbours and to all we speak with. We pray for strengthening relationships and that your Kingdom will come into our own personal communities. We pray too for families juggling work and home schooling, for those living alone and feeling lonely and for those facing employment or financial challenges. For parents of children with additional needs and limited support. We name those we know now.

And finally father, we pray that you will enable each of us to be encouraged by the Easter message of hope and a reminder that you are the same yesterday, today and forever. Amen.

Song

O Praise The Name (Anástasis)

Verse 1

I cast my mind to Calvary
Where Jesus bled and died for me
I see His wounds His hands His feet
My Saviour on that cursed tree

Verse 2

His body bound and drenched in tears
They laid Him down in Joseph's tomb
The entrance sealed by heavy stone
Messiah still and all alone

Chorus

O praise the Name of the Lord our God
O praise His Name forevermore
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord oh Lord our God

Verse 3

Then on the third at break of dawn
The Son of heaven rose again
O trampled death where is your sting
The angels roar for Christ the King

Verse 4

He shall return in robes of white
The blazing sun shall pierce the night
And I will rise among the saints
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face

Family News

Our daily reflections are continuing, and some church members have been writing them in the recent weeks. If you're not receiving them, we'd love to send them to you. Do have a look on our website or contact the church office. If you'd like to write one for everyone else to enjoy, please drop us an email or again get in touch with the church office and we will send you the information that you need to do that.

We have another evening of prayer next Wednesday at 8pm and it's just so important right now that we're gathering as a church to pray and to seek God and to ask for healing, protection, for a vaccine, for an end ultimately to this whole coronavirus pandemic that we're all in right now. So come along, join us and let's just gather in prayer and there'll be some more information happening next week, so do look out for that.

We're are going to be doing our offering virtually. So if you would love to give to life and work of St. Saviour's and we're really grateful for that, so thank you, . You can find more information on the Giving Page in the Get Involved section of our website.

We also have an opportunity coming up for you to get involved in our online Sunday services. So, if you're taking photos or videos or just anything fun during the week, we'd love you to send these in. Obviously, our services are public so do be aware that the content will be too. If you're happy with that, do send us videos and photos by the end of next Wednesday to the church office, we'd love to hear from you.

Closing Prayer

Father God, I pray that as we go into this week, the sixth week of lockdown that we would experience you, we would encounter you, we would know you really close to us at this time, Jesus. We love your name. Bless us, bless our families and those in our lives, whether they're near or far. Amen.