

Vicar's Letter – Pentecost Sunday 2019 'Thy Kingdom Come'

Dear Friends

Today is Pentecost Sunday. We celebrate the birth of the church and the coming of the Spirit of God on the first disciples of Jesus to empower them to be his witnesses. Without God's Spirit energising, refreshing and equipping God's people with creativity and life, the church would be reduced to monochrome tired religion. Instead it is vibrant, attractive and bursting forth in glorious technicolour. At least that is our longing as we pray; 'Come Holy Spirit'.

Prayer has been our focus in this last week as we have joined together with Christians around the world in response to the global, 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer initiative. One of my favourite hymns, 'The day thou gavest', contains within it the prayers of the saints rising up to heaven as the dawn rises on different continents:

**'We thank Thee that Thy Church, unsleeping,
While earth rolls onward into light,
Through all the world her watch is keeping,
And rests not now by day or night.**

**As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away'**

As we go to bed, Christians on another shore are getting up and beginning their day in prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God.

Saint John Chrysostom (349-407) wrote, 'Prayer...is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings...The potency of prayer has subdued the strength of fire, it has bridled the rage of lions...extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the gates of heaven, assuaged diseases...rescued cities from destruction ...and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt'. The Holy Spirit is given to us to create within us a hunger for prayer. For it is in prayer that we become more aware of the presence of God, who He is and His ability to undertake for us in whatever situation we find ourselves to be.

Don't Stop Praying

Many of us have entered into this week of prayer, having tied 5 knots around a piece of wool to remind us of the 5 people for whom we are earnestly seeking God. Don't stop praying once the global initiative has ceased. We need to continue to persevere in prayer, to keep praying and never give up, trusting the outcome to God in everything.

Jesus intercedes for us on our behalf

The New Testament book of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God and is our great High Priest who lives to intercede for us. St Paul (Romans 8:34) reaffirms this truth that Jesus is now praying for us. This truth changes the way we pray. We now pray *with* Jesus not simply *to* Jesus. Jesus is interceding for me (and you), so we offer up our prayers for family, friends and ourselves with Jesus to our heavenly Father. Knowing Jesus is praying with me allows me to ask him what I should be praying for and then I can pray with courage and confidence.

Know to whom you are praying.

The final verse of this hymn reminds me to whom I am praying and despite the turmoil and troubles of life, the One in whom I can have confidence.

**'So be it, Lord; thy thrones shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away:
Thy Kingdom stands, and grows forever,
Till all thy creatures own thy sway.'**

Jesus said; 'I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18). On this Pentecost Sunday, let us pray for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit on His church in every nation to renew and bring revival.

With every blessing in Christ

Stephen