

4.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord of Life, we pray for your Church.

Help us to be the church you would have us be, filled with your Spirit, bringing your love to our world.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Lord of life, we pray for our world.

We pray for the people working to find an answer to Covid 19; the scientists and medical staff trying to produce vaccines against this disease; the people who have to make decisions to enable the life of our world to progress. And we pray especially for all those working in the care services.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Lord of life, we pray for those suffering from disease and illness. We pray for their families and friends, that they may be strengthened and sustained in their time of trial.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer.

Please remember to make your offering for the work of God.

Hymn The Spirit lives to set us free ([StF 397](#))

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

Special thanks to Local Preacher, John Kidd who prepared our worship sheet this week.

United in Christ across Darlington District
Sunday 17th May 2020

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in his sanctuary,

Praise Him in his mighty heavens.

Praise Him for his acts of power.

Praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Hymn Come down O Love divine ([StF 372 H&P 281](#))

Opening Prayer

God of greatness and majesty,

We praise you.

God of light and love

We praise you.

God who gives to us

We thank you.

God who gave us your Son

We thank you.

For our greed and selfishness

Father forgive us.

For our failure to listen to you

Father forgive us.

For our weakness and failings

Father forgive us.

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Reading

[John 14:15-21](#)

2.

Reflection

The discourse given by Jesus to his disciples in the upper room covers three chapters of John's Gospel. Jesus is talking to his disciples, the people who have been following him for three years, watching him, learning from him, finding out more about him, and now, though they didn't realise it at the time, about to see his death. Jesus talks to them, trying to make them see more clearly who he was and what he was trying to do. The discourse is expressed only to his disciples, and it shows quite clearly that they still hadn't understood him. So Jesus, like all good teachers, went back to basics.

He told them he was leaving them; he told them that they couldn't go where he was going; he told them that he was one with God the Father; he told them that they would be able to do the things he had done; he told them that anything asked in his name would be done. But then the crunch: "If you love me, keep my commands." To obtain the benefits of being his disciples they would have to be obedient, obedient to him and his commandments to them. And obedience to his commands would be a demonstration of their love for him.

I suspect that the disciples still hadn't understood at this point the centrality of love to the life and work of their Master. He had been demonstrating throughout his work that goodness was at the heart of what he was about. He cared for people, he healed the sick, made the blind see and the deaf hear. Everything he did was about goodness and love, and the few direct commands he gave were to do with love. When asked what was the most important commandment he had said, "Love God," and then stressed the second most important, "Love your neighbour as yourself." These two Old Testament commandments were given by Jesus a far more significant status than that given in the Law. And he gave an even stronger commandment. "Love one another as I have loved you." So anyone who claimed to be a follower would be obedient to the command.

3.

But to keep that command isn't easy. All of us are human, and Jesus knew and saw that in his followers. So to assist them, Jesus promised them a helper. "I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth." An advocate is someone who stands up in a court of law and pleads the case for his client. Many years of Jewish tradition spoke of God as a judge in the heavenly lawcourt, and Jesus was promising that his followers would have someone to speak on their behalf.

But the word translated as "advocate" can be translated in other ways too. Tom Wright translate the word as "helper." And as helper it doesn't just mean that the Spirit comes to our aid when we are in need. It means that the Spirit gives us the strength we need to do the things we have to do as God's people. And as we know that isn't easy. But we can rely on the Spirit to help us whatever situation we are in.

And yet another meaning is "comforter." There come times in everyone's life when they need the comfort given by other people. A bereavement or tragedy leaves us all in need of support. It may be a hug, or a handshake or even just a pat on the shoulder, but that human support is very important and significant. When Jesus speaks of the Spirit he means one who gives that sort of support.

Now the followers of Jesus at that point in their lives had experienced none of these. But he was making the point that they would receive the Spirit at some time, and as a result they would know the presence of God in their lives.

And what he said to his disciples still applies to us. When we receive the Spirit of God in our lives we are helped, comforted and given an advocate. How we receive that Spirit is not important. God works in His way, and we receive from him in different ways. But having received the power which comes from the presence of His Spirit we are able to carry out our Lord's commands more effectively, and we can share his love with everyone else.