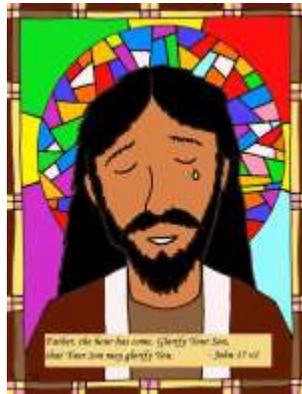


# Stokesley Methodist Church



**Sunday 24th May 2020**



## **A Gathering Prayer from the Roots resources**

Lord of all glory, we come before you seeking your wisdom, that we may glorify you through our thinking;  
seeking your love, that we may glorify you through our emotions;  
seeking your strength, that we may glorify you at all times;  
seeking your perseverance, that we may glorify you in all places.  
Show us how to live,  
that our lives shine with your glory,  
and those who encounter us may know you  
and that you are at work in your world.

**Amen.**

## **Lectionary Readings:**

**Acts 1 v6-14** (p1092) Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

**Psalm 68 v1-10, 32-35** (p582) Sing to God, sing praise to His name, extol him who rides on the clouds

**1 Peter 4 v12-14; 5 v6-11** (p1220) Suffering for Being a Christian/To Elders and Young Men

**John 17 v1-11** (p1085) Jesus Prays for Himself/Jesus Prays for His Disciples

## **Glorify My Name**

This week our focus is on Jesus' prayer that he is glorified in our lives.

Jesus says that the hour has come for him to glorify the Father. He prays for those who have kept God's word and so belong to God. He prays for their protection in the world as he leaves it, and that they may be one.

In the reading from Acts the disciples would like a definitive timetable from Jesus, explaining when Israel will be restored. Instead, Jesus speaks about the coming Holy Spirit: 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes to you; and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.'

Then he is lifted up and a cloud hides him from their sight, and two men dressed in white explain that there is no point in continuing to look for Jesus, as though this were some random disappearance that will end at any moment. But, they say, he 'will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven' – he will return according to a divine purpose, at the time that God determines. This moment marks a decisive change in the disciples' relationship with Jesus. Things have been startlingly different since the resurrection, with Jesus appearing, and teaching, and

then disappearing again. But now he has told them that the moment they should be waiting for is not his next resurrection appearance, nor the liberation of the nation, but the moment when they will receive the Holy Spirit. Luke depicts this departure as different: a cloud takes him out of their sight, reminiscent of the transfiguration, and of the cloud that filled the Temple (1 Kings 8.10-11) and of the pillar of cloud that guided the people to the Promised Land (Exodus 13.21).

At this present time we would all agree that life is difficult. It is a fact now as it was in the time of the early Christians. The writer of 1 Peter would agree with that assessment: 'do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering' (1 Peter 4.12). Do not waste your energy on being surprised, or on wondering how such a strange event has come about. Focus instead on what you need to do to respond well. Christ suffered, therefore suffering is not outside the shape of God's plan for life. In fact, to suffer when you have done nothing wrong is to share in Christ's sufferings. This holds out the promise that you will also share his joy, for the pattern that Christ presents is not of unlimited suffering for its own sake, but suffering leading to forgiveness and an overflow of life: death leading to resurrection. God has called you to his eternal glory in Christ. There will come a time to be glad and to shout with joy! What a special message for us to remember today. John's Gospel does have a prayer offered by Jesus that resembles the anguish of the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in the Synoptics, but it is back in chapter 12 (12.27-36). This prayer has a quite different quality. Jesus looks up to heaven and says, 'Glorify your Son.' We often think of glory as dazzling light, the spiritual equivalent of some heavenly bling, but when the term is used in this passage several other meanings emerge. The crucifixion, for all its horror and darkness, will be the hour in which Jesus is

glorified. Jesus has also glorified his Father by finishing the work he was sent to do. Jesus even says that he has been glorified in his disciples. Glory, like knowledge, is deeply relational and mutual: Jesus requests that the Father glorify the Son, so that the Son may glorify the Father. Glory is something to bestow on another, and knowledge is about knowing *someone*, not knowing *something*. The spirals of meaning in John's Gospel take on their widest curve yet: right back to the prologue of the Gospel (John 1.1-3), and so back to before the time that the world itself existed. Jesus is not asking here for a return to a heavenly status quo where he can forget that the experiment of the incarnation ever happened; he is praying for a new situation of increased knowledge and glory, where his disciples are included in the relationship between Father and Son, caught up in this mutual giving of glory, like so many mirrors reflecting the eternal light.

### **The links between the readings**

God's glory is everywhere, but it is not always visible. Sometimes a moment of glory precedes a separation, as it did for the disciples on the mountain-top. Sometimes glory is hard to recognise, as it was for the disciples before the crucifixion. Sometimes glory is hidden, as it was for the suffering Christians. But the glory of God persists.

### **A Sending Out Prayer**

Go into the world to show God's glory,  
and may you always know God's blessing  
and God's peace.

**Amen**