

**THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:
Telephone Service for Sunday 16 May 2021 – 7th Sunday of Easter**

The service for today has been prepared by Rev Ryder Rogers and can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley churches for the 7th Sunday of Easter.

Welcome to our Service where ever you are.

On this last Sunday of Easter, and the Sunday after Ascension, we give the final Easter shout:
Hallelujah, Christ is risen; He is risen indeed, Hallelujah

Invitation. God's Word invites us: *Come close to God and he will come close to you.*

As we draw near to God we pray: Heavenly Father, in our worship help us to sing your praises, hear your word, and bring our prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Song *Hail that day that sees him rise, Alleluiah.* Charles Wesley

<i>Hail that day that sees him rise,</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>	<i>There the glorious triumph waits:</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>
<i>Glorious to his native skies:</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>	<i>Lift your heads, eternal gates!</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>
<i>Christ, awhile to mortals given,</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>	<i>Wide unfold the radiant scene:</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>
<i>Enters now the highest heaven!</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>	<i>Take the King of Glory in!</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>
<i>Lord beyond our mortal sight,</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>		
<i>Raise our hearts to reach thy height,</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>		
<i>There thy face unclouded see,</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>		
<i>Find our heaven of heavens in thee.</i>	<i>Alleluia</i>		

Reflection

I feel a bit like a barrister - constantly in & out of court. This is my 3rd case.

- On Easter Sunday we covered the case of a man who was killed but had come back to life again and we called witnesses who said they'd seen him.

Over 500 eye witness said that they saw Jesus alive.

- On the 3rd Sun after Easter, we looked in on a case of a man born lame now walking & Peter & John having to answer in court - how they did it & who gave them permission.

- Today's readings create a different court that looks at cases of **IDENTITY** i.e. Who people really are.

Cf Crooks steal identities (from credit cards, internet) to use/misuse them in what we call Identity Fraud - With Scam Calls & e-mails the big question is: Are people who they claim to be?

In Bible days there were lots of '?'s c **Who Jesus is.**

Pilate asked *Are you the King of the Jews?*

The curious crowds asked: *Who is this man?*

John Baptist asked *Are you the Promised One, the Messiah?*

Today people ask: Is Jesus real? Is he really who he says he is? Our Bible readings give us witness to Jesus

- there is three sorts of witness Human, Divine & Personal

Let's read the 'case documents' found in **Acts1:15-16, 20-26**

15 *And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said,*

16 *"Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;*

20 *"For it is written in the book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.'*

21 *"Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,*

22 *"beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."*

23 *And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.*

24 *And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen
25 "to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."*

26 *And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

Acts1 tells us that Judas, the betrayer, killed himself

The 12 became The 11. So, who would take Judas' place?

To be a replacement Peter said (in Acts1:21) *apostles must be ...men who accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in & out among us, starting from the baptism of John Baptist to the day when Jesus was taken up from us & a **witness** with us of His resurrection.*

1st we have **human witnesses** - The apostles short-listed 2 candidates and after prayer chose Matthias to be Judas' replacement as someone who 'was there' with Jesus for 3yrs, who could identify Him as a real, historic, flesh & blood person; Jesus, the God Man; the crucified, risen, ascended Jesus - all he said he was. These human witnesses knew Christ's true identity, & put it 'on record' in the Bible that Jesus is Real

2nd we have **Divine witness** i.e. what God says?

The next 'case records' come in **1 John 5:9-13**

9 *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.*

10 *He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.*

11 *And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*

12 *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

13 *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*

v9 says: *If we receive the witness of men.... the witness of God is greater*

Jewish law said: 3 male witnesses made a watertight, closed case. If 3 human witnesses were enough John says: *how much greater is God's witness that was heard audibly 3 times affirming Jesus' identity*

i) at Jesus' Baptism, Father God said *This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*

ii) on the mountain of Transfiguration he said *This is my Son Listen to him*

& iii) In Jn12 when some Greeks came looking for Jesus, as he promised & prayed that Father God would be glorified by his death on the cross, Father God's voice was heard from heaven, saying, *"I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.*

And add to this how in John17:8 Jesus prayed for his disciples, and the world saying: *Father, I have given to them the words which You gave Me; & they've received them, & have known surely that **I came forth from You**; they have believed that You sent Me.*

Cf Jesus (as God the Son) affirmed what Father God said, declaring: *Your word (from sky & Script) is truth.*

Divine witness identified Jesus as the Son of God, our Saviour and Lord, who has ascended and sits on heaven's throne

1 Human witness identifies the reality of Jesus as Son of Man

2 Divine witness identifies Jesus as Son of God And

3rd we have **Personal witness** - something, or someone, inside us saying: this is certain

Let's go back to the 'case documents' in 1Jn5

John says in v10: *He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself;*

Cf There's a 'knowing in our Knower' that says **It's true** - *God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*

John then states unequivocally: *He who **has** the Son **has** life; he who does not have the Son of God **does not have** life.*

This is one of my favourite verses - it's so simple and clear. Either we have Jesus in our hearts ... or we don't. If we **do** have Jesus - we have eternal LIFE If we don't have Jesus... we don't have life eternal. When we, by faith, ask Jesus into our hearts, we get this guarantee; Jesus is Real; He is greater than all - he is God the Son, & through his death & resurrection He is the Life-Giver The big '?' is: 1. Have we, and will, we accept the evidence (Human & Divine) & 2. will we accept Jesus into our heart? That's when we know Jesus, and are given eternal Life

Song: 1. *This little light of mine, I'm goin' to let it shine.* 2. *Jesus is the light I'm goin' to let him shine* Trad

Our **Creed** comes from Philippians 2

Though he was divine, he did not cling to equality with God, but made himself nothing. Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness. He humbled himself and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God has raised him on high, and given him a name that is above every name; That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **Amen**

In our **Prayers** we end with the words **Lord have mercy**

Father forgive us our faults and shortcoming, our broken promises and our lack of love. We thank you for your promise to forgive and cleanse all who confess their sins.

Lord ... have mercy

We pray peace, love and joy for our families and friends, we thank you for those who show us your love.

Lord ... have mercy

We ask for your church as it proclaims the Good News, that you will give it wisdom, grace, courage and faithfulness to shine for Jesus.

Lord ... have mercy

We pray for our world spoilt by violence, corruption, selfishness, greed, asking for justice and truth to prevail.

Lord ... have mercy

As we await the coming of your Spirit at Pentecost, may our hearts be filled with faith and a passion for your glory.

Lord ... have mercy

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen**

Song: Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine Fanny J Crosby

*1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine
Heir of salvation, purchase of God
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood*

*Ref: This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long
This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long*

*2. Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight,
Angels descending bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.*

*3. Perfect submission, all is at rest
I and my Saviour am happy and blessed.
Watching and waiting, looking above;
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love*

A Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you,
The Lord lift up his smile upon you, and give you his peace
and

The Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit be with you, and in you, and those for whom you pray, this day and for evermore. Amen

Music covered by licence CCLI 2370586