

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 31st October

All Saint's Day

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Lord, direct our thoughts and teach us to pray. Lift up our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

First hymn: All hail the power of Jesus' name

All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

2 Crown him, ye morning stars of light,
who fixed this floating ball;
now hail the Strength of Israel's might,
and crown him Lord of all!

3 Crown Him, ye martyrs of your God,
Who from His altar call;
Praise Him whose way of pain ye trod,
and crown Him Lord of all.

4 Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,
Ye ransomed of the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
and crown Him Lord of all.

5. Hail him, the heir of David's line
Whom David Lord did call,
The God incarnate, Man divine,
and crown him Lord of all.

6 Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget
The wormwood and the gall,
Go, spread your trophies at His feet,
And crown Him Lord of all.

7 Let every tribe and every tongue
To him their hearts enthral;
Lift high the underseal song,
and crown him Lord of all.

Edward Peronet 1726-1792 CCLI Licence 2370586

Psalm 24.1-6 The earth is the Lord's and all that fills it, the compass of the world and all who dwell therein. For he has founded it upon the seas and set it firm upon the rivers of the deep. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, or who can rise up in his holy place?' Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, who have not lifted up their soul to an idol, nor sworn an oath to a lie; they shall receive a blessing from the Lord, a just reward from the God of their salvation. Such is the company of those who seek him, of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

Invitation to confession: St Paul says, 'Be imitators of God; love as Christ loved; do not grieve the Holy Spirit; put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice.' So let us confess our sins to God, who forgives us in Christ.

Kyrie confession:

Christ came in humility to share our lives: forgive our pride. Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Christ came with good news for all people: forgive our silence. Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

Christ came in love to a world of suffering: forgive our self-centredness. Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Absolution:

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect: Let us pray, **God of holiness, your glory is proclaimed in every age: as we rejoice in the faith of your saints, inspire us to follow their example with boldness and joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Isaiah 25. 6-9

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow

up death for ever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Rev 21.1-6a The New Heaven and the New Earth

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.'

Hymn: All Heaven Declares

All heaven declares
The glory of the risen Lord.
Who can compare
With the beauty of the Lord?
Forever He will be
The Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee
And worship Him alone.

I will proclaim
The glory of the risen Lord,
Who once was slain
To reconcile man to God.
Forever You will be
The Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee
And worship You alone

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John 11. 32-44

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Reflection

The gospel story takes us to Bethany, to a family in despair, believing that Jesus has not prioritised them in their predicament and that his turning up now is too late and somewhat pointless.

You may not be surprised to know that I am very interested in this little town situated near Jerusalem, after all, I have a daughter named Bethany. I will tell you in a moment about our trip there in 2010.

Opinions are divided on the meaning of the name of this town, some say it is the House of the poor and this indicates that it was the site of the almshouse. Others say its name means the 'place of care', I'd like to think the two would go hand in hand. Another popular opinion is simply House of Figs!

This story of Lazarus being raised from the dead is very familiar, we must have all heard it and variations of interpretation over the years. Looking afresh at it this week I can't help see how much Mary and Martha

had given up hope. Who can blame them, after all their brother had been dead for 4 days, there were already the signs of decay, the stench of rotting flesh. Surely there was no hope.

And then the unthinkable happened and Lazarus was raised from the dead, with Jesus saying ... "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

"Unbind him, and let him go." He's alive!

This got me thinking – have we given up hope? Do we also think the good news of the gospel is too little, too late?

When I took my Bethany to the Holy Land, the thing I was most looking forward to was taking her to visit the place she was named after "Bethany".

But by the time we got there we had visited so many churches and ancient sites that she had had enough! She was only 12! When we got to the entrance of the cave where Lazarus had been raised from the dead and the rest of our party were desperate to go inside – she refused! And I mean totally refused ... so we let everyone else go past us and we sat on the side of the pathway.

I was so disappointed, as you can probably imagine.

But then something amazing happened, which would not have been possible if we have gone underground! As we were sat on the side of the road waiting for the others a young muslim boy aged about 5 and his mum came out of a little gate and he sat down with his lunch, I can only describe it as a mix between a cake and a honey sandwich and both Beth and I looked at it because we were wondering what it was. His mum soon disappeared and came back with a sandwich for each of us – she must have thought we were looking because we were hungry. Despite the language barrier we managed to thank her and the four of us just had a whale of a time together, just a short time but we shared and laughed and it was just the tonic that Bethany needed. Such welcome and hospitality, it was a moment that neither Beth nor I will ever forget. A God moment, when all is well with the world.

Reading this account for today and remembering back then I realised that God is so interested in each one of us, he knows exactly what we need and ... when we need it.

Even though Mary and Martha had given up all hope. Jesus never let them down. He was there for them, he did what they needed him to do.

Even though the last 18 months and probably even before that have been disappointing for our churches here across the Bride Valley. God knows. He hasn't given up on us, as individuals, as a church here, as the Christian presence within our communities.

Together let's continue to hope for a time when by believing we too will see the glory of God, here with us, here in this place. Our God is well and truly a God of surprises. Our hope is built on nothing less. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith: we say together in faith

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is and is to come.

We believe in God the Father who created all things: **for by his will they were created and have their being.**

We believe in God the Son who was slain: **for with his blood, he purchased us for God, from every tribe and language, from every people and nation.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit: **the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' Even so come, Lord Jesus! Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for God's faithfulness to be known in our world. Faithful God **glorify your name.**

In a world of change and hope, of fear and adventure; Faithful God **glorify your name.**

In human rebellion and obedience, in our seeking and in our finding; Faithful God **glorify your name.**

In the common life of our community, in prosperity and need; Faithful God **glorify your name.**

As your Church proclaims your goodness in words and action; Faithful God **glorify your name.**

Among our friends and in our homes; Faithful God **glorify your name.**

In our strengths and triumphs, in our weaknesses and at our death; Faithful God **glorify your name.**

In your saints in glory and on the day of Christ's coming; Faithful God **glorify your name.**

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may ever be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer and know ourselves surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Jesus taught us to call God our father, so in faith we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
Now and forever. Amen.**

Final Hymn: All my hope on God is founded

1 All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.

Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.

God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

2 Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.

But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

3 God's great goodness ay endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:

splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of nought.

Evermore, from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

4 Daily doth the almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

5 Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

*Meine Hoffnung stehet feste Joachim Neander (1650-1680)
Paraphrased Robert Bridges (1844-1930) CCLI Licence 2370586*

Final Prayer and Blessing

May God, who gives patience and encouragement, give you a spirit of unity to live in harmony as you follow Jesus Christ so that with one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and all who you love and pray for, now and forevermore. **Amen.**