

Paper and pen required for the end of the Talk later.

While keeping on your Mute button, please join in the responses, with the person responding on behalf of us all, and the singing throughout the Service. Please UNMUTE if reading to us. Thank you.

Welcome to Worship, on this Fifth Sunday of Easter,

**How much do we consider the love and purpose of God,
in every 'person encounter' we have?**

Gathering words

We come before the throne of God with countless crowds
from every nation and race, tribe and language.

Salvation belongs to our God! Alleluia!

Song

All heaven declares
the glory of the risen Lord;
who can compare
with the beauty of the Lord?

For ever He will be (forever He will be)
the Lamb upon the throne (the Lamb upon the throne)
I gladly bow the knee, (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 (forever You will be)
the Lamb upon the throne; (the Lamb upon the throne)
I gladly bow the knee, (I gladly bow the knee)
And worship You alone.

Noel and Tricia Richards 1987 Kingsway's Thankyou Music

Introduction to Confession

We run the race set before us, surrounded by a great crowd of witnesses.

Therefore, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely, bringing them to Jesus in penitence and faith.

The Confession

**Living God, we confess our faults and admit our frailty.
we own our brokenness and recognise the ways we wound our
lives, the lives of others and the life of the world.**

**By your abundant grace, please forgive us;
please renew us in mind and spirit;
please enable us to grow in love.**

**We ask that you may move among us and give us life,
with the spirit of freedom,
which sustains us in joyful and faithful witness.**

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

Absolution

May the God of love and power forgive us,
heal and strengthen us by His healing Spirit.
May He raise us to new life
in Jesus Christ, our living Lord. **Amen.**

Song

I will worship, (I will worship),
with all of my heart, (with all of my heart),
I will praise You, (I will praise You),
With all of my strength, (all my strength).

I will seek You, (I will seek You),
all of my days, (all of my days),
I will follow, (I will follow),
all of Your ways (all Your ways).

Chorus:

*I will give You all my worship,
I will give You all my praise.
You alone I long to worship,
You alone are worthy of my praise.*

I will bow down, (I will bow down),
hail You as King, (hail you as King).
I will serve You, (I will serve You),
Give You, everything (Give you, everything).

I will lift up (I will lift up),
My eyes to Your throne (my eyes to Your throne),
I will trust You, (I will trust You),
I will trust You alone, (trust in You alone).

Chorus: I will give you.....

1st Reading: Acts 8:26-40

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth.”

The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot.

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

2nd Reading: 1 John 4:7-21

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Song:

Who is there like You
and who else would give their life for me,
even suffering in my place?

And who could repay You?
All of creation looks to You,
and You provide for all You have made.

So I'm lifting up my hands,
lifting up my voice,
lifting up Your name,
and in Your grace I rest,
for Your love has come to me
and set me free.

And I'm trusting in Your word,
trusting in Your cross,
trusting in Your blood
and all Your faithfulness,
for Your power at work in me
is changing me.

Paul Oakley 1996 Kingsway's Thankyou Music

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John chapter 15, starting at the first verse.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The Gospel of John 15: 1 – 8 The Vine and the Branches

Jesus said “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples”.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ.

The Talk

How much do we consider the love and purpose of God, in every 'person encounter' we have?

Reflecting on the Acts reading today, some theologians think Philip was only prompted by the indwelling Holy Spirit, rather than actually meeting the person of an angel of the Lord who spoke to him. Well, I wonder...

Are you aware of meeting an angel? I feel sure I have, knowingly anywa 4 times in my life. They weren't 'beings with wings', 'shining in white', as some of the biblical accounts describe. They were seemingly ordinary people, who came to me in real need and then just disappeared after they had truly helped. I can quite believe the angel visiting Philip was a person like that.

The writer of Hebrews in chapter 13 v 1 states:

"Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it".

Anyway, Philip didn't seem at all nonplussed by this encounter with the angel of the Lord, whether literally in person, or not. He was nonetheless directed to act on the message he'd received. In so doing, he was part of another surprising encounter.

Philip met a Eunuch, who is described here as an official in charge of the Queen of the Ethiopians' Treasury, very probably a God-fearing Gentile, who had been worshipping in Jerusalem. Consequently, he may not have been brought up with the teaching which those of Jewish background might have had.

The Holy Spirit prompted Philip to just go to this man. It was common for people to read aloud the Scriptures. The manuscripts

really needed to be spelt out and took quite considerable experience to read silently. So Philip would immediately have heard the Eunuch.

This Philip, not to be confused with the disciple of Jesus, is thought to have been an Evangelist, one of seven early leaders of the Jerusalem church. They devoted themselves to preaching and, prayer and, as a result, many came to believe in the Gospel Message concerning Jesus Christ. What a blessing to the Eunuch this encounter with Philip proved to be, as his God-given purpose and plan was in explaining the Scriptures to everyone he could.



The Eunuch offered Philip a ride in his chariot, so keen to hear more. He was so captivated by the message of love and salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, that he just couldn't wait. He saw the water and just stopped the chariot to be baptised.

Then Philip was directed to Azotus to continue his evangelistic work and the Eunuch continued on his way rejoicing, transformed through this amazing encounter.

In our second reading, the Apostle John focusses on God's love – not that we loved God, but that he loved us. God himself had an encounter planned with us. He sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. And then comes this humbling and awesome statement:

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

What comes **first**, is that God loves us. Through our responding, we open the door of our hearts, so that God can live in us and his love is complete in us. What's more, the infilling love of God is sufficient for us to follow the call we have to love others. Our personal first encounter spreads, with the life and the love of God at work in us.

So it was that the encounter between Philip and the message of God, led to the Eunuch encountering not only Philip but the transforming, saving love of God. This was then symbolised and realised by the cleansing water of baptism.

The Gospel writer, John, explains that by living as followers of Christ, like the branches of the vine, which Jesus described as himself, we live rooted in him and he in us. God the Father prunes and nurtures and breathes life into us. Through his indwelling Holy Spirit, we receive the strength for all his purposes and plans for us. As we love others, we are drawing on the power in the vine, producing the beautiful fruit of disciples. This will draw people to the vine itself and hopefully they too will taste. They will come to understand that to be part of the vine is to be part of the worldwide church family of God. As our opening words remind us: **We come before the throne of God with countless crowds from every nation and race, tribe and language. Salvation belongs to our God! Alleluia!**



Last Sunday we were considering the abundant life which is the fulfilment of us taking to heart all the “I am’s” that Jesus declared about himself, to help focus us in our relationship with him and our following of him.

However, it’s important for us to remember that every relationship starts with an encounter. If we just pass on by, we’ll miss the blessing for us and all we can share.

How much do we consider the love and purpose of God, in every ‘person encounter’ we have?

We can pray at the start of every day for God to make us more aware. We can pray at the end of the day, focussed on those planned or those chance encounters, committing them to him. Maybe there was a divine purpose in God bringing you to the same point on the path as ‘this other person’, or even through a phone call. In our prayers we can give thanks and praise. We can ask for

the person's guidance, arising from the conversation. Sometimes we must seek forgiveness, when those encounters have been difficult, but God is able to do far more than we can imagine to turn round relationships, if we let him.

We may find certain relationships more challenging. Then let's pray to understand the other person and, yes, to encounter God **through them**. Everyone is made in the image of God, so let's stop 'the chariot' we're on, climb out and look and listen and ask to see things differently...to see each person differently.....the way God does.

Last Sunday we thought about the importance of kindness and patience and trust. Let's take a moment to stop and think and commit to God some of our recent encounters, maybe jotting down prayer prompts with our paper and pen now, as our pledge to.....

**consider the love and purpose of God,
in every 'person encounter' we have.....**



We join in saying the words of

The Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Song

God's Spirit is in my heart.
He has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
What I have to do.

Chorus:

*He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
Tell blind people that they can see,
And set the downtrodden free,
And go tell ev'ryone the news
that the Kingdom of God has come
and go tell everyone the news
That God's kingdom has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,
so I'm sending you out to be,
My witnesses, throughout the world,
the whole of the world.

Chorus:

*He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
Tell blind people that they can see,
And set the downtrodden free,
And go tell ev'ryone the news
that the Kingdom of God has come
and go tell everyone the news
That God's kingdom has come.*

Don't worry what you have to say,
don't worry because on that day,
God's Spirit will see me in you,
will see me in you.

Chorus:

*He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
Tell blind people that they can see,
And set the downtrodden free,
And go tell ev'ryone the news
that the Kingdom of God has come
and go tell everyone the news
That God's kingdom has come.*

Hubert J Richards

Let us pray:

That the people of God in all the world may worship in spirit and in truth, borne from belief, hope and trust in the living God

Response: Let us pray to the Lord

That the leaders of the world may seek after the ways of peace, borne out of love and compassion for all humanity

Response: Let us pray to the Lord

That people may respect their place in the wellbeing of the whole creation and work together for its recovery

Response: Let us pray to the Lord

That all who suffer at this time may know the living presence of the God who brings his wholeness into healing

Response: Let us pray to the Lord

That all who with Christ have entered the shadow of death, may rest in peace and rise in glory

Response: Let us pray to the Lord

Silence for our own prayers

We draw all our prayers together in saying 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 those, who trespass against us

and deliver us from evil, for Thine is the Kingdom,

the power and the glory

for ever and ever. Amen.

Song

How lovely on the mountains
are the feet of Him,
who brings good news, good news,
proclaiming peace,
announcing news of happiness,
our God reigns, our God reigns!

Chorus:

*Our God reigns,
our God reigns, our God reigns!
our God reigns.*

Ends of the earth see the salvation
of your God,
Jesus is Lord, is Lord.
Before the nations,
He has bared His holy arm:
your God reigns, your God reigns!

Chorus

*Your God reigns,
your God reigns, your God reigns!
your God reigns.*

Leonard E Smith Jr 1974 Kingsway's Thankyou Music

The Blessing

May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father,
the Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore.
Amen.

The Dismissal

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

NOTICES!