

Sunday Worship for 25.4.21

Fullness of Life

“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full” John 10:10

Opening Prayer

Generous and loving Father, we gather today with grateful hearts, using the gift of technology that has enabled us to worship together despite our isolation. You have journeyed with us through the trials and tribulations of this pandemic, comforting and nourishing us through your Word and presence. Accompany us today, we pray, as we celebrate what it means to live fully in your love. We ask this in your most precious name. Amen.

**Lord, take my life, my small life,
And illumine it:
That everything I say and do
May reflect the light of your glory.**

**Lord, take my life, my small life,
and imprint it:
That everything I say and do
May reveal the image of your love.**

**Lord, take my life, my small life,
And inspire it:
That everything I say and do
May resonate with the power of
your Spirit.**

**Lord, take my life, my small life,
And indwell it:
That everything I say and do
May radiate your Life
Your glorious Life.**

Song: In Christ Alone

1. In Christ alone my hope is found.
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

2. In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones he came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

3. There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

4. No guilt in life, nor fear of death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from his hand;
Till he returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Fullness – what does that word suggest to you? What image comes to mind? My dictionary fills more than a column with its various contextual definitions – which says something about the word!

Our context today for exploring this word, lies within the ‘I am’ passage in St John’s gospel that we have been looking at these past few weeks. It is the culmination of all the images Jesus uses to describe himself in his relationship with God, and his relationship with us. In John 10: 10 he says, “I have come that they – us – may have life and have it to the full”. Jesus, the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises.

I AM the Light of the World.

I AM the Bread of Life.

I AM the Good Shepherd.

I AM the Door of the Sheep.

I AM the way, the Truth and the Life

I AM the Resurrection and the Life.

I AM the True Vine.

Fullness: sufficiency, satisfaction, copiousness, overflowing, brimming, abundance (more than enough), completion. “My cup runneth over” says the psalmist in Psalm 23.

To be a follower of Jesus, to understand and believe that he is the embodiment of God, is to experience the life-giving, life-enhancing superabundance of our generous, loving God.

Yes, I hear you say, but what does that actually mean? How does it play out in our lives?

Here’s a little story: A Roman soldier came to Julius Caesar with a request for permission to commit suicide. He was a wretched dispirited creature with no vitality. Caesar looked at him. “Man”, he said, “were you ever really alive?”

A rather extreme illustration you might think, but have you witnessed – or are *you* the person – who has been transformed from a half-alive, life-crushed one-dimensional cardboard cut-out into a vibrant 3D version of yourself - into the person God had intentionally created?

‘Life in all its fullness’ I interpret as the discovery of meaning and purpose in life – to experience the Holy Spirit’s injection of energy, heightened perception and awareness through greater self-knowledge – the desire to know God as I am fully known – a fulfilment of your potential – a completeness. This is how I’m meant to be!

I think of blossom petals unfurling into the beauty they were created to be. God’s plan for our lives coming to fruition – a recognition and flowering of latent gifts which reveal God’s glory in us and through us in others. How does that make me feel? How do I respond? With joyfulness, thankfulness- re-energised. Released from the bondage of all that held me back. The prison of my fears and insecurities. “The truth will set you free” says Jesus, the true vine.

In his brief life on earth Jesus experienced great trials, great ‘highs and lows’. He has been to all the ‘places’ we may go in the course of our lives. If we follow in his footsteps we shall not be exempt from suffering and stumbling blocks strewn across our path. Our commitment may come at great personal cost. We remind ourselves that Jesus paid the ultimate price for our salvation. The sacrificial lamb died that we might live.

“Those who obey his commands live in him and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us. We know it by the Spirit he gave us”

The first letter of John exhorts us to live by our actions. We can be the conduits of this amazing, abundant love which gives us freedom, peace of mind and the fullness of life which God intended. Alleluia!

Breakout Groups: approx. 10 mins to consider how we can, individually and collectively, be the conduit of 'fullness of life' within our church community.

St Mary's Church Prayer

Dear God

Strengthen us to walk in faith.

**Open our ears, our eyes and our hearts
to the needs of the community,**

May your family grow,

as we teach and reach out in your love.

**Guide us to work through partnerships,
in the power of your Holy Spirit.**

For Jesus' sake and in His Name we pray.

Amen.

Celtic Creed



We believe and trust in God, the Father Almighty

We believe and trust In Jesus Christ his Son.

We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit.

We believe and trust in the Three in One.

Poem:

Everything Holds Together by Malcolm Guite, based on this reading from Colossians 1: 15 – 17.

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Everything holds together, everything,
From stars that pierce the dark like living sparks,
To secret seeds that open every Spring,
From spanning galaxies to spinning quarks,
Everything holds together and coheres,
Unfolding from the centre whence it came.
And now that hidden heart of things appears,
The firstborn of creation takes a name.

And shall I see the one through whom I am?
Shall I behold the one from whom I'm made,
The light in light, the flame within the flame
Eikon tou theou, image of my God?
He comes, a little child, to bless my sight
That I might come to him for life and light.

Song:

**To be in your presence
To sit at your feet
Where your love surrounds me
And makes me complete.**

***This is my desire, O Lord
This is my desire,
This is my desire O Lord,
This is my desire.***

**To rest in your presence,
Not rushing away,
To cherish each moment,
Here I would stay.**

***This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire,
This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.***

Words & Music: Noel Richards. Music arranged by David Peacock & Geoff Twig © Kingsway Music 1991

Prayers with sung refrain:

**O Lord hear my prayer,
O Lord hear my prayer,
When I call, answer me.
O Lord hear my prayer,
O Lord hear my prayer,
Come and listen to me.**

Generous God, who offers abundant life to your faithful people, we humbly come before you in penitence and faith, to ask forgiveness for all the ways we have failed you in what we have said and done or not said and not done. We ask that you fill us with your life-giving Spirit that we may draw others to you who are desiring healing and wholeness.

O Lord hear my prayer.....

Comforting God, who walks alongside those who are suffering loss of any kind, we pray for those known to us who are 'walking in the shadow of death' – that they will fear no evil but feel your comforting arms around them. We pray particularly at this time for our Queen and her family as they mourn the loss of Prince Philip. We ask that you watch over and protect those who have lost their homes, communities and livelihoods through war and natural disaster. Pour out your abundant love upon them and restore them to well-being and wholeness.

O Lord hear my prayer.....

Loving God, we thank you for loving us so extravagantly. We ask that we become worthy to dwell in your house forever. Amen

O Lord hear my prayer.....

We conclude our prayers today with a version of the Lord's Prayer from Central America.

Our Father.

who is in us here on earth,

Holy is your name

in the hungry

who share their bread and their song,

Your kingdom come

which is a generous land

which flows with milk and honey,

Let us do your will,

standing up when all are sitting down

and raising your voice

when all are silent.

You are giving us our daily bread

in the song of the bird and the miracle of the corn.

Forgive us

for keeping silent in the face of injustice

and for burying our dreams,

don't let us fall into the temptation

of shutting the door through fear;

of resigning ourselves to hunger and injustice;

of taking up the same arms as the enemy,

but deliver us from evil,

give us the perseverance and the solidarity

to look for love,

even if the path has not yet been trodden,

even if we fail;

so we shall have known your kingdom

which is being built for ever and ever,

Amen.

Song: Amazing Grace

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That save a wretch like me;
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.

*My chains ar gone, I've been set free
My God my Saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood his mercy reigns,
Unending love, amazing grace.*

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow.
The sun forbear to shine.
But God who call me here below
Will be forever mine.
Will be forever mine.

John Newton (1725-1807)

The Blessing (*Gerard Kelly*)

May you who are restless,
Find rest,
And the healing
Of your hollow soul.
May peace be yours

May you who are frozen,
Find freedom, the strength
To face the fire
And the thawing of your ice-gripped heart.
May peace be yours.

May you who are conflicted,
Find convergence, confidence to be the one new child
Of your old divided self.
May peace be yours.

May you who live in tension,
Find tenderness
And in tenderness the tendency
To kindness and the miracle
of majoring in mercy,
may peace be yours.

And you who are without God,
May you find God
And in God
The grace and growth you need
For fruit and fullness
And the love that will last you
Through the long haul
Of a lived-for-others life.
May peace be yours.

May the blessing of God the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit, remain with you and those you love, for evermore. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.