**Morning Praise @ Home 3rd September 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Galatians 5: 22 – 23 Matthew 16: 21 – end

**Reflection from John**

In Galatians 5:22-23 we see the wonderful fruit of the Holy Spirit and all its characteristics. And one of them is peace. Peace is one of the vital things we need in our lives and it can be supernaturally infused into the life of a Christian believer.

Intriguingly it was Francis of Assisi who famously said:

**Make me a channel of your Peace.**

So, whatever this peace is, it is clear that BEING AT PEACE is not the whole deal – Christians are called to be peacemakers. Not peace at any price - peacekeepers but Peacemakers.

We are not locked away in a cloister cut off from the harsh realities of life. More likely we will find ourselves in most unpeaceful situations – making peace.

It ain’t easy being an instrument of peace when there is no peace.

So first of all - acknowledging that peace is a frequently misused word -a cheapened word, we need to know that the fruit of the Spirit is not an absence of busyness, hostility or stress. Peace is not determined by circumstances. Peace is not about all being rosy in the garden - it is God’s supernatural presence transforming our innermost being so that our reaction to adverse circumstances is infused with sustained quiet confidence in God.

By contrast some people lack peace because they are a walking civil war. They are at conflict within themselves and there can be many different causes.

**Firstly, the restless spirit.** It was Augustine, a 4th century Bishop who said *Restless is the heart until it finds rest in thee.* We live in an age which is constantly trying to dull our restless spirit from addictive behaviours to workaholism.

There is a restlessness that only God can heal. Becoming a Christian is a vital beginning, but it must grow on from there until we find in Christ our rest.

*Come unto me all who are weary and are heavy laden and I will restore you.*

**Then there is the person** **who has a guilty conscience** from which no man-made medicine can offer relief or cure. Only the forgiveness that Jesus offers can restore a soul. Many years ago, I discovered a little known Bible verse in 1 John 3:20. *If your heart or conscience condemns you remember this God is greater than your conscience and he knows everything.*

The fruit of the Spirit is seen in a life which embraces the fact that they are beloved by God, that he practises not only forgiveness but forgetfulness. That he is utterly committed to my ongoing transformation. Even an overactive conscience can be brought to peace by knowing that God knows me inside out and longs for my wellbeing.

**Then there is the lonely heart.** It sounds odd but one of the results of the fall is not only that we are cut off from God, but we are also cut off from other people.

We become more and more isolated. Loneliness isn’t the experience of those who are alone - it impacts everyone and it’s not a heresy to say that being right with God is not enough. We need to be also restored to human relationships.

**Finally, there is the troubled mind** which is essentially a heart riddled with fear. It is something which at times is as devastating an epidemic as COVID. Fear is so destructive. It eats away at the soul. **Perfect Love (not its counterfeit) casts out fear.**

You see Jesus must have known that his followers would be subjected to the most difficult of times and so he bequeathed to them his PEACE. Just before he died he said “My peace I leave with you”.

Matthew Henry in a very old Bible Commentary wrote:

When Christ died he left a will in which he bequeathed his soul to his Father, his body to Joseph of Arimathea, his clothes to Roman soldiers, his Mother he gave to John but to his disciples he left not silver or gold but something more precious - His peace.

Come Holy Spirit and breathe into our souls that fruit which is a direct gift from Jesus and which accompanies those who ask for it - peace even in the midst of every trial.

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Let us pray for the Church and for the world and let us thank God for his goodness. We are gathered here today to worship you in love and fellowship.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Creator God, you call us all to love and serve you with body, mind, and spirit. Help us to demonstrate our love for your creation and the world in the way that we live. Open the hearts of those with power both elected and non-elected and give them compassion in all that they do for the good of the people that they lead. We pray for governments across the world that they govern wisely and especially pray for all areas of war and unrest across the world.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Holy God, in our Prayer Diary this week we pray for the work of the Mango Tree Project as it continues to develop community-led projects, working with young people in communities deeply affected by Aids and other serious health issues.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Holy God, we pray for the people of our parish especially for those who feel excluded, exploited or ignored. We pray that as God’s people we may work to build a community as open and generous as God’s love shown to us in Christ Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Faithful God, we pray that God will bring healing in mind, body and spirit to all who are troubled. We pray that in lives darkened by any kind of pain, distress or grief the light of Christ will bring comfort, hope and a sense of God’s all-encompassing love. We bring before you now in a moment of silence all those on our hearts at this time.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Merciful God, we pray for all who grieve for loved ones who have died. Be with them in their sorrow, lead them with your love to accept their loss and to go on with their lives. From our parishes we especially pray for the Abbott family and the McConnell family.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Gracious God, we thank you for this time together in prayer and as we look forward to the week to come, we pray for an awareness of your love and support in all we do.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**