

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 19 May 2024 - Pentecost or Whit Sunday

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Ezekiel 37.1-14; Acts 2.1-21 (this must be either the first or second reading); Psalm 104.26-35; Romans 8.22-27; John 15.26-27 and 16.4b-15

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Mrs Liz Pinnock, LLM, Hemingford Grey and Hemingford Abbots

DNA was discovered in 1869 by Swiss physician, Friedrich Miescher, searching for the 'building blocks' of life.

Many will, more likely, remember that Francis Crick and James Watson were awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for having determined the structure of DNA.

You may have overlooked that Maurice Wilkins also shared the Nobel Prize with his colleagues, Crick & Watson and you may not know at all that Rosalind Franklin was also part of the discovery team.

Sadly, Rosalind, the only member of the team with a degree in Chemistry, died at the age of 37 from ovarian cancer 4 years before Nobel prize was awarded. At that time, no more than three people could jointly win a Nobel Prize and neither posthumously, so she faded from the history books.

I write this to you conscious that I am the fourth, and youngest, child in my family.

In her later years, my mother would often address me, or refer to me, by rattling off the list of all my older siblings, including my brother, before getting to me!

When naming a group of connected people, we often exert an unconscious bias which somehow reveals an order of importance or priority.

Is it possible that we might also do that with the Holy Spirit coming a poor third to the Father and the Son?

Going back to DNA, this is a seemingly familiar term that has slipped into everyday speech, it's almost become part of our DNA!

Even though very few people get to see actual DNA, we know it to be the carrier of genetic information that makes us who we are.

It is the previously unseen agent of what we have already seen at work.

The first time my son-in-law collected his daughter from Playgroup, the staff instantly chimed, “well we don’t need to ask whose daddy you are!”

With bright red hair, pale skin, freckles, and virtually identical features - they needed no other proof!

Jesus spoke of being one with his Father, of himself in his Father and his Father in Him!

I wonder if we are instantly recognisable as God's children?

What is the carrier of the thing that makes us who we are in God?

In John 14, Jesus said to those who believed that he was the Son of God, that, “you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.”

Jesus tells his followers that the Holy Spirit will instil the life and likeness of God in us.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparable and do not have an order of importance.

You See one and you see them all is what Jesus was saying - a sort of buy one get two free offer!

But the thought of something living in you can be a scary thing - ask any woman who has had a baby!

The Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, baptism by fire, tongues of flame, speaking in tongues, prophesying and all those things associated with the Holy Spirit can be quite puzzling and frightening.

Yet, the life and likeness of a Father living in us, is surely not so bad. I'm happy to have DNA in my system, mysterious as that substance is!

Character traits are one thing; however, God gives more. He equips the believer with his own power and ability with the purpose of telling of his goodness and revealing himself to any who will trust him. That is the supernatural bit.

We have been conditioned to fear the supernatural, so, by contrast, we speak of the ‘natural’ world in comforting tones. Yet the placing of the sun, moon and stars in the heavens seems supernatural to me.

Living plants and creatures, volcanoes, mountains, oceans, seas, snow, whales, mosquitos, music, and deoxyribonucleic acid (that’s DNA) seem beyond my ken!

Yet, in the western world, we are engaged in an intense study of what we call the natural world.

The discovery of DNA gave rise to the Human Genome Project - the physical map of the human being!

We are picking the planet to pieces and why not, it is pretty awesome!

There is a relentless search for cures to every disease.

None of this is wrong in itself but the greatest disease of mankind is sin.

Sin has the power to separate us forever from God, who gave us our earthly life, but longs to give us eternal life.

We have a thirst for knowledge but where is the thirst for righteousness?

Jesus could have been speaking today when he said;

“This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. The world cannot receive him because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognise him.’ (John 14:17)

And later in **John 16:8** “when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me.”

Jesus also described the Holy Spirit as the ‘comforter’ and ‘advocate.’

The dictionary definition of ‘advocate’ is, ‘A person who puts a case on someone else’s behalf.’

The Holy Spirit, despite being described as water, wind, fire or being ‘like a dove’ in appearance is not just part of our make up or a life-force when we receive him, but a person - a person who pleads for us, who speaks up for us before God, who reassures us of our salvation through God’s mercy.

The Spirit makes us aware of God’s presence and purposes both for our own lives and for the entire world.

In a recent visit from one of our Mission Partners to our Church, he said that the Holy Spirit had opened his eyes, in a miraculous way, to see the way his work was connecting with that of others, in other parts of the world, to achieve God’s purposes.

When the believers spoke out in the power of the Spirit so that everyone could hear on the day of Pentecost - they spoke of the wonderful things God has done!

What is scary about that?

The Holy Spirit was the tangible **presence** and **power** of God the Father and Jesus the Son in the world and still is today.

You might like to recall some of the wonderful things written in Scripture about the Holy Spirit:

Ezekiel 37:11 When Ezekiel gives the prophecy that the dry bones of the people of Israel would receive the breath of God to bring them back to life, Ezekiel gave them this word from the Sovereign Lord, “I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done what I said.”

Acts 2:11 “In our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.”

John 15:26 “But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. And you must also testify about me.”

John 16:13 “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. All that belongs to the Father is mine;”

We bear God’s hallmark, it’s in our DNA! But his image is marred by our sin. However, if we will receive him then we will be bound together, not just in a double helix but a beautiful, triple helix of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - in no particular order!

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder how the Disciples felt and how the people of different nationalities felt when they spoke and heard in different languages?
- I wonder why the Holy Spirit was not fully poured out until the Day of Pentecost?
- I wonder how you feel about receiving gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Suggested intercessions

As we start to pray let us say;

Welcome Holy Spirit, be the tangible presence and power of God with us.

Friends and followers of Jesus, we rejoice because we are born of the Spirit, we share in His life and, as co-heirs, are led by the Spirit, the tangible presence and power of God.

So We pray;

Firstly, for those in ministry,

For our Bishop Dagmar, for all Clergy and Lay Ministers, that as they serve the Church, and encourage ministry in all believers, they will embody your humility, your holiness, and your inspiration. May they live and lead by the Spirit, your tangible presence and power.

We pray;

For our King, his government and all for whom the leadership of nations rests upon their shoulders. It is by letting your Spirit control the mind that will lead to life and peace. So may they submit their power to the greater power of your rule of love.

May they live and lead by the Spirit, your tangible presence and power.

We pray:

For those places in the world where food is scarce, jobs are few or life is dangerous - be that from natural disaster or human-caused strife. May your spirit be their comforter and their most reliable relief agency.

We pray;

For our families and our closest friends and associates. May your Spirit be the guest at every meal and cup of tea we share, the guider of conversation, the motive behind every caring act, the consoler in times of difficulty.

May we live amongst family, friends and neighbours led by your Spirit and bearing your likeness.

We pray;

For those who endure sickness and pain of every kind. Would you heal by your Spirit and comfort those who will not be healed until the day they see you face to face.

May we, whether in sickness or health, be open to your healing Spirit that has the power to make us whole.

We pray;

For those parted from someone they love, whether through death, a broken relationship or the affects of illness or disability. May they experience the Comforter you have sent to be with us. May they be led by your Spirit to live in peace and hope and knowing your presence with them.

And We pray;

For your visible body, the Church, gathered here.

We pray that we would step boldly into the reality that we are co-inheritors with Christ of His Spirit's powers that transcend beyond our wildest hopes, imaginings, or abilities. Help us to understand that we can be fully human yet set alive and made a new creation.

May we put aside our own selfish desires, wants and needs and, above all else, live by your Spirit as witnesses to your presence and power.

Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

Jesus Lead us to the Father Sam Hargreaves *Engage Worship*

Spirit of God, Unseen as the wind Margaret Old

Spirit of Holiness, wisdom, and faithfulness Christopher Idle

Breathe on me breath of God Edwin Hatch

Holy Spirit Fill me Up Matt Summers

Come Holy Ghost, our souls Inspire

Great is the Darkness that covers the Earth Coates & Richards

To God be the Glory Frances van Alstyne

Activities to accompany the service:

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- reflectionary.org – lectionary-based resources
- engageworship – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)