

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 15th November 2020

The Church and the priesthood of all believers

It is good to be able to share in this service with you and I pray that the Lord will make it a blessing to us all.

Let us start with a hymn of praise.

Song Mission Praise 560 Praise, my soul the King of heaven
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyRIVbdsi4c>

It is good to remember the goodness of God and the blessings we have in Him.

Dear Lord we thank you for all your goodness to us. It is wonderful that you care so much about us and we want to respond to your love in our worship, prayers and Bible study.

Let's sing another hymn

Song MP 506 How great Thou art
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GKhDCsLrUg>

Let us contemplate the greatness of God and then go on to our intercessory prayers and any notices we may have.

Prayers

Readings

We will now have two short readings

Matthew 16:15-20

¹⁵ 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

¹⁷ Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever

you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

1 Peter 2:1-10

2 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. **2** Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, **3** now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – **5** you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For in Scripture it says:

‘See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame.’

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

‘The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,’

8 and,
‘A stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall.’

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Let us have another hymn

Song MP 1072 In Christ alone

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENTL_li4GbE

The Bible tells us of many blessings we receive in Christ. John tells us that we can become sons of God by receiving Jesus. He also tells us how we can be born again. There are plenty of other blessing for which we can be thankful. These readings tell us that we are members of a new kind of community based on our relationship with Jesus.

One day, when Jesus and his disciples were near a popular pagan site, sometimes called the gates of Hades, Jesus asked two questions. Who do people say I am? Their answers were very vague.

Then he said “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” Peter gave an answer that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

It is this confession of Peter’s that forms the foundation of the Church. All who make the same confession and commitment belong in it.

Peter in his letter writes about our status before God. He urges us to rid ourselves of all sorts of wickedness. This is not surprising as we learn from elsewhere in the New Testament that we are to be like Jesus. This is a challenge that without the work of the Holy Spirit within us is one we cannot achieve.

God wants to build us up into a special community. We are to be a spiritual house. If the stones don’t hold together a building will eventually fall down so we must work together.

Peter also writes about us being a holy priesthood. This must have been an amazing idea especially to Jews. They had all sorts of rules of how to approach God. Only priests could go into the main temple building and gentiles were kept well outside. If we have trusted in the Lord Jesus they may keep us out of temples in this world but they are only pointers to the presence of God in Heaven. We have personal access to God himself. This is not limited to any one place but anywhere.

This is wonderful. The Jews had a High Priest. He was the only one allowed in the most holy part of their temple. It was separated from less holy parts by a very thick curtain. Matthew tells us what happened to this when Jesus was crucified.

Matthew 27:50-51

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Matthew wants us to know that this was a sign from God. Things are different because of what Christ has done.

We read more about this in the letter to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Jesus has opened a new way for us so that we can approach God through Him. Because of what He has done we are encouraged to draw near to God and also encouraged in our Christian lives. Meeting together may be difficult at the moment there are other ways of having fellowship such as telephone and the internet. So as we read this and worship with it we are having fellowship with each other,

Let us sing another hymn

Song MP 975 Before the throne of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MUNywhsZPU>

Let us say the Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

and the love of God

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with you now and for evermore.

Amen