

The Gathering – first video

Welcome - [KELVIN]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Since the days that Jesus walked the earth, people have been in debate about who he really is. In our gospel today we hear some of that debate. And we hear Peter's conclusion that he is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

In all of our worship, whether here online or here in church, we draw close to the one whom Peter recognised – Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Collect for Purity - [JIM]

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Confession

[OLIVER] God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[KELVIN] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gloria - [ROSAMOND THOMAS]

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect - [KELVIN]

Living God, you sent your Son among us to reveal your wisdom and make known your ways. Increase our faith, that we may confess Jesus as your Son, take up his work on earth, and trust his promise to sustain the Church. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Ministry of the Word – second video

Reading: Exodus 1:8-2:10 - [KATE]

A Reading from the Book of Exodus.

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, 'Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.' Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 'When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.' But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?' The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.' So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.'

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

For the Word of God in Scripture,
For the Word of God among us,
For the Word of God within in,
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: Matthew 16:13-20 – [OLIVER]

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mathew.
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the

Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

Sermon [OLIVER]

Over the past few months, there’s been a lot of talk about church buildings—mainly, because, for much of that time, Christians haven’t been able to gather in them. Congregations have had to find ways to meet, pray, celebrate and give thanks together, without a physical address. We’ve gathered on Zoom, we’ve assembled virtually (watching material prepared for online use), and we’ve called and texted to check in with each other.

In the wake of our adaptive measures, many have wondered why we need church buildings in the first place. In the absence of facilities formerly used to make gatherings possible, we’ve gotten on just fine. It hasn’t stopped the Church from being Church. Is it possible that much of what we do can happen without a building?

After all—say several—the Church isn’t a building. It’s the people. And folk have, perhaps rightly so, condemned the ‘cult of bricks’—those more concerned with structures than with people. They point out that some buildings act like fortresses, shutting out the world. They urge us to try to think about a church without walls—in the world, not isolated from it. Folk will know we are Christians by our love, not by our edifices.

But is it that simple?

In today's gospel, we read that Jesus and his disciples arrived at the town of Caesarea Philippi—a new-growth city, with considerable history. It used to be called Paneas, named after the god Pan, whose shrines were part of the city's notable sights-to-see. It got the name we read in the New Testament from Herod the Great's son Philip. His father had built a grand temple in the city made of shining white marble dedicated to the emperor, Caesar.

Standing at the edge of this city, with infrastructure emerging from the desert like the Las Vegas strip, Jesus and his disciples encountered a culture exhibited in monuments, shrines, manicured parks, boulevards and markets. This city's architecture said something—ideas presented about what was valuable, who was important and the destiny of humankind—and Jesus asked his disciples, 'Where do you think I fit into all this? How do you reconcile what I'm saying—who I am—with history and these current circumstances?'

Architecture is the expression of a city's soul. Architects, city planners and builders, at their best, help society realise what is valuable. Our skylines are canvases, our streets manifestations of who we are. Buildings are ways for us to say something—and for buildings to say something to us. They aren't just containers for people. Instead, buildings are a testament to ideas, to beliefs. If all that was important to a city was providing a place to do stuff, we'd have nothing but concrete boxes (or whatever material suited the city's weather best). There'd be no need for anything else.

In saying that Christians don't need buildings, folk may be right, technically. The same logic might say we don't need art, music, or poetry. All those things are superfluous. But I reckon for many listening today this would be a horrible prospect. And I bet the adage 'buildings are surplus to requirements for Christians' doesn't give solace to those who remain at home for whatever reason

now, away from church buildings. Many miss them, and with good reason.

When done well, a church building uses light and shadow, objects and space, sound and silence to make a statement—to proclaim, with Peter, that Jesus is ‘the Messiah, the Son of the living God’. It is on this statement that the Church is built. It is on this statement that the Church is literally built. As best we can as human beings, we’ve fashioned materials of this earth to express that. Our buildings aren’t just places to meet. They are witnesses to and places to engage with what we believe is true.

Now, at this point some must be thinking, ‘How in the world did we get here from today’s gospel? This seems like a tangent.’ But today’s gospel is about public declaration, about identifying what’s true and most important among a sea of options. Yes, we as Christians do that by our words and by our deeds, but we also do it in our expressions of art, and I don’t think we should diminish the importance of the shared sphere of cityscapes and village squares. Here, we have something to declare, too.

Am I saying that buildings are priority, that we must preserve churches at any cost? Certainly not. Christians don’t need buildings. We don’t need a lot of things. However, buildings, insofar as they are part of a cultural language, might need Christian voices. Jesus asked his disciples, ‘Who do you say that I am?’ For centuries, humans have answered this in paint and marble, brick, wood and rubble. Even in a pandemic, perhaps these things still have something to say.

Intercessions [ROBERT]

Holy God, your Son Jesus Christ spoke to the disciples about truth and discernment, about the use of power.

We pray for those given authority in civil matters, who are trusted to decide the best course for our communities. With decisions to

be made in health or education and the lives of many; may their decisions be based on Your firm ground.

Within our community of St Mary's, we pray for those making policy decisions, especially today for safeguarding vulnerable groups, and for Matt Cavanagh, coordinator. We pray that we may each of us learn to make decisions as followers of the Son of the living God.

Jesus spoke to the disciples about revelation and truth. We pray for those who work to tell the true stories of our communities in television, radio, newspapers and online media. We pray for those who have power that can bind and loosen, may they have the courage and discernment to speak truth. We pray that we, each, may we grow in our ability to listen and understand the truth revealed in God's world.

Jesus spoke to the disciples about the new Christian community. We pray for the church throughout the world, remembering today the Anglican Church of the Province of South East Asia. Within our diocese we pray for the churches of St Bartholomew's, Gourock and St John's, Greenock. In each of our communities may we be people of discernment, understanding when to speak, when to be silent, when to bind, when to loosen.

We pray for any who face decisions at this time, especially for young people considering future education or employment. In a time of stress, we pray for peace of mind. In a time of joy and celebration we pray for your guidance.

We pray for any who are troubled or ill, we bring to mind any known to us ...

We pray with those who grieve at this time. We remember with thanks the wisdom of those who have died, and we commend to you those we mourn.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Holy God may your truth rule the affairs of people and may power be used wisely; May your Kingdom come. **Amen.**

Communion – third video

Offertory - [KELVIN]

As I stand at the altar in church today, I am full of gratitude for the time and the talents and the money that people offer here. I invite you to pause and give thanks for the gifts of others and the gifts that you bring.

If you would like to make a financial donation, please go to thecathedral.org.uk and click on MAKE A DONATION.

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.

All things come from you, and of your own we give you.

Eucharistic Prayer - [KELVIN]

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, Father, in every place and at all times.

All power is yours. You created the heavens and established the earth; you sustain in being all that is.

In Christ your Son our life and yours
are brought together in a wonderful exchange.

He made his home among us that we might for ever dwell in you.

Through your Holy Spirit you call us to new birth
in a creation restored by love.

As children of your redeeming purpose
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven,
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you,
most loving Father,
for the gift of your Son born in human flesh

He is the Word existing beyond time,
both source and final purpose,
bringing to wholeness all that is made.

Obedient to your will he died upon the Cross.

By your power you raised him from the dead.

He broke the bonds of evil
and set your people free to be his Body in the world

On the night when he was given up to death,
knowing that his hour had come,

having loved his own,
he loved them to the end.

At supper with his disciples
he took bread and offered you thanks.

He broke the bread,
and gave it to them, saying:

“Take, eat.

This is my Body: it is broken for you.”

After supper, he took the cup,
he offered you thanks,

and gave it to them saying:

“Drink this, all of you.

This is my Blood of the new covenant;
it is poured out for you, and for all,
that sins may be forgiven.

Do this in remembrance of me.”

We now obey your Son's command.

**We recall his blessed passion and death,
his glorious resurrection and ascension;
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.**

**Made one with him, we offer you these gifts
and with them ourselves,
a single, holy, living sacrifice.**

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by his life-giving power,
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

**Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body
to live and work to your praise and glory;
may we grow together in unity and love**

**until at last, in your new creation,
we enter into our heritage
in the company of the Virgin Mary,
the apostles, and prophets,
and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be to you,
Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

Lord's Prayer - [OLIVER]

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power**

**and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Communion

God is with us wherever we are.

As we gaze in adoration we feed on God in our hearts and minds that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.
Amen.

Music at Communion - [CHRISTINE]

'Take this moment, sign, and space' John L. Bell

Post Communion Prayer - [JIM]

Living God, increase in us the healing power of your love. Guide and direct us that we may please you in all things, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing - [KELVIN]

My thanks go to all who make the worship of the church possible.

If you would like to keep up to date with what's happening at St Mary's, make sure you are signed up for the email news – just go to thecathedral.org.uk and enter your details.

I'll be taking part in the online coffee hour at 1 pm on Sunday – the details of which are in the weekly email.

And if you are new to St Mary's and are finding a way into the congregation, do fill in a welcome card. You can find the welcome card on the website.

But now the blessing:

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always, Amen.

Amen.

A hymn and materials for Young Church are available on the online worship page at www.thecathedral.org.uk/worship.