

2020 07 05 *Pentecost 5*

The Joy of the Lord is my strength.

It's a huge step forward that churches can be open, and that we will be able to meet together for a service very soon.

Not everyone can come yet, and some choose not to, just yet, so we will remember them in our prayers. If you are one of these, please join us spiritually.

Yet, even though the services this month are a *tentative* step forward, with all its precautions; it is still a joy to be in church, and our service today is about joy, a counterpoint to the anxiety, fear and grief we have been experiencing.

For, "The joy of the Lord is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10)

What a joy to be alive – to have this huge gift of life for as long as we are here, the opportunity to live in the world, appreciating its beauty, the love of those we have, and most of all, the love of God surrounding us and within us, a great privilege. Even when we are not feeling loved. we have the joy of our salvation, of loving others, of prayer and thanksgiving, and of the love we have for God.

Most of us have had the joy of surviving this plague of huge proportions, and of the power of our prayers within it. God has chosen us to live at this time in order to serve others, each with the gifts that God has given. And we remember those who have died, and those that mourn.

Jesus is overjoyed, because God has revealed truth to ordinary people, disciples, anyone willing to receive the good news, not to the learned people who thought they knew better, and that all knowledge was theirs; but to fishermen, tax collectors, the poor and outcasts of the time; for these were the people who listened like children.

In our reading Matthew 11: 25-30 (overleaf), this is the Lord's joy! He praises God and gives thanks, for they were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of our good Father: the Father who runs to meet us, to clothe us in heavenly clothing, giving honour and glory.

St Paul recommends giving praise and thanks: a good protection against grumbling and depression. He says, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say rejoice...do not be anxious about anything, but present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Think about all that is true and good, lovely and admirable, anything that's excellent or praiseworthy." (Phil 4:4-8)

And in 1 Thess 5: (16-18) He says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

When the ancient Israelis were released from bondage in Babylon, they made a long pilgrimage to return to Jerusalem. Once there, Ezra read the book of the Law, and the people started weeping and mourning for all that had been lost. Ezra said, "This day is holy to the Lord your God, so do not mourn or weep; instead rejoice, enjoy a feast and share with others, for the Joy of the Lord is your strength." This month we have passed a milestone in the church, for not only is it open for private prayer, but we will come together for a meal with our God, a feast of spiritual delight in him, and with each other. It's not as it was; it's not as it will be, yet it is our joy to celebrate together. Here is nourishment for our earthly pilgrimage.

*Your
Kingdom
Come
O
Lord.*

The joy of the Lord is our strength!

The Gospel reading is Matthew 11: 25-30.

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

A Collect Prayer for this week:

Almighty God and Father,
at this time of recovery, we pray that our lives and our churches
may not only recover;
but be renewed by your Holy Spirit,
through the grace of Jesus Christ,
our Lord and Saviour,
Amen.

Dear Lord and Father,
Fill us with the joy that is our right,
for the joy of the Lord is our strength.
Help us not to be dismayed, depressed or angry,
but to see all that is good and lovely,
all that is true and delightful,
and to renounce all grumbles. Amen

Lord, in this time of rapid change
we pray for your strength to cope with our lives,
and the love we need to serve others. Amen

Please also pray for our brothers and sisters abroad who are discriminated in food distribution during Covid-19:
Christians in Northern Vietnam;
Christian day-labourers in India;
All people, except the rich, in North Korea.
North Korean officials claim they have not had any cases of C-19.

Notices:

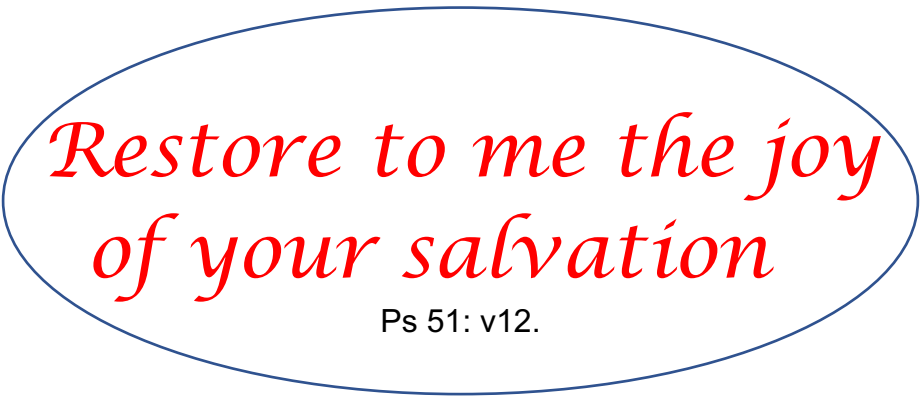
Willoughby Church is closed again. To visit please ring 01788 438 561 or 01788 891 313. Thank you for your patience.

The Holy Communion service which was to be held at Flecknoe this Sunday has been postponed due to unforeseen circumstances – but will happen on the 3rd Sunday of July: the 19th of July at 9am.

Next Sunday, the 12th, there will be a Holy Communion at Willoughby at 11am. Please let us know if you can come: 01788 438 561

We anticipate there will be a service at Leamington Hastings on the 26th July – more details later.

We are very short of people willing to clean in our churches; can you help? As well as to do small work in carpentry and other crafts.



*Restore to me the joy
of your salvation*

Ps 51: v12.