

# Readings for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

## The Prayer of the Day

**Great and loving God,  
your will for us in your Son Jesus  
is the peace which the world cannot give,  
your abiding gift, the Advocate he promised.  
Calm all troubled hearts, dispel every fear,  
and keep us steadfast in love and faithful to your word.  
Grant this through Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead,  
who lives with you now and always in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever. Amen.**

## Acts 16.9-15

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. From Troas we put out to sea and sailed to Neapolis.

From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer.

We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Hear the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Psalm 67

Let God be gracious to us and bless us: and make his face shine upon us,  
That your ways may be known on earth: your liberating power among all nations.

**Let the peoples praise you, O God:  
let all the peoples praise you.**

Let the nations be glad and sing:

for you judge the peoples with integrity, and govern the nations upon earth.

**Let the peoples praise you, O God:  
let all the peoples praise you.**

Then the earth will yield its fruitfulness:  
and God, our God, will bless us.

**God shall bless us: and all the ends of the earth will fear him.**

## **Revelation 21.10-22.5**

*St John's vision of the New Jerusalem.*

And in the spirit the angel carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day--and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Hear the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **John 14.23-29**

## **Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ**

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

For the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**



## Sermon

A word to mothers! Imagine the scene! Your young son [about 8] fairly early one morning comes marching into the living room. You - his mother – are seated there in your favourite chair sipping your morning coffee. You look up amused and amazed at how he is dressed. His head is encased in a large space helmet. A cape is draped around his neck, across his shoulders, down his back and is dragging on the floor. One hand is holding a torch and the other a cricket bat.

“What’s going on today?” you ask.

“Nothing,” he answers.

“Nothing?” you question.

“Well, you never know,” he says, “Something could happen today. And if anything does, I’m going to be ready for it!”

Mum looks at him wistfully and comments, “I need a suit like that!”

Happy Mothers’ Day!

Peace and quiet does not normally characterise the life of a mother; nor indeed the lives of any of us these days. The world seems quite violent and people are at each other’s throats. A suit like that would help, so we could say, “Whatever may come my way, I’m going to be ready for it! Bring it on!”

Well, I don’t have a suit like that to give you this morning, but I do have word for this morning:

**“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”**

There is a defining phrase in that statement. One that tells us what kind of peace it is that Christ gives us. Listen to it again and see if you can pick it out: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

The defining phrase is: **“Not as the world gives.”** Do you see how that defines God’s peace? The world promises peace through the rule of law. Law and order is the only way for a society and a people to experience peace and law and order must be kept by the aggressive use of force. That’s the only way that the world can bring about peace.

But here is how Jesus will give you peace. If you obey his word He and the Father will come to you and make a home with you. Right in your heart. Not by force but by choice. They will abide in your heart bringing peace. The world’s peace is peace through strength. The Lord’s peace is peace through surrender.

We have all been asked by our children: if you could have any wish what would it be? I think the most common answer given is peace – world peace. Peace is important. Jesus makes a point to tell his disciples that he going to leave them with peace. Peace is part a vital part of our faith. Let’s look a little closer at what Jesus means by peace:

1. **First, there is the Peace the World Gives:** This peace is the peace of security. It’s a peace that comes about because armaments are increased. In the 1970s & 80s I

joined the campaigns in England against nuclear weapons. The most common argument used in support of England having nuclear weapons was to maintain the balance of power. It was argued that since the Soviet Union knew we could retaliate then they would not use nuclear weapons against us. Peace came at a price – the price the nuclear arsenal and a balance of fear.

Looking back, of course we can now say there was no nuclear attack, but did the balance of power / fear ensure that? We do not know.

Today we have another different situation. The world is held in the grip of fear.

2. **Second, there is the Peace the Lord Gives.** How does He give peace?

Ultimately we do not fight for peace – we receive it as a gift.

New Jerusalem

Beth Shalom

3. **Third, there is the Obedience We Give.** Love one another as I have loved you. Peace comes through love. St John writes elsewhere “Perfect love casts out fear”.

“THE TIME for peace had come”, the First Minister of the new power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland, the Revd Ian Paisley, said in Stormont on Tuesday.

Mr Paisley, aged 81, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, quoted scripture to the gathering. He said that there was “a time to love and a time to hate, a time of war and a time of peace”. “From the depth of my heart”, he said, he believed that the time of peace had come.

His deputy First Minister, the ex-Provisional IRA commander Martin McGuinness, began his own speech in Irish. He quoted Seamus Heaney, Northern Ireland’s Nobel Prize-winning poet, and said: “For too long and too often we speak of the others or the other side and that what we need to do is to get to a place of ‘through otherness’.”

After the ceremonies, the heads of the four main Churches said that statements by Mr Paisley and Gerry Adams, the President of Sinn Fein, represented “an important and welcome development in the search for a stable future for Northern Ireland”. “It is important that everybody continues to build a country where all are valued.”