

Blessed be the Lord who has come to his people and set them free.

**Hymn** – StF 409 Let us build a house where love is found

Let us build a house where love can dwell  
And all can safely live  
A place where saints and children tell  
How hearts learn to forgive  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions  
Rock of faith and vault of grace  
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions  
**All are welcome, all are welcome**  
**All are welcome in this place**

Let us build a house where prophets speak,  
and words are strong and true,  
where all God's children dare to seek  
to dream God's reign anew.  
Here the cross shall stand as witness  
and as symbol of God's grace;  
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus.  
**All are welcome ...**

Let us build a house where love is found  
in water, wine and wheat:  
a banquet hall on holy ground  
where peace and justice meet.  
Here the love of God, through Jesus,  
is revealed in time and space;  
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us.  
**All are welcome ...**

Let us build a house where hands will reach  
beyond the wood and stone  
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,  
and live the Word they've known.  
Here the outcast and the stranger  
bear the image of God's face;  
let us bring an end to fear and danger.

**All are welcome ...**

Let us build a house where all are named,  
their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed  
as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter,  
prayers of faith and songs of grace,  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter.  
**All are welcome ...**

### Prayers,

Let us pray, To see you in glory today, to see you in splendour, to hear you in truth encompassed by love. Let us pray to see you after the Cross, not just before. Let us pray to see ourselves in the light of your suffering love.

We know that we do not always do this, and that our lives and the life of the world are broken by our failings, and ask that God would forgive us, Christ renew us, and the Spirit enable us to grow in love. Show us what it means to have integrity Lord, and put a right spirit with us that we may live in tune with you. AMEN.

**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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

**Reading, Luke 12:29-32**

<sup>29</sup> And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. <sup>30</sup> For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup> But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>32</sup> "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

**Hymn - StF 418 We have a gospel to proclaim**

We have a gospel to proclaim  
Good news for men in all the earth;  
The gospel of a Saviour's name:  
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:  
Empty the tomb, for He was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell  
That we might share His victory.

Tell of His birth at Bethlehem,  
Not in a royal house or hall  
But in a stable dark and dim:  
The Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of His reign at God's right hand,  
By all creation glorified;  
He sends His Spirit on His Church  
To live for Him, the Lamb who died.

Tell of His death at Calvary,  
Hated by those He came to save;  
In lonely suffering on the cross  
For all He loved, His life He gave.

Now we rejoice to name Him King:  
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.  
This gospel message we proclaim:  
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

**Reading Romans 1:13-16**

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

<sup>14</sup> I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup> That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

## Sermon

### **I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO THE JEWS FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GENTILES**

Did you hear the interview that Amol Rajan had on the BBC with Gary Lineker? Amol asked Gary if he was bothered about what people thought of him. Gary said, "Why should I be bothered about what people who don't know me think of me. There are people who are close to me whose views I value but why should I bother with the views of those who don't know me?"

They said he wasn't much of a public speaker. They said he wasn't much to look at. That's what they said of Paul, not Gary Lineker, but it didn't bother him, either. He said, I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO THE JEWS FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GENTILES. Maybe, that sums up Romans for Paul saying in the verse in the letter, WE FAIL GOD, WE NEED GOD'S HELP, GOD'S HELP IS THERE

WE FAIL GOD

HOW CAN I FAIL GOD WHEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE WANTS?

Paul's answering that question. You know how he answers it. Of course you do. You've seen what He's done in nature. Talking about nature, you naturally have a sense of right and wrong, so you know what He wants.

You were made in the picture of God and by messing up your life, you've spoilt that picture. Maybe most of us do have a natural sense of right and wrong. We inherit it. There are some who, because of bad condition, may find it difficult to have that sense but I think most of us do.

In the days before Whats Aps, or even Emails, Arthur Conan Doyle, writer of Sherlock Holmes, hearing that everyone had a skeleton in his or her cupboard, was supposed to have once sent a telegram to a very Venerable Archdeacon, who nobody would criticize. It said, "All is discovered. Fly at once". The Archdeacon disappeared and was never seen again". So, the story goes.

Is one of the reasons why we want to conceal things because we realise we have done something that is wrong and feel others might think so, too?

Can we truly say that we are always true to God? Can we say that we have never let Him either by the things we have done or the things we have not done?

I don't like the examples Paul uses to make his point, it's his interpretation of the background of his time, but his point is still true even if his examples can be at best unhelpful.

Or, of course, we could say, I AM SATISFIED AS I AM

I know what God wants and I keep to it. I'm O.K.

I keep to God's rules, I make sure I behave right.

A preacher was berating the faults and failings of society. A lot of people like to hear that, especially if the preacher isn't talking about their own faults and failings. So, one lady was thoroughly agreeing with him as he went on. She cried out, "Amen, preacher". "Amen, preacher". Then he moved on to her own faults. She wasn't so pleased, "Ah, there, he's stopped preaching and started meddlin".

She hadn't actually got everything right.

If we assume we keep to the rules, and behave right, we only have to lapse from our standards once to break our own rules. This is why Paul said, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”.

In other words we need the good news of Jesus, too.

“It’s me, it’s me, O Lord, standin in der need of prayer”. This is what Romans 1 and 2 is about. It is saying, whoever we are,

WE FAIL GOD ... SO WE NEED GOD’S HELP.

You know how we sometimes say, “I’ve gone and said the same thing again”.

“I thought I’d learnt” “Will I ever learn?” Paul puts it this way, “The good that I would do I don’t do. The bad I don’t want to do that’s what I do”.

There was once a Comedy called “BREAD”. The Boswell family, who plan to milk the social welfare system to survive, meet for prayers at the meal. Billy says, “Mum, you taught us right from wrong, and I do both”.

We do do both, but we can’t seem to stop ourselves from saying or doing the wrong thing occasionally.

Paul says, “We’re all a bit of a mess, really”. Who is going to help us. Jesus, and his free gift of love, seen on the Cross. When we do things wrong, we’ve said it, almost, we spoil things with God, but when we say, “Yes”, to Jesus to love seen on the Cross, God treats us as if we’d never spoilt things with Him at all. We can be satisfied with what we have achieved, with our career, with our education, with how we brought up our family, yet what’s really important is that God chose to love us and Jesus went through what he went through on the Cross to show us that love. Then amazement takes over from pride.

But, for that to happen, we need to say to Jesus sometimes, “I’m in the wrong, and I need to put things right”.

You know what it is said of the English, “The English are a race of self-made men – thereby relieving the Almighty of a terrible responsibility”.

Not all, of course, but those who say they have no need of God or others tend to be most unattractive people. It seems that God is quite content to let them advertise themselves. Do we want to be that way ourselves or accept that we need God? That’s my take on Romans 3.

GOD’S HELP IS THERE

Someone said, “God only tells us the bad news so he can give us the good news”.

The concern with Romans is you hear so much of the bad news of how bad we all are, that you hardly notice the good news Paul talks about, which he does in spades.

He says Christ makes more than makes good all the damage that human failure has done. That’s my angle on the first part of Romans 5. We might ask how that message might play in Ukraine or Gaza today, but it is Paul’s belief.

“Oh happy fault that earned for us such a Saviour,” was from an early Christian service.

Paul imagines some people saying, "Great, if Jesus is so gracious then I'll sin the more so he can be even more gracious". Can we say that?

There was a Methodist scholar, Donald English, who believed it would help if his class read Romans in the original Greek. They read Romans Greek. They read the passage in Greek, "Shall we sin the more that God's grace may abound" Paul's answer is to say, "Certainly not". In the Greek, "Mair Gevoito". There was a Geordie student who had a very strong Geordie accent. He was given the passage which included the words, 'mair genoito'. The Geordie student read the words, "Shall we sin the more that God's grace may abound?" He replied in the Greek, "Mair Genoiter". Donald English said, "He said it in exactly the tone that Paul meant. How could you? Christ has done so much for you. How can you think that way, and fail to live as He would want?"

Instead, be transformed (Romans 12) by the renewing of your mind. You've got to be a new woman, a new man, now. You want to do what makes Jesus happy. God's Spirit will help you do just that. He rescues you. He goes on rescuing you. He restores you. Why would you want to do anything other? Could it not be that as we do this something beautiful, something healing happens inside us

Do we accept we fail God? Do we accept we need God's help? Do we accept that God helps us live his way? Will you and I go on making this life our own.

Can we say with Paul, I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL. IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO THE JEWS FIRST, AND ALSO FOR THE GENTILES", IN OTHER WORDS FOR EVERYONE. AMEN.

### **Prayers,**

Let us pray,

We look out of the window.

We see flowers, sometimes people talking, the street is at peace. We see signs of love and beauty. We thank God.

We read our Bibles, and know that, if not today, on some other days we find God's words guide us. We thank God.

We listen to the news.

If we listen carefully there may be something that shows that there is kindness in the world. For the rest, it might be easy to think that God had left this world. We thank God it is not true, but pray for India and Pakistan, Gaza, the West Bank, the new Pope Leo XIV, and the situations that the news has forgotten, all those who suffer because of violence and injustice.

We talk to our friends, and know that they feel forgotten sometimes.

We thank you for those who remember them. We pray for all those who feel forgotten and alone, for whatever reason. We pray for those who are sick and who are tired of being sick, tired of feeling it is all hopeless.

We pray in the quiet.

Often there is too much quiet. Lord, be especially close to us, then, please. May we know we are loved and that nothing can separate us from your love.

May, Lord, these be the prayers of our hearts that we offer to you. AMEN.

## Hymn - StF 588 I come with joy a child of God

I come with joy, a child of God,  
forgiven, loved and free,  
the life of Jesus to recall,  
in love laid down for me.

I come with Christians far and near  
to find, as all are fed,  
the new community of love  
in Christ's communion bread.

As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,  
each proud division ends.  
The love that made us, makes us one,  
and strangers now are friends.

The Spirit of the risen Christ,  
unseen, but ever near,  
is in such friendship better known,  
alive among us here.

Together met, together bound  
by all that God has done,  
we'll go with joy, to give the world  
the love that makes us one.

## Response

Please look around your lounge, and see anything that gives you pleasure and thank God. Look out and see any signs of beauty, and thank God.

Think of or look at a Cross if you have one close by and thank God for Jesus' love.

Think of Jesus' life, and death. Picture his rising again. Thank God.

Pour yourself a drink, it could be tea or coffee. Eat a biscuit. Imagine Jesus being with you as we are sure He is. Thank God.

Remember God has something good for you. Give thanks once more.

Remember that no matter how sordid things may be, we still live on the edge of glory.

## Hymn - StF 313 Thine be the glory

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;  
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay.

***Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.***

Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;  
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;  
let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,  
for her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting:

***Thine be the glory...***

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;  
life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife;  
make us more than conquerors through thy deathless love;  
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above

***Thine be the glory,***

**The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. AMEN.**