

<sup>18</sup> *If I had ignored my sins, the Lord would not have listened to me.*

<sup>19</sup> *But God has indeed heard me; he has listened to my prayer.”*

The readings for today if you wish to read them are; Acts 17: 22-31, Psalm 66:8-20, 1 Peter3: 13-22 and John 14: 15-21.

### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY – EASTER 6

<sup>8</sup> *Praise our God, all nations; let your praise be heard.* We so often forget the importance of prayer and in our current climate more and more people have been turning to God in prayer. The importance of prayer can be seen in the reading from Psalm 66, for here we find a Psalm of praise for God’s answer to prayer. The Psalmist has been saved from an enemy threat by God, the threat is not clear it could be spiritual or physical but chances are it was a mixture of both, because we as Christians are attacked both spiritually and physically by the Devil and his minions, this is a fact and it is through the power of prayer and our faith in God that he and his minions are defeated. The Psalmist knew this to be true and we see here that the Psalmist knows that it was God who has intervened and saved him and so he did what any man or woman of faith does, he praises God and so should we when we find ourselves in times of need. Throughout the Bible we find time and again people being saved by God from their predicaments and so today we are encouraged one more like the Psalmist to go to God in prayer to see His divine protection in everything we do, that way with our trust in God we will overcome and succeed.

Part of the Good News contained within and throughout the Bible is that God delivers. But when God delivers His people, He normally does more than that as can be seen in the psalm we find that God not just delivered King David but God delivered the whole people of Israel from their troubles. <sup>9</sup> *He has kept us alive and has not allowed us to fall.* <sup>10</sup> *You have put us to the test, God; as silver is purified by fire so you have tested us.* <sup>11</sup> *You let us fall into a trap and placed heavy burdens on our backs.* <sup>12</sup> *You let our enemies trample over us; we went through fire and flood, but now you have brought us to a place of safety.* It is when times of distress come into our lives, we find that we enter a period of testing. The period of testing focuses our trust and

loyalty in and on God. Do we trust him enough to see us through is the question? The answer is normally yes, without thinking about it, but sometimes we do wonder and cry out to God for the strength to see us through, as did the Psalmist, as do many people in our society today. Of course, we see the metaphor at work here comparing the burning of metals in the fire to get rid of impurities and so through a period of testing we too are refined to better serve God. We see that the people of God were brought out of a situation of distress into a situation of overflowing well-being. So, what should we do? Take note of what the Psalmist says: <sup>16</sup> *Come and listen, all who honour God, and I will tell you what he has done for me.* <sup>17</sup> *I cried to him for help; I praised him with songs.* <sup>18</sup> *If I had ignored my sins, the Lord would not have listened to me.* <sup>19</sup> *But God has indeed heard me; he has listened to my prayer.* <sup>20</sup> *I praise God, because he did not reject my prayer or keep back his constant love from me.*

Be warned do not ignore God, because if you ignore God He will ignore you. Nothing unholy can come into God's presence, but the truly penitent heart will be heard, and God will take action and save, too many people are ignorant of this fact. They laugh it off but scripture is clear, "*If I had ignored my sins, the Lord would not have listened to me.* However, as men and women of faith we rely on God to help us carry out His work here on earth. We know that we cannot do anything here on earth that leads to fruition unless God is with us. Why? Because we know that He looks out for us and helps us deliver His message through word and action, so that others can hear and receive God's love and through our work we can save people's lives. It is by delivering God's message we change lives for the better. So, <sup>13</sup> *Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good?* We know as a rule that people are not harmed for acts of kindness. Yet Peter is reminding us as men and women of faith that we could possibly end up suffering because we are doing God's work <sup>14</sup> *But even if you should suffer for doing what is right, how happy you are! Do not be afraid of anyone, and do not worry.* <sup>15</sup> *But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honour him as Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you,* <sup>16</sup> *but do it with gentleness and respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that when you are insulted, those*

*who speak evil of your good conduct as followers of Christ will be ashamed of what they say.<sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if this should be God's will, than for doing evil.* If you do end up suffering because you are doing God's work i.e. doing good, showing kindness, being helpful then this as we are told by Peter brings special blessing to the sufferer (the Christian). We are not to be afraid as the non-believer is afraid because we have a God who looks after us and that my friends give us a sense of comfort, knowing we have our Heavenly Father looking after us all the time, for we are never alone with God.

For many of us the test comes when we have to speak for Christ, and just like all believers we make afresh today a new commitment or we renew our commitment to Christ and because of that commitment we find that when it comes to talk to others about Christ God give us the words to speak. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit we can talk to others about Christ. The Christian is always to be a gentleman or gentle woman and especially when opposed by unbelievers our defence of Christ is always to be given with love and never in any degrading form or terminology. We are called to speak in love through the Holy Spirit and if we do that you will impart the blessings of God and plant the seed of faith and with and through trust and prayer you will save a life. <sup>18</sup> *For Christ died for sins once and for all, a good man on behalf of sinners, in order to lead you to God. He was put to death physically, but made alive spiritually,<sup>19</sup> and in his spiritual existence he went and preached to the imprisoned spirits.<sup>20</sup> These were the spirits of those who had not obeyed God when he waited patiently during the days that Noah was building his boat. The few people in the boat — eight in all — were saved by the water,<sup>21</sup> which was a symbol pointing to baptism, which now saves you. It is not the washing away of bodily dirt, but the promise made to God from a good conscience. It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,<sup>22</sup> who has gone to heaven and is at the right-hand side of God, ruling over all angels and heavenly authorities and powers.* If Christ was sent to do that work how much more so is it our responsibility to do the same? After all Christ told us quite simply <sup>15</sup> *"If you love me, you will obey my commandments.* But how are we to do it? We will

be able to do it and more because of what Jesus told us he said:  
<sup>16</sup> *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you for ever.* Again, we find reassurance that the Spirit will always stand by Christ's people. Things get hard when we try to do them of our own backs, without leaning and relying on God's grace. If everything in life were easy, we wouldn't need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us. <sup>17</sup> *He is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you.* <sup>18</sup> *"When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you."* <sup>19</sup> *In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you also will live.* <sup>20</sup> *When that day comes, you will know that I am in my Father and that you are in me, just as I am in you.* <sup>21</sup> *"Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them."* The Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as our 'Helper.' He is in us, each one of us and He is with us all the time to *help* us, to enable us to do what we cannot do – and, I might add, to do with ease what would be difficult without Him. That is why through our testimony and our kindness we will show the people of this world the love of God. Add to it the fact the through the power of the Holy Spirit we will then be able to spread the Gospel message of hope to a fearful and mistrusting world. The answer to mankind's problems is simple it lies in trusting and believing in God and through his Son the people will find salvation. So, let us pray with a loving heart for our neighbours around us and for all in our country who are struggling to cope and let the Holy Spirit guide your words so that through our faith and trust in the Risen Lord we will bring hope and peace and comfort to those in need today.

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father we know that you listen to our prayers all the time and that you answer them in your timing. We also know Father that many people get disheartened because they do not get what they expect and that is because they do not pray with a

trusting, believing heart, so today we ask you to guide them with the Holy Spirit to give them that praying, trusting, believing heart. The Bible teaches us and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ told us how to pray and that we must believe it through faith, because if we have faith it will be done in His name. Help us today to pray in Jesus name for the healing of the nation and of the world from Covid 19. Help us to pray for strength for all those who are key workers, for all those who are at home worrying about jobs, how to feed the family, pay the bills. We pray today for hope, for peace and for comfort for those who are worrying about family members.

Father we pray for all those who work in care homes and hospitals, for delivery drivers and all those who serve us in our communities. Especially today Lord we pray for the families of those who are grieving or who are unable to grieve the loss of a loved one because of the restrictions placed upon us by the Covid 19 virus. Help them all Lord we pray, comfort them, and grant them your peace. Help us all to turn to you and lift up our voices in praise and prayer so that You will heal and restore.

We pray also today for wisdom for our government leaders, our scientists, and advisors. Protect all those key workers and emergency services personnel and help us stay safe at home. Again, Lord we pray for wisdom for the people of this country to listen to advice and head it and not put themselves, their families and others in danger just because they can't stay inside. We are being tested Lord all we ask today is for you to give us the strength to cope. In Jesus Holy name we pray.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

