

The Swiss Church in London

Audio service, Sunday, 19 July 2020

Jésus s'approcha et leur dit: «Tout pouvoir m'a été donné dans le ciel et sur la terre. Allez donc, faites de toutes les nations des disciples, baptisez-les au nom du Père, du Fils et du Saint-Esprit.»

(Matthew 28:18-19)

And Jesus came and said to the disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus trat herzu, redete mit den Jüngern und Jüngerinnen und sprach: “Mir ist gegeben alle Macht im Himmel und auf Erden. So geht nun hin und macht zu Jünger und Jüngerinnen alle Völker, und tauft sie auf den Namen des Vaters und des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes.”

Welcome

Today I am recording at the Royal Foundation of St Katherine, a small city monastery in the midst of Limehouse in London’s East End. I have grown fond of this place over the past years since I’ve moved to London and every now and then I come here for a silent retreat, to spend some days in prayer and quiet, and to enjoy the lovely courtyard in this peaceful atmosphere.

I was last here four months ago, just before the lockdown started, and it is a special moment to be back and again share this wonderful

place with other people after all that we have been through and the uncertainties ahead of us.

So, today's service will be a bit different. I will take you on a journey and share with you some of the thoughts I had during my stay at St Katherine.

As I speak, I am standing in the Chapel. In the middle of the chapel laid into the floor is a rose compass and around it a quote with the words of St Augustine of Hippo: "We come to God not by navigation but by Love." As we worship together apart, I hope that you can sense something of God's unconditional love for all human beings, an all-compassing eternal love that will never, never go away.

Prayer

Lord, when my season is joy, let me celebrate and be thankful.

When my season is pain, let me discover you healing me.

When my season is doubt, let me know the seedling of faith stir again.

When my season is loneliness, bring a friend to me.

When my season is full of loathing, take my bitterness away.

When my season is loss, show me you have not forgotten me.

Help me, Eternal God, to discover you in all seasons of my life.

Amen

Reading John 14:1-7

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were

not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Reflections from the silent day by Reverend Carla Maurer

In God’s house there are many dwelling places. God has prepared a place for us to rest. What a comforting thought. St Katherine monastery in Limehouse is one of those places where I get a sense for the home that God is, and I want to share with you some thoughts from that place of peacefulness.

The first thing I noticed when I arrived was that nothing had changed.

Everything was exactly the same:

The friendly receptionist

The brown bricks of the monastic walls

The neatly cut grass

The modern sculptures in the courtyard of a lone figure and of a woman cradling her baby

The big tree stretching its branches across the lawn

The noise of the traffic

The deep sense of peace and quiet in the midst of the bustling city

Almost everything was exactly the same except for the green leaves that now adorned the big trees, and the few withered leaves on the grass announcing the next season.

The sculpture of a duck was also new.

Other than that, nothing had changed. Everything was exactly the same.

Then I thought of today's morning news and the radio presenter who said that the global economic growth of 3% might turn into a global recession of 3% or worse.

I thought of the tens of thousands of people who will be made redundant when the government's furlough scheme will come to an end in October.

I thought of the theatres and restaurants and small businesses who will not be able to reopen. And of the many homeless people who will have to return living in the streets, and who will be more vulnerable than before.

I thought of the illness still so unknown and unpredictable in its behaviour and how it can be treated.

I thought that we now have to stay at a distance from one another and trying to avoid coming too close.

Nothing had changed and yet everything was different.

I took a walk around the yard, slowly taking one step at a time, hardly moving at all in an attempt to let the past few months sink in, to make sense, to order and to master my anxiety.

I went into the Chapel.

Immediately I felt a sense of calm.

I wanted to ask God what the purpose was of this all. I wanted to know the answer. I wanted to know where we were going, but I knew that God's answer to my questions was going to be silence.

So, I embraced God's silence.

I went around the compass laid into the floor with the words of St Augustine: "We come to God by love, and not by navigation."

I decided to put in God's hands all the beautiful moments of the past months and my gratefulness for the closeness with my dearest.

I decided to put in God's hands my anxieties, and to ask for forgiveness for the times when I have failed to reach out to others, and for the times when I failed to do the right thing.

I decided to thank God for the guidance that I had experienced and for all the wonderful people who worked alongside me, supporting and encouraging each other.

I knew in God I was at home. God is home.

In God I feel no judgement.

In God I feel no guilt.

God is Eternal, there are no time pressures.

God is everywhere, there are no constraints.

In God's presence I am an open book, I am seen and understood like no other human being can ever see me. I am vulnerable, and yet I will never be hurt.

God is the ground we stand on and the air we breathe. God is around us and within us. God is the source of never-ending steadfast love woven into the book of humanity, and into the fabric of our soul.

No matter how much we struggle, everything we are is in God, and no one can ever take this away from us. Our dignity is rooted in God, and no human can ever come between us and God.

All we have to do is to bend our knee, bow our head and trust in God, the Eternal, the source of life, the fountain of love, the mystery of life.

Trust will see us through, no matter what life throws at us. Trust will hold us tight and lift us up. If we trust in life and do not fear evil, our fears will be lifted from us, and we will be set free and go out into this world with confidence and peace in our hearts.

Do not fear, for I am with you. I will hold you and I will keep you, for I am your God.

Amen

Reading Isaiah 32:1-8

See, a king will reign in righteousness
and rulers will rule with justice.

Each one will be like a shelter from the wind
and a refuge from the storm,

like streams of water in the desert
and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.

Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed,

and the ears of those who hear will listen.
The fearful heart will know and understand,
and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear.
No longer will the fool be called noble
nor the scoundrel be highly respected.
For fools speak folly,
their hearts are bent on evil:
they practise ungodliness
and spread error concerning the Lord;
the hungry they leave empty
and from the thirsty they withhold water.
Scoundrels use wicked methods,
they make up evil schemes
to destroy the poor with lies,
even when the plea of the needy is just.
But the noble make noble plans,
and by noble deeds they stand.

Announcements

Today we are holding the Annual General Meeting at 11am on zoom. I would like to thank all our members who have voted remotely and who are participating in the meeting online for their flexibility and understanding. A big thank you to Yvon, Marco and Heidi for the preparations which is every year a huge amount of work, and to the Steering Committee for guiding us through the recent months. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the team. It has been a real privilege to tackle the various of challenges of the past few months with such a great group of people. I feel, as always, blessed, to serve such a wonderful church community that is standing so close together even though we are for now apart.

We will reopen the church for external hirings and for artist residency in August. If you would like to know more about our guidelines for the reopening of the church, please get in touch. As for the return to church services, we will give a further update towards the end of the summer break in August. The results of the survey will be shared via electronic newsletter. If you would like to receive the results on paper or via phone, please get in touch with me and I shall be more than happy to post them to you or speak on the phone. I shall be away on annual leave from 24 July to 14 August. In case of an emergency, please do not hesitate to call me on my mobile phone.

I wish you all a wonderful summer!

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, hear our prayers!

For all who are restless, for all who have no place to rest their tired bodies and minds, for all who have no place to call home, for all who do not feel safe in their own four walls.

Lead us to your house where we can dwell and refresh our soul.

Lead us to that place, physical or spiritual, where we can be ourselves and where we feel the weight from our shoulders lifted.

Take from us our grief, our anxieties, our insecurity, and fill our hearts with gratefulness and joy, even in the bleakest hour.

In you, there is home. In you, there is comfort.

Kyrie eleison

Holy Spirit,
bring us together in thought and in prayer.
We pray for the members of the Swiss Church congregation, and
especially for those who feel lonely and abandoned.
We pray for our families and friends worldwide.
Let us find our voice to make our needs heard.
Sharpen our awareness so we may recognise each other's needs.
Bring us ever closer together and find new ways to unite in your
name.

Kyrie elesion

Forgiving God,
we ask you, be generous with us as we are finding our way as human
beings each day anew.
Send to us the full power of your forgiveness.
Teach us to forgive ourselves and to forgive others and to spread the
healing power that this brings.
Make us aware of our blind spots and of our prejudice for people
that are different from us and whom we fail to understand.
There is a dwelling place for everyone in your house. May we grow
ever more acceptant for fellow human beings who dwell with us.

Amen

Blessing

Bless you God, who is in our summers, autumns, winters and springs.
May the blessing of God, Parent, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon us
And all whom we love, now and always.

Que Dieu vous bénisse, qui est dans nos étés, automnes, hivers et printemps.

Que la bénédiction de Dieu, Parent, Fils et Saint-Esprit soit sur nous
Et tous ceux que nous aimons, maintenant et toujours.

Segne dich, Gott, der in unseren Sommern, Herbst, Wintern und Frühling ist.

Möge der Segen Gottes, Vater-Mutter, Sohn und Heiliger Geist, auf uns liegen und auf allen, die wir lieben. Jetzt und immerdar.

Amen