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## **EASTER 6C**

25th May 2025

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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## Opening Prayers

Use the following words to help centre yourself in the moment. Say them out loud, or speak them in your mind.

*Jesus, open my heart.*

Prepare yourself to hear God's word in a new way.

*Jesus, open my heart.*

Listen for God's voice, calling you to serve others and love radically.

*Jesus, open my heart.*

Hold the joys, regrets and frustrations from the week, and look ahead to the opportunities next week will bring.

*Jesus, open my heart.*

Hold the people you share your life with, and the challenges that come with relationships and friendships.

*Jesus, open my heart.*

Rest a moment in the quiet.

*Jesus, open my heart.*

**You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar**

**Reading:** John 14:23-29 – [Click for reading](#)

## Reflections on the reading

John Wesley was an Anglican priest, who was already devoting much of his life and energy to the Church and to God, when he had his life-changing experience. On the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1738, he went to a church gathering on Aldersgate Street in London – and nearly didn't go at all. In his diary he describes being unwilling to attend. I wonder how many of us have felt like that about church at various points in our lives... Maybe today you are feeling a bit 'unwilling' to make this space for worship and reflection?

Yet he went, and whilst there felt his 'heart strangely warmed'. This little phrase has become a much-used expression to describe how Wesley came to have a real encounter with the Holy Spirit, and perhaps it is a phrase you can associate with. Or perhaps God reveals something of the divine nature to you in totally different ways. For Wesley, this was the moment when God became present to him in his heart, as well as just an idea in his head. As this is the Sunday nearest to the 24<sup>th</sup> May, this is the Sunday we mark as Aldersgate Sunday in the Methodist tradition.

As you worship today, and as you go about your life in the days and weeks ahead – may you make spaces where this kind of experience can happen to you. How can we be transformed by the encounter with the divine?

God is all around us, in us, working through us and in the faces of the people we meet. Are you looking out for God in those spaces? Are you touched by the Spirit of Aldersgate Sunday, who warms hearts and changes minds?

Wesley went on to do amazing things in his life – he was a prolific writer, preacher and encourager of others. His hard work and commitment to following God's call on his life led to the Methodist Church existing, because he challenged the norms of the church he was in. All through that hard work, it was the encounter with the Spirit of God that gave him energy and strength.

Wesley's encounter brings to mind famous and important encounters elsewhere in scripture, and literature. Take, for example, one of the most poignant moments in the Lord of the Rings is a conversation between Frodo the hobbit, and Gandalf the wise wizard. Frodo: I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened. Gandalf: So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.

More about that in a moment, but first, let's look at our Bible passage for today:

'Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "but Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not the world?"

John immediately identifies the poser of the question, making sure that his readers understand which Judas he is talking about. Or rather, which Judas he is not talking about. Elsewhere in his Gospel, John is very clear about his feelings towards Judas Iscariot and his suspicion of his every intention. We might assume then, that by distancing Judas from the asking of this question, John wants to avoid his reader attaching any negativity to the question asker or the question itself. It seems that John feels this a perfectly valid inquiry. Perhaps it's a question that he himself has been pondering and, as I'm sure we've all experienced in a meeting at some point, is relieved someone else has been brave enough to ask. I certainly share that sense of relief as it's a question that I have often pondered.

How often have you wished or prayed for the clouds to part and booming voice to declare to everyone that all you have believed is true? Maybe God could throw in a big sign and some flashing lights too! Jesus doesn't immediately address that fear but rather reminds his disciples of the requirements of faith and love, and of the covenant nature of the disciples response. Jesus is also clear to remind the disciples that his message is endorsed by God the father, re-enforcing his place as Immanuel, God incarnate.

After this challenge, Jesus does offer incredible words of comfort to those who are fearful. He begins with a reminder that he doesn't expect all who follow him to remember or understand all that he asking them to do. Indeed, he doesn't expect anyone to do anything for him, relying only on their own strength. He says that to those who have journeyed with him, who have seen his miracles and shared daily in his teaching. If they weren't expected to know or remember everything, perhaps we can feel a little better about our own perceived failings (which is a good job for me because I was never very good at revising either!) We might also hear the foreshadowing of the risen Jesus's encounter with 'doubting' Thomas. 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Not only does Jesus talk about the gift of the Holy Spirit he also gives his disciples the gift of peace. It's not an invitation to peace, it is forcefully and abundantly given. 'Peace I give

to you' a definitive statement of fact. It is because of this peace that the disciples can truly be released of their fear. Jesus knows, all too well, the pain that separation through death will cause. And yet he also knows the joy of experiencing the power of the resurrection. Ultimately, we can have peace through the love of God for the world he has created.

The last phrase used by Jesus speaks straight to the heart of his answer. 'I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.' Believing is the beginning of faith. Without faith we cannot hope to claim the gifts offered by God. Faith then leads on into the transformation of our actions, our taking of our place in the covenant relationship of God and his people, sealed by the sacrifice of Christ.

This is where we come to Frodo's conversation with Gandalf in 'The Lord of the Rings'. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. As Wesley did, as those first disciples did, as so many people of faith have done throughout human history.

### **Responding in music:**

313 STF Thine be the glory – [YouTube](#)

### **Responding in prayer**

Circle me with your promises, oh Lord  
Help me to embrace your love and grace for all your creation  
May I keep peace within me  
Push out hatred, discrimination and spitefulness.

Circle me with your promises, oh Lord  
Help me to shelter with you in the wildest of storms  
May I keep your strength within me  
Push out indecision, crisis of faith and doubt.

Circle me with your promises, oh Lord  
Help me to rest in your careful embrace  
May I find health in you  
Push out sickness of body, mind or spirit.

Circle me with your promises, oh Lord  
Help me to protect those in need and trouble  
May I always seek to give, more than I receive  
Push out greed, selfishness and boastfulness.

Circle me with your promises, oh Lord, Amen.

### **Blessing**

May you go out with joy and set forth with peace,  
Heading out into your communities and the wider world,  
To seek to play your part in building a Kingdom of justice and joy,  
By the power of your Spirit, O God.

Amen.

# Prayers and Prayer Pointers

## Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May

- Lord, you have blessed us with this day, this week, this month, this lifetime. Show me how to use the time you have given to me, And the gifts each of us have received, For your glory and your Kingdom, here on earth. Amen.

## Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May

- Sit silently for ten minutes and let your mind wander. Offer any thoughts and feelings to God.

## Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May

- Read again the Bible passage set for this week - John 14:23-29. Has anything changed in your reflections on it since Sunday?
- Pray about anything that strikes you or feels significant.
- You might like to talk to someone you trust or someone from your church about your responses.

## Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May

- Listen to this hymn, singing along if you feel comfortable doing so: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDcbYk-9C-Y> (The Spirit lives to set us free – STF 397)
- Are you experiencing freedom in your life at the moment? How might the Spirit of God be inviting you into a greater sense of liberation?

## Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May

- God of all grace, thank you for all that you have done for me, and continue to do for me. Help me to show gratitude today – gratitude for this new day, for the opportunity to encounter you, for the chance to share your love with those around me.
- Help me to live from the energy and strength I find in your Spirit, this and every day. Amen.

## Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May

- 'All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us'.
- Offer to God the hours, minutes and seconds that make up this day, this weekend (a bank holiday for many of us).
- May I use this time for your glory, and in pursuit of justice, joy and peace, Amen.