

Abbey Baptist Church, Reading

Worship Service 10:30 A.M. 27th April 2025

Led by Angel Yu Preacher Simon Bird

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

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As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit

On Easter Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead. The 'Good News' is that God loves everyone and forgives us through Jesus, whose death and resurrection restore peace with God. Faith in Him brings us salvation and eternal life, leading to a changed life guided by the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said to Thomas, we are called blessed because we believe without seeing the risen Jesus. Have you believed even without seeing?

The risen Christ in us — the hope of glory, now and forevermore.

Song

The greatest day in history
Death is beaten, You have rescued me
Sing it out, Jesus is alive
The empty cross, the empty grave
Life eternal, You have won the day
Shout it out, Jesus is alive He's alive.

*Oh, happy day, happy day
You washed my sin away
Oh, happy day, happy day
I'll never be the same Forever I am changed*

When I stand in that place
Free at last, meeting face to face
I am yours, Jesus, You are mine
Endless joy, perfect peace
Earthly pain finally will cease
Celebrate, Jesus is alive He's alive.

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In our new series up to Pentecost we are going to be learning about the coming of the Holy Spirit, who he is and how he changed the lives of the early followers of Jesus and is still changing lives today. We are filled with God's love through the Holy Spirit in us. It's a love to shine brightly and be shared with others. As we go out into the world, we are called to pass on this love and share the gospel, bringing light to those around us.

Family time - Sharing Jesus

Before we sing "*This Little Light of Mine*," let's commit to letting our light shine for all to see.

We will take up the collection during this song and afterwards the children will leave for their classes

Song

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, oh let it shine.

*Everywhere I go, I'm going to let it shine x3
let it shine, let it shine, oh let it shine.*

Won't let Satan blow it out, I'm going to let it shine x3
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Let it shine around the world I'm going to let it shine
let it shine, let it shine, oh let it shine

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Last week we spoke about the importance of having a sure foundation for our faith, believing that this is not just the beginning of our Christian life, but also what sustains it. It is what equips us to obey God personally and to lead others into faith.

So let's speak together again the truth and foundation of our faith.

**I believe in God our Father, I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit, Our God is three in one
I believe in the resurrection and that we too will rise again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus**

**JESUS, I believe in You, I believe You rose again
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord
For I believe in the Name of Jesus**

Thank You, God, for Your redemption and the Good News You've given to all of us. And thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to guide us, empower us, and draw us closer to You.

God's love shines in us and through us to the world. We are called to be a reflection of His love and to bring His kingdom to earth. Now, as we come together to pray *The Lord's Prayer*, let's remember that it's not just a prayer for us, but a prayer for God's will to be done here on earth, through us. May our hearts be open to what God wants to do in and through us as we pray together.

The Lord's Prayer: YOU ARE INVITED TO PRAY IN YOUR OWN LANGUAGE

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and 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 and ever. Amen.**

Song

Holy Spirit, we welcome you Holy Spirit, we welcome you
Move amongst us with holy fire
As we lay aside all earthly desire
Hands reach out and hearts aspire
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome you

Holy Spirit, we welcome you, Holy Spirit, we welcome you
Let the breeze of your presence flow
That your children here might truly know
How to move in the spirit's flow
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome you

Holy Spirit, we welcome you, Holy Spirit, we welcome you
Please accomplish in me today
Some new work of loving grace I pray
Unreservedly have your way
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome you
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First Bible Reading:

John 20:19-23

Second Bible Reading

Acts 1:4-8, Matthew 28:16-20

Sermon Easter/Holy Spirit

When I retired, my boss told me, 'it is time to hang up your boots (he was a keen sportsman) and put your feet up.' Many working people are sustained by the thought of retirement – time to rest, to read the newspaper, doing as they please, ticking off their bucket list. I wonder how

many are then happy. For a Christian, it is said, there is no retirement! I am sorry to disappoint you. There is God's mission to fulfil. There is always work to do in building the Kingdom. The time for rest and refreshment will be in glory.

Last week, we celebrated Jesus rising from the dead, and looked at how John went into the empty tomb, saw the graveclothes and 'saw and believed' (John 20:8). I left you in anticipation of seeing the risen Jesus. Well this week we move to the end of that first Easter day. The disciples have locked themselves away in fear, but in comes Jesus (vs19). In his resurrection body he has the power to come and go. And Oh the relief, the joy, of the disciples. The confusion, the sorrow, bitter disappointment of his death and betraying him are all wiped away as Jesus says, 'Peace be with you.' They are overjoyed, they rejoiced and were glad at seeing Jesus risen and alive.

But this was not a moment to sit back. I am sorry. Jesus' next sentence was to send them on their mission, 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you' (vs21). Jesus' choosing of the disciples and their training in ministry were to prepare them for this. He prayed to the Father for them at the last supper, 'As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world' (17:18). The world is not a comfortable place to go. He warned them: they would expect trouble and opposition, but said, 'Take heart, I have overcome the world!' (16:33).

This 'sending' matches what we call the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' This is given at the end of the other Gospels, so it is a command Jesus emphasizes and we cannot avoid.

Well, you may be thinking this sounds uncomfortable, but at least we have a nice fellowship to enjoy! Yes, we did follow a series on being family. We do have a New Commandment, to love one another. Yes, it is good that we create a loving fellowship, but one goal of this is that the world will know God's love (Jn 17:23). Sorry, there is no 'letting off the hook' or sitting back and relaxing. We have a mission.

As the Father has sent me. There is a deep and fundamental truth here. We understand our calling by how Jesus was called and how he responded. He is our model. **God has a mission.** You will know the basic story of the bible. God made the world perfect, but man sinned and became separated from God. We read these very well-known verses: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him' (Jn 3:16-17). Jesus' mission started in God's heart of love, and the objective was to save the world.

How did Jesus fulfil his mission? Jesus did this by **obeying** the Father (Jn 8:29); in **dependence** on the Father (5:19); knowing the Father's love for him (1:18) and **presence** with him (17:5); and being **equipped** by the Spirit (3:34). If we dwell on Jesus' relationship with the Father, this gives us the pattern for our own walk with God

So, I am sending you. The Great Commission above comes with **authority**. If we run into trouble or opposition, we know our instruction comes with the authority of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are to **obey**. As above, we then go on to make disciples who will in turn obey Jesus' instructions. We are to go in **dependence**: 'no purse or bag for the journey' (Lk 10:4) and trusting the Spirit to give us the words to say (Lk 12:12). Jesus promises his **presence** with us, being with us to the end of the age.

He breathed on them and said, '**Receive the Holy Spirit**' (vs22). Jesus promised another comforter, someone to come alongside to help (Jn 14:16).

Jesus later tells the disciples: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with^l water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' ... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1:4-8).

Now we are starting a series on the Holy Spirit leading up to Pentecost. We will have a visiting speaker to talk about mission on Pentecost. So as well being a good thing to talk about the Holy Spirit anyway, our series has the emphasis that the main work of the Holy Spirit is to inspire this very mission that Jesus is sending us on. I need to say a couple of things here.

Firstly, there is a puzzle that Jesus breathed on the disciples in the upper room to receive the Holy Spirit, and we know that the disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2). What did John mean here? Is this John's way of describing Pentecost? What did they receive in the upper room? I think the best explanation is that Jesus was symbolically sending the Spirit to them now. It is like he is saying a prayer and giving a prophetic action – his breath symbolises the wind that comes at Pentecost, 5 weeks later. He wanted them to look forward to the Holy Spirit, and know the Spirit was from him.

Secondly, the word 'receive' has the idea of taking hold of, an active openness to the Spirit. You will remember from our series on prayer Jesus told us to ask for the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:13). Also, we are to thirst for the Holy Spirit and to come to Jesus and drink (Jn 7:37). It does not happen automatically; it is part of becoming a Christian to actively breathe in the Holy Spirit.

The result of the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit can be seen in the book of Acts. Because of their confidence that Jesus had risen from the dead and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, they were transformed from frightened, defeated men to bold warriors. They went out, they preached with power and performed miracles and healing.

So, this morning, you may take a moment to rejoice in Jesus rising from the dead, but you cannot relax too much. There is work to be done. There is a mission to fulfil. Will you step up to our mission in obedience, dependence and be equipped by the Spirit?

Response

As we've heard today, the Holy Spirit empowers each of us to go and make disciples, to share the good news of Jesus with those around us and to the ends of the earth. The Great Commission is not just a call to some, but to all who follow Christ. Now, we're going to hear a testimony from Eva, who has answered this call through her years of missionary work. Her story reminds us that the Spirit equips us, even in the most challenging circumstances, to carry out God's mission. Let's listen with open hearts, allowing God to stir in us a greater desire to follow Him, wherever He leads.

Testimony - Eva

How beautiful are the footsteps of those who bring good news. Thank God, I have had the opportunity to serve and preach the gospel in different places in the past, including Israel, Indonesia, Thailand, Sichuan and Xinjiang. I experienced many miracles and saw many people believe in Jesus. I remember going to Sichuan after the big earthquake. We visited an orphanage. Since we could not enter Sichuan to openly preach the gospel, we visited them to give supplies, taught English, and played games with them. Many children lost their parents and families after the earthquake, and some even had to have their limbs amputated. What impressed me most was that when I gave candy to a little girl, she happily took it immediately,

quickly tore open the paper and ate it, and looked at you with a very happy and grateful look, as if she had never eaten candy nor not eaten candy for a long time. I was very moved after seeing this, and I still remember her eyes to this day. It turns out that a small piece of candy was a big gift for her. I remember Jesus saying that if what we do for a little one, we do for Him. The love of Jesus was like a seed sown in her heart.

Dear brothers and sisters, may we all be willing to follow the teachings of the Lord Jesus, willing to share the love of the Lord Jesus and His testimony in our lives, and have a fervent heart to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

May God receive the greatest glory!

Reflection

It is so amazing that we can share God's love and pass His Good News among people. Before we sing this next song, let's take a moment to reflect on what it means to say

“yes”

to God's call. "Here I Am, Lord" is more than just a song—it's a response. It's a prayer of surrender, a commitment to be the light in a world that needs hope, and a willingness to

go where God sends us. As we sing, let's open our hearts and say, “Lord, I'm ready. Use me.”

Heavenly Father, We pray for us all here today. Fill us afresh with Your Spirit. Stir in us a deeper passion to know You and to make You known. Give us courage to speak Your truth, compassion to love as You love, and faith to follow wherever You lead. Amen

Lord, we thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit—our Helper, our Comforter, and our Guide. Thank You for reminding us today that the Great Commission is not just a command, but a calling You've entrusted to each one of us.

Help us to be lights in dark places, messengers of hope, and vessels of Your grace. Whether across the street or across the world, may we go with joy and obedience, trusting that You are always with us.

We dedicate ourselves to Your mission. Use us for Your glory. In Jesus' name Amen.

Song

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my words to them. Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will send the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?
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Intercessory Prayer - Angel Yu

Heavenly Father, We come before You with humble hearts, lifting up the leaders of our nations, especially the President of the United States, and leaders across the world. We ask for Your wisdom to guide them in making just and peaceful economic and political decisions. May they seek Your guidance in their policies, bringing peace, prosperity, and unity to their people.

We also pray for the countries suffering from conflict and war. Specifically, we lift up the nations affected by ongoing battles, such as Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and Sudan.

Lord, we pray for Your healing, peace, and restoration over these lands. Move in the hearts of those in power to seek peace and bring an end to all violence. Amen.

Father, we pray for those who have been affected by recent natural disasters, especially the victims of the recent earthquake in Burma and Thailand.

We ask for Your comfort and strength for those grieving, for the injured, and for all those affected. May Your love surround them, and may relief efforts bring hope and restoration. Amen.

Lord, we lift up our brothers and sisters facing health problems, visa challenges, and struggles with finding jobs and housing.

We ask for Your healing touch, guidance, and provision. May they feel Your presence and know that You are with them in every challenge. Amen.

Finally, we pray for our next generation and all of us.

May we continue to grow spiritually and draw closer to You, Father. Help us to walk in Your ways, seeking Your truth and wisdom daily, and may we always be led by Your Holy Spirit. Our prayers in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Time of prayer

As Your Word says in Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." If you are in need of prayer, please feel free to raise your hand or stand. You're welcome to share your prayer needs, and we would love to pray with you.

Song

Lord I come to You Let my heart be changed, renewed
Flowing from the grace That I've found in You

Lord I've come to know The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away By the power of Your love
*Hold me close Let Your love surround me
Bring me near Draw me to Your side
And as I wait I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love*

Lord unveil my eyes Let me see You face to face
The knowledge of Your love As You live in me
Lord renew my mind As Your will unfolds in my life
In living every day By the power of Your love

The Power of Your Love lyrics © Music Services, Inc

THE BLESSING: May we go out with the joy, the power, the hope and the certainty of the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, our LORD and our GOD.
the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit AMEN

The Grace: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

This week's notices

Prayer meeting	Next Friday (2 nd), 10:30am
Connect group coffee	Next Sunday (4 th) after service
Church meeting	Sunday 11 th May, after service



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