

# Greatham, Empshott and Hawkley with Priors Dean

## Prayers at Home 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020

### Hymn

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
naught be all else to me, save that thou art--  
thou my best thought by day or by night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;  
thou my great Father, I thy true son;  
thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Be thou my battle shield, sword for my fight;  
be thou my dignity, thou my delight,  
thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tow'r:  
raise thou me heav'n-ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance, now and always:  
thou and thou only, first in my heart,  
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,  
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav'n's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

*Irish 8<sup>th</sup> century, translated by Mary Byrne (1880-1931) and versified by Eleanor Hull (1860-1935)*

### Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the word vision? Do you think of your eyesight and how good or bad it is? Or do you think of the way vision has become one of the key words of strategic thinking where every organisation now has a vision statement? I have been wondering how people with sight impairments are managing with new layouts on pavements and in shops – and how on earth guide dogs make sense of new barriers or signs painted on the ground.

In the hymn we invite God to be our vision; to help us not only see but also to help us understand and make sense of what we see.

The message of the gospel for today is that we know the Father if we know the Son and there is an intriguing little sentence when Jesus invites people join in with his new way of living – and they decline. Jesus said: 'we played the flute ... but you did not dance'. Christianity is not a spectator sport – everyone is invited to join in.

<sup>16</sup> ‘But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, <sup>17</sup> “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

<sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; <sup>19</sup> the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!” Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.’<sup>[h]</sup><sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank<sup>[i]</sup> you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.’<sup>[i]</sup> <sup>27</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. <sup>28</sup> ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

### Reflection by Peter Sutton

Jesus says to an apathetic crowd ‘We played the flute for you and you would not dance’.

I enjoyed seeing snippets of Glastonbury last weekend where not only the flute but every imaginable instrument of the world was played ... and people danced. Like David in the Old Testament they threw themselves around whether they were good at dancing or not.

Jesus’s ‘we played the flute’ comment to the crowd introduced the notion of dance as a way of understanding our relationship with God. It’s not formal dance of any kind but it is about the invitation to step away from our small corner and onto the world’s dancefloor in God’s company. But Jesus found his listeners to be like bored children and we can feel his sadness when he says ‘but you would not dance.’

Jesus’s hope was to take people on a journey, or a dance with him as the living and eternal God. The nature of the dance doesn’t matter – it’s the joining in that does.

I am well out of my depth talking about dance ... so I’ll talk about joining in. Joining in with God is about accepting the invitation to be part of God’s vision and inviting God to be at the heart of ours.

The pandemic is a bit like the drunk uncle who stumbles onto the dance floor at a wedding reception who crashes around, knocks people over and messes everything up – until he collapses from exhaustion and lies for a while in a heap in the corner. Everyone sighs with relief and the dancing starts again. And I suppose that’s what we are doing, starting again and learning how to do church in less dangerous ways.

In its chaotic turn around the dance floor Covid has taken lives, dreams, hopes, jobs, businesses, competitions, art, culture, careers, holidays, exams and so much more. A great many people are and will face enormous hardship and the Church like lots of other institutions, charities and business has had the shock of regular income, or part of it, suddenly stop. The music stopped, the dancing stopped, and we are invited to ask the question: Where do we go from here? Where are we going next? What now is our vision and is God at the heart of it?

I have asked the treasurers of our four churches to lead our prayers this week because the word ‘treasurer’ conjures up for me a picture for me of someone who oversees our treasure. Every organisation needs one and churches are no different. A church treasurer doesn’t have a great chest with gold coins cascading over the sides because that’s not the church’s most important treasure. The treasure that God yearns for is the company of every human being so they, and we, need to use our resources wisely, generously and with compassion.

As we reshape our vision for the future we’ll need to think about every aspect of our treasure. Like every institution, company and charity our financial resources are much reduced and so our gifts, talents, skills and time become even more important as we think about what lies ahead and how in God’s company we might get there.

So imagine you were in that market square and Jesus said: "We played the flute for you, and you ....." Well there's the question. How important is it for each and everyone of us to be joining in with God's dance; of sharing our treasured resources, our treasured skills and our treasured time?

In that market place where Jesus spoke to people sitting like wallflowers around the edge of a dance floor he went on to say to those who would join in: 'Come to me, all you that are weary and all who are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

It's not about the nature of the dance or quality of our dancing. It's joining in that matters.

On the video and audio this week the prayers Our prayers this week are led by our four treasurers .....

## **Prayers**

Generous God, all that we have comes from you.  
As we look forward, be at the heart of all that we see and all that we do. Be our vision; be our guide.  
Lord hear our prayer.

God the source of all wisdom, all that we are comes from you. As we make plans and make decisions, be at the heart of our thinking and the judgements we make. Be our vision; be our guide.  
Lord hear our prayer.

God of all people, of all colours and creeds, of rich and poor, of all abilities and political beliefs, all that is good and just comes from you. As we change help us to share the treasure that is yours. Be our vision; be our guide.  
Lord hear our prayer.

God of eternal love and life, each human is precious to you. As we see the suffering of the sick, the grief of the bereaved, the fear of the unemployed, the hopelessness of the homeless and the shattered dreams of those whose businesses fail; help us and all your people be to them the support they need. Be our vision; be our guide.  
Lord, hear our prayer.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Conclusion**

Church News this week has information about services in our churches as well an update on how we can join in with our treasure: our time, our talents and of course our money if we are able. As Church services return we hope to keep video reflections so that anyone who feels they cannot safely return can join in as you are now.

Let's pray for God's blessing.

Lord of the dance, open our eyes to see you, open our ears to hear you, open our minds - so that in seeing and hearing we might understand your will for us now.

Be thou our vision, O Lord of our hearts.

May God who is Father Son and Holy Spirit bless us now and always. **Amen.**