



EMMANUEL CHURCH – WORSHIP FOR 23RD AUGUST 2020



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 23rd August 2020.
If you are able, watch this small service via the Emmanuel Church website: www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk.

Welcome and Gathering Words: The Lord is here: **HIS SPIRIT IS WITH US.**

Opening Prayer:

Draw near to God, all you who long for faith, all you who strive to lead a godly life.
Draw near to God, all you who believe, all you who have proved your faithfulness.
Draw near to God, all you who trust in the promises of the gospel:
the good news of Jesus Christ for all.
Draw near to God. **AMEN.**

Reading: Matthew 16: 13-20 ‘Peter Declares Jesus is Lord’

¹³ Jesus went to the territory near the town of Caesarea Philippi, where he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ “Some say John the Baptist,” they answered. “Others say Elijah, while others say Jeremiah or some other prophet.” ¹⁵ “What about you?” he asked them. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ “Good for you, Simon son of John!” answered Jesus. “For this truth did not come to you from any human being, but it was given to you directly by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And so I tell you, Peter: you are a rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.” ²⁰ Then Jesus ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Address: ‘The Church of Rock’

Prayers and the Lord’s Prayer:

We pray for:
the Church, the body of Christ, that the many denominations might be as one,
that we might respect and learn from one another;

those who have served the Church faithfully through the centuries, those who have gone before us, and those who serve the Church faithfully today;

those who witness to their faith in places where it is difficult to be a Christian, in places where they are ridiculed, persecuted, or imprisoned for their faith;

those whose faith stirs them to action, to make the world a better place, and those who have the courage to speak out for others;

our local church and the needs of our own congregation, and for those who especially need or have asked for our prayers at this time.

God hears all our prayers: **THANKS BE TO GOD. AMEN.**



Blessing: May the love and power of God go with us today and every day. May the blessing of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, **AMEN.**

Address: 'The Church of Rock'



I have done more Zoom quizzes in these last few months than I could shake a stick at. My general knowledge is expanding and I am thinking of applying to *Pointless*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, and maybe even *Mastermind* – though I would have to skip the specialist subject round. Mind you, I could possibly do one on local ecumenical partnerships and building schemes - bet that would go down well!! I remember one Zoom quiz recently there was a round on names: famous people who used a different name: Richard Starkey (*Ringo Starr*); Marion Morrison (*John Wayne*); Reg Dwight (*Elton John*); Michael King, Jr (*Martin Luther King, Jr*). Oooh I could go on!!

We've got a name-change in our reading this morning. The four Gospels all record Simon as being known as Simon Peter or just Peter. Matthew, Mark, and Luke often say in the earliest lists of the fishermen-disciples being called: 'Simon... who was called Peter'. Cephas, of course, means 'rock', and Peter is simply the Greek version of Cephas. The fourth Gospel John gets it in very early in Chapter 1 – Andrew "brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter)" (John 1:42).

It's clear Jesus is blessing Simon Peter greatly here – recognizing his great confession that 'Jesus is Lord', and seeing in this man someone who can be a builder of God's church. You and I also are well aware of Peter's faults too: we know that a little later in this chapter Jesus says to Peter: 'Get behind me, Satan!' (Matt 16:23); that he is terrified and is soon to deny even knowing Jesus, let alone that he is Lord. And yet this is also the man who in Acts experiences the Holy Spirit and who preaches, heals, and shares the good news, growing the church enormously. Jesus knew who Simon was – who he really was – from the very beginning.

If you and I try and work out who we are, what we are here for, who we are to love and look after, care for, share life with – and do that *without* God in our lives, then we will never fully know ourselves nor our place in this world. It is *only* God who can tell us who we are, who knows us through and through better than we know ourselves. It is God who calls us to new things, new challenges, new experiences, knowing full well our gifts, our strengths, our weaknesses, and who knows that what he gives us to do is nothing more than we can bear. Jesus knew who Peter was... God knows us. So if God is calling you to something, or calling you away from something to serve him anew, then listen to the one who knows you more fully than you know yourself.

So, what sort of a rock was Peter? (Now, I am obviously not talking about igneous or sedimentary types here, though I am fully prepared for a quiz round on that too!). Well as I mentioned, we can look to Acts for examples of Peter being a rock for the church, but we can also look to the two letters in the Bible which bear his name. 1 Peter is a deeply *pastoral* letter – a letter full of concern for early Christian communities who were suffering and being persecuted, it's full of consolation, comfort, it's even quite tender in places. 2 Peter is very different – the writer looks ahead to Christ's coming, and seeks to guard the people against harmful teachers and to stay strong in the face of all the difficulties they face. If 1 Peter is from a pastor, 2 Peter is from a guide who doesn't want those he loves to go astray.



If Peter is the rock for the whole church – maybe you and I can give some time to thinking about how we can be the rocks that make up Emmanuel – that little part of God's church in Eastbourne. How might we be rocks – in lockdown, in transition to the church opening up again, in the future too? Jesus knew Peter inside out: knew him, called him, and Peter used all his gifts with God's blessing. The same is true for us: let's listen to the one who knows us, and to be the people he means us to be.