



EMMANUEL CHURCH – WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2020



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 8th November 2020.
If you are able, watch this short service via the Emmanuel Church website: www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk.

Opening Prayer:

God of justice, encircle our earth with your demand for integrity and openness, for fairness and sharing and call the nations to live in harmony.
Prince of Peace, heal your divided world of its warring madness.
Still our fears and calm our stormy confrontations, and call the nations to live in harmony.
Spirit of reconciliation, breathe your fertile influence on all creation and help us find the common ground, where forgiveness may flourish and flower in new friendship and call the nations to live in harmony.

Holy Trinity of Hope and Love and Joy, let your desire for justice, peace and reconciliation mark every encounter with you and with our neighbour that in your presence and to your glory, the nations may learn to live in harmony. Amen.

Readings: 2 Samuel 11: 14-17, 26-27 'Absolute Power Corrupting Absolutely'
Matthew 27: 1-2, 11-14 'The Silence of Jesus'

Address: 'Power and Peace'

Act of Remembrance:

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
at the going down of the sun and in the morning
we will remember them.*

*As the stars that shall be bright
when we are dust, moving in marches
upon the heavenly plain;
as the stars that are starry
in the time of our darkness,
to the end, to the end, they remain.*

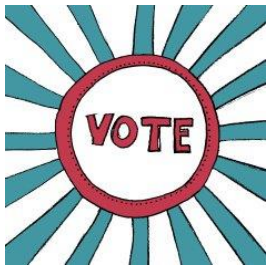
Prayers of Intercession and The Lord's Prayer:

God of all peoples and nations, we pray for communities and nations trapped in the cycle of distrust, hate and conflict, for those who feel they must use force to dominate others; for those who feel they must use violence to achieve justice; May there be a willingness to understand and to forgive between nations and communities.
MAY THERE BE HEALING AND PEACE.

Lord Jesus Christ, prince of peace, we pray for individuals and families struggling with difficult relationships, feeling hurt or angry: for those who find it hard to admit they have made mistakes, who cannot forgive; for those who have been let down by someone they trusted and feel betrayed; for those who are suffering because the people they love are arguing and fighting. May there be a willingness to understand and to forgive within families and friendships. **MAY THERE BE HEALING AND PEACE.**

Holy Spirit, bringer of life and peace, we pray for our planet, where we so often fail to live in harmony with the rest of creation. We pray for those who make the big decisions that may poison a river or save a rainforest, and for those who make the small decisions about how to travel and what to buy. May there be a willingness to understand and to forgive throughout God's brilliant, incomparable world, which suffers so much at our hands.
MAY THERE BE HEALING AND PEACE. OUR FATHER...

Blessing: May the peace and blessing of God be upon us all today and forever.



Address: 'Power and Peace'

We've had wall-to-wall US election coverage recently – to be honest I am now getting fed up of it and I want them to announce the winner soon. Did you hear this week that in Rabbit Hash, Kentucky, a French bulldog named 'Wilbur' won a heated race to be the town mayor? Yes, this is odd, but perhaps not as odd as the fact that they have had mayors since 1998. Also, apparently in 1988 a bad-tempered chimpanzee was put forward as a candidate as Mayor of Rio de Janeiro. The campaign's slogan was apparently 'Vote monkey – get monkey'. However, all his votes were declared null and void. It was reported that Tião was 'disappointed' by the outcome.

As daft as these things are, when people have done this sort of thing, behind it is usually a deep dissatisfaction with those in authority who have power, and who are often afraid to lose it. There's that old phrase – "Power corrupts... and absolute power corrupts absolutely". There's a great deal of truth in that! Power can bring out the very worst in people, some people do appalling things to achieve power, others will do anything to cling on to power. Human history is replete with examples of Kings, Queens, Governors, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Chairmen, Rulers of every description who misuse the power that they have. And please don't think I am only referring to the United States and President Trump – you only have to look at Kim Jong-Un, Putin, Xi: it's amazing how common it is for roles get redefined to enable a person to carry on term after term, or constitutions get changed that enable someone to hold a role for life.

In the 2 Samuel passage (and do just go ahead and read the whole of Chapter 11) David behaves appallingly – to Bathsheba, to Uriah, arranging his death and the deaths of those around him, just for his own ends. This passage ends with the most colossal understatement surely anywhere in the Bible: "*But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord*" (2 Samuel 11:27)! What David had done with his power was appalling, sinful, shameful, whatever you want to call it! On Remembrance Sunday that's particularly poignant to think about – how many lives have been lost in wars caused in the pursuit of power.

The piece from Matthew's Gospel gives an incredible counter-balance to the misuse of power and tyranny of David. Look at this picture (right) from Naumberg Cathedral showing a 13th Century stone carving of Pilate washing his hands. There are angry, contorted faces on all sides: grim and foreboding; Pilate looks amazed as he has his hands washed for him. Yet the central figure in this image is Christ and Christ



alone: his expression alone is calm, controlled, passive even. In the Gospel accounts, Jesus meets the power of the Roman Empire, the religious authorities, and the crowd baying for blood with calmness, with silence, with the righteousness of an innocent man in the midst of his accusers.

Sometimes you and I may need to protest, speak out, break silence – but we should never misuse the power that we have: to do so risks injustice and worse. Instead, our power should be used for peace, to hold up the vulnerable and to build up those who others seek to dominate or oppress. God's power in Jesus Christ was demonstrated on the cross: love, life, and forgiveness are the true qualities of power – and God's Spirit in us will only bring about peace and reconciliation. May the God of power and peace be with us always.