

Loving God, your extravagant love has called us to worship you. Long before we knew you, you already knew us and had chosen us to be part of your own family, sisters, and brothers with our Lord Jesus Christ.

What amazing love you have shown toward us!

And so, we come before you with praise and thanksgiving, Offering you the worship of our hearts and lives and opening ourselves to the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit.

Amen



Our Scripture reading this week are words full of hope, encouragement, and comfort. Nothing we are told can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. We can read earlier on in Romans Chapter 8, of how the world is groaning. It then it speaks of the groaning of the Church and then the groaning of the Spirit

In Romans 8:22 Paul says that *“from the beginning until now, the entire creation as we know it has been groaning in one great act of giving birth.”*

And so, we read our Bible reading for this week **Romans 8:26-31** New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Click [here](#) to see ReGen Harmony sing "Romans 8"

Recently I watched the film Frozen 2. In this film, the main characters had just sung a song about how great it was that 'some things never change'. This happy song was followed almost immediately by Arundelle, the city where they lived and ruled being engulfed by a huge storm. They had to hastily evacuate the city. All the people gathered together in the hills looking down onto their smashed kingdom. As they huddled together, Kristoff one of the main characters, asks Olaf the talking snowman (I know, go with it) whether he is ok. Olaf is shown playing with some of the local children. To keep them occupied and distracted during the crises the snowman is letting the children stick shards of ice into his chin to make a beard. As the children laugh and giggle, Olaf replies "Oh yeah we're calling this controlling what you can, when things feel out of control."

At the moment things may feel out of control for us. We are experiencing, to a certain extent the groaning of the world, the Church, and the Spirit of God. We may be feeling confronted with a sense of weakness in our present situation. Perhaps we feel that we should be doing more. Some may be questioning how we can be the Church when our buildings are still for the most part closed.

1 Corinthians 3:22-23 reads "*The world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.*" This suggests that humanity is an integral part of unfolding history and we are part of universal acceptance and belonging. This scripture also emphasises interconnectivity. Interconnectivity has been brought into focus for us recently. We are now all too familiar with the fact that we have to avoid physical contact and even touching of objects that others may have had contact with! On a more positive note, it is lovely to be able to join with our brothers and sisters across the world and participate in the plethora of worship services and fellowship meetings which are on offer via the internet. We are all connected. Above all we should know that we are also connected with God.

Perhaps we feel as though we ought to know what to do, what to say and how to act during this crisis. Paul is assuring us that it is ok when we do not know the answers. We have to allow God to be God and to trust him to work through us as we seek to do the one thing we can do, pray. Prayer knows no boundaries and can be transformational in lives and situations.

In our reading, Paul says that we do not know what to pray for as we ought. We may be struggling, and we may be feeling that our words when we manage to find them, seem inadequate. When we read Romans 8:26 it seems to imply that this uncertainty should be considered as normal! It is perhaps comforting to read that as we pray whether in words, cries or sobs God is searching our hearts and the Spirit of God intercedes for us also with "sighs too deep for words."

I remember once saying that I found prayer difficult; I felt others were far more eloquent during prayer meetings. I was told that sometimes the deeper the prayer the fewer words are used. I did not believe it, so was told to think of a swimming pool. The deep end of the pool, I was told, is always noticeably quieter than the shallow end. Prayer is being in God's presence and communicating. Communication is not simply talking but also listening and being aware of the other person's unspoken needs by reading their body language. When we read 1 Kings 19:11-12 we are reminded of how Elijah did not find God in the earthquake, wind, or fire but in the still small voice.

Romans 8:28-30 tells us that God will work with us and through us and all those who love him to bring about good. God wants to involve us in relieving the suffering in the world. Paul says that we are called according to God's purpose to pray and to lament and as we draw close to God, we will be able to work with Christ to offer God's love, hope, and comfort to a hurting world.

As we live through hardships, uncertainty, and fear God is with us and we are told that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord".

Let us pray:

"Let nothing disturb you,
nothing frighten you,
all things are passing,
God is unchanging.
Patience gains all,
nothing is lacking to those who have God:
God alone is sufficient."

St. Teresa of Ávila

God of love and hope,
you made the world and care for all creation,
but the world feels strange right now.
The news is full of stories about Coronavirus.
Some people are worried that they might get ill.
Others are anxious for their family and friends.
Be with them and help them to find peace.
We pray for the doctors and nurses and scientists,
and all who are working to discover the right medicines
to help those who are ill.
God of compassion,
Be close to those who are ill, afraid, in isolation or bereaved.
In their loneliness be their consolation,
In their anxiety be their hope,
In their darkness, be their light.

God of compassion,
Thank you that even in these anxious times,
you are with us.
Help us to put our trust in you and keep us safe.

Amen