

### Prayers of Intercession

Lord we pray for our churches in this District as we gradually explore ways to meet together again. We pray for the ministers and everyone with a role in the way forward. Give us open minds to accept new ways of worship and lead us into deeper relationship with you.

**Lord, may your kingdom come.**

Lord give wisdom and integrity to those in authority in the world that the problems of race, of climate change, of wars and disasters may be mitigated.

**Lord may your kingdom come.**

We pray for those struggling to deal with Covid-19 with limited resources wherever they are: for health care workers, researchers and those with decisions to make.

**Lord, may your kingdom come.**

Lord, in our individual communities, we remember before you those who are ill, those who are grieving, those who are lonely, those who are stressed because of threatened livelihoods.

**Lord, may your kingdom come.**

And lastly Lord we pray for ourselves, that you would meet with us in new and challenging ways. That our understanding of who you are may grow so that we might be empowered as your kingdom servants. **Amen**

Let us summarise our prayers in the prayer our Saviour taught us: The Lord's Prayer. **Our Father...**

Hymn: **And can it be** [StF 345 / H&P 216](#)

### Blessing

Lord Jesus, may the knowledge of who you are go with us each moment of the coming week in every place and every encounter. Make us conscious of your presence and fill us with your power to make your kingdom known. **Amen**

## United in Christ across Darlington District Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2020

*And what about you?*



**Lord God, here, now, even in our homes, we are in your presence. Open our eyes and ears and hearts to recognise you. Enable us to step aside from the ordinary to worship you in spirit and in truth.**

Hymn: **Come let us sing to the One, to the Father of life** [StF 2](#) ([lyrics](#)) or Father in whom we live [H&P 4](#) (StF 5)

### Prayers of thanksgiving and confession

Almighty God, thank you for the glimpses we see of you in the wonders of your creation, from the tiny flower to the vast skies. But you are so much more. Lord, fill our minds with wonder and awe and help us to worship you.

Lord Jesus, you came to earth and paid the ultimate price to bring us back into God's family. Open our eyes and our minds to the wonder of your love and help us to worship you.

Holy Spirit you guide us and strengthen us and it is you who opens our eyes and our hearts so that we can offer worship. Wonder of wonders, you live in our hearts. Praise you and thank you.

God our Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we confess that we so often don't approach you with the awe and wonder that you deserve. Forgive us Lord and open our minds. We confess that we don't listen carefully enough to your prompts and we often miss seeing what you want us to do and do what we should not do. Forgive us Lord and open our ears and our hearts.

Let us take a moment to rejoice that for everyone who puts their trust in Jesus, he promises that our sins are forgiven.

**Hallelujah, what a Saviour.**

**Hymn My Jesus, my Saviour, Lord there is none like you.** [StF 363](#) or How sweet the name of Jesus sounds [H&P 257](#) (StF 322)

Reading: [Matthew 16:13-20](#)

Caesarea Philippi is way up north, near the source of the river Jordan. Jesus wanted to get the disciples away from the pressure of his celebrity status to focus on something important for each of them.

He started with a general non-threatening question. 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' In other words, '*What are people making of me?*' And he gets the answer he probably expected, that people were comparing him with the prophets, fiercely uncompromising men of God who were not afraid to make political waves. The disciples knew they were following someone special, someone unpopular with the authorities. Truly a prophet figure.

And then comes the question that puts them on the spot. '*But what about you? Who do you say I am?*' And Peter makes his inspired answer: '*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*' This admission comes in a town which is the site of a great temple to Caesar describing Caesar as divine, as Saviour and Son of God. It is important that the disciples understand, however imperfectly, who Jesus is. They need to acknowledge and consider what it is they have signed up to because there are consequences to following Jesus. Being a disciple obviously has its exciting moments and the disciples must have been thrilled to be part of such a select band. But there were costs too. And not just the loss of family ties and jobs. There would be ongoing costs and personal challenges. Following Jesus was not going to lead to glory and status in the new kingdom of Israel. The disciples needed to reflect on their commitment.

Jesus asks us the very same question. Even those of us who have followed him for a while. '*What about you? Who do you say that I am?*' I think that is amazing. *What about you, my*

*child?* Jesus is not just concerned with salvation for the whole world. He, the Son of God, is concerned about salvation for you, for me. He is asking us personally for our response. He offers us the totality of God's love and it matters to him how each one of us responds to this personal challenge? So, what about you? Who do you say Jesus is?

It's not just a casual question. It's not just an enquiry like whether you support Newcastle or Sunderland. There were consequences for the disciples' lives. There are consequences for us too, for the way we live. It's not going to be a matter of a few minor adjustments to our daily lives. '*What about you? Who do you say I am?*' A great human teacher? The Son of God, responsible for solving all problems? Or what? '*What about you? Who do you say I am?*'

And look at Jesus' response to Peter. 'Right Peter. You have declared who I am. Now I will tell you who you are.' Did Peter expect that? Not just to be a follower but to be the leader and prop for everything. Not just that the future Christian community would be built on him but that huge authority would be given to him. I wonder what he made of that.

There are consequences when we recognise Jesus for who he truly is. Jesus always surprises us, always takes us further. He recognises potential that we don't see in ourselves and he equips us to fulfil it through the Holy Spirit! So what about you? Are you up for the challenge? Who do *you* say Jesus is?

It's worth taking time to reflect on our answer. Because a lot depends on it. By God's generosity and grace, we have a role in bringing in the Kingdom of God. By God's generosity and grace, we hold the keys to heaven – let's not keep it secret.

**Hymn: Be still and know that I am God** [StF 18](#)

or read Psalm 46: 10-11