

**Bulletin for Sunday 29 May 2022**

Good morning friends.

I hope you've all managed to enjoy a bit of sunshine. A few people fed back last week that they are still using this order of service - many thanks to them for getting in touch. If anyone else would like to express an opinion on the way forward for the Bulletin, feel free to let me know over the next couple of weeks. As I said last week, no decisions have been taken yet, we're trying to measure the continuing need. Thank you!

Let's pause as we prepare to worship... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Morning has broken (R&S 45)

Prayers: Creator God  
We thank you for this fresh new morning:  
for the hopes and opportunities which each day brings  
and for the beauty of the living world around us.  
We thank you too for the freedom we have,  
to live and worship in peace and in safety.  
May we treasure that freedom, for ourselves and others.  
We ask your blessing on everything we do,  
and on everything we give in your service,  
today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Acts 16: 16-34 and John 17: 20-26

Reflection: The slave girl, whose name we aren't told, was considered a valuable 'possession' by her 'owners'; and considered a nuisance by Paul. It almost seems that Paul healed her in order to stop her disturbing his mission, rather than out of compassion for her as a fellow human being; and certainly her 'owners' were just furious at their loss of income. Nobody apparently gave a thought to the girl herself, or how she felt about it. Nobody, in fact, thought of her - a slave - as a person like themselves. And frustratingly, as so often, we don't have the rest of her story. Was she returned to the slave market and sold again, or did she escape slavery at this point? After

hearing Paul speaking, day after day, did she later manage to join the small Christian community? We have no way of knowing.

The consequence, for Paul and Silas, of liberating the slave girl from her 'spirit of divination', was that they in turn found themselves imprisoned. A captivity from which they were released by the earthquake, leading to the opportunity for the jailer and his family to become believers. Freedom for the girl came despite nobody caring for her. Freedom for Paul and Silas came without human intervention; and freedom into new life for the jailor was the high point of this passage. Throughout, I believe God can be seen at work in the events and in their liberating consequences - chains were broken, both literal and figurative. God surely wills that everyone is free from oppression. Everyone!

Hymn: Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes (R&S 137)

Prayers: Prince of peace, we hold before you our world  
which longs for real peace, so everyone can thrive.  
We pray for all wounded, bereaved or displaced  
by war - may they find healing and hope.  
We pray for all who don't have enough to eat,  
clean water to drink, or a place to call home.  
And we pray for all held captive by others' greed.  
May they experience the liberation you intend for all.  
Bless our communities and all those we love...  
In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers,  
including the unspoken prayers of our hearts. Amen

Hymn: Great God, your love has called us here (R&S 339)

Blessing: May the God of life lead us into freedom;  
and may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us and with all those we love,  
this week, and always. Amen

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There will be a ' Sunday at Six 'service on Zoom at 6pm on Sunday - all welcome.

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