

Seventh Sunday in Easter
(Aldersgate Sunday)
A Liturgy for use at Home

Notes:

*This liturgy may be used at home or in small groups. Feel free to adapt it as you see fit. Children present might enjoy lighting candles, reading scriptures and leading some of the prayers. Words in italics are instructions. Words in **bold** are said by all.*

Preparation

Light a candle as you read

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you”
(1 Pe 5:6–7).

silence

Call to Worship

Sing to God, sing praises to his Name;
exalt him who rides upon the heavens;
YAHWEH is his Name, rejoice before him!
Father of orphans, defender of widows,
Is God in his holy habitation!
God gives the solitary a home
and brings forth prisoners into freedom;
**Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth;
sing praises to the Lord.**
(Ps 68:4-6,33)

Opening Prayer

Glory be to God on high:
We praise you, We bless you, We glorify
you, We give thanks to you for your great
glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the
Father Almighty. **Amen** (Gloria, SAPB)

Confession¹

If we’ve doubted your power
Lord forgive us
If we’ve fallen into despair
Lord forgive us
If we’ve failed to hope in you
Lord forgive us
If we’ve been fearful of death
Lord forgive us
If we’ve forgotten the victory of Christ
Lord forgive us

Silence

May the living God
Raise us from despair,
Give us victory over sin
And set us free in Christ.
Amen.

Scripture

1 Peter 4:12–14, 5:6–11
John 17:1–11

Collect

Eternal God, you have given all authority in
heaven and on earth
To your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Grant that we may never lose the vision of
your kingdom
But serve you with hope and joy
Through him who live and reigns with you,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever. **Amen**

Reflection

- *A written reflection is appended to these notes.*
- *The Sunday Sermon is online²*

Response

- Practice turning your thoughts to God’s glory at every moment of the day this week. Keep gently reminding yourself to turn your thoughts to “things above”.
- Pray for unity within and between churches. Talk about your faith with another Christian from a different denomination.
- Sign up for the 10 days of prayer.
- Fast (as you are able) from sunrise to noon every Thursday. At noon stop what you are doing and join the Methodists around Southern Africa as we pray.
- Continue the discipline of tithing as you are able.

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

These prayers may help as you hold before God the needs our church and nation at this

¹ From the Methodist Worship Book

² <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

time³. Pray them as written or use them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.

Unity Prayer⁴

God of steadfast love and compassion,
you call us and send us to proclaim good
news to all;
help us to show unusual kindness to all in
distress,
by sharing the Good News of your death
and resurrection,
by encouraging all to follow the new life you
offer,
and by assuring them that you will be with
them always;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit,
one God in glory everlasting.
Amen

The Poor in Spirit

Grant your help, Lord, to all who feel ill-
equipped for the demands of life, whether
through age or illness, tiredness or poverty.
Sustain them in overwork and anxiety; give
them friends in their need; enable them to
find your will in the circumstances of their
life and to rejoice in your love, even amid
hardship and difficulty; for Jesus Christ's
sake.

The Elderly and Infirm

Eternal God, you are the same yesterday,
today and forever, be near to all who are
aged or infirm. Though their bodies may fail,
let their spirits be strong in you; that with
patience they may bear weariness and
distress, and at the last meet death
unafraid; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Prayer for Aldersgate Sunday 2020⁵

By the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins

Resourceful Holy Spirit of God,
We thank you for your servants, John and
Charles Wesley.

That you fuelled their zeal
and tempered it with divine grace;
brought them through dark times,
enlightened and renewed.

That you warmed their needy hearts,
assured and shaped them by your active
holiness.

That through their willingness,
you worked out Your purposes of hope,
mercy, and justice.

Somewhat daunted, we stand today in their
deep footsteps.
In a world of new challenges and old needs
in a time like no other.

But undaunted, we humbly ask you to do in
us,
what you did in and through them.

May we know both your infilling and
outpouring,
that whatever our situation or condition,
we will serve and honour Christ,
and in these, our days, know and believe
that the best of all is, "God is with us."

Amen. Our Father...

Sing or listen to a song/hymn

Benediction

**And now may the grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with
us all, now and forever more. Amen**

The Glory of the Son

³ Prayers adapted from "My Personal Prayer Book" by Bishop Geoff Quinlan.

⁴ A prayer from the Church Unity Commission.

⁵ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/special-sundays/aldersgate-sunday/>

Jesus prayed, *“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you”*. Friends, it is right and proper to turn our thoughts again and again to God’s glory. Let’s do that now.

Glory in the Tabernacle

On Christmas Day we read: *“the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth: (Jn 1:14)*. Scholars tell us that could be translated “the Word became flesh and *tabernacled* amongst us” - recalling the Tabernacle or “tent of meeting”, the mobile Sanctuary where God met with the people in the wilderness (Ex 25:9).

God’s glory filled the tabernacle as a luminous cloud (Ex 24:16, Ex 40:34-35). So too, God’s glory filled the temple Solomon built – so much so that the priests were unable to stand and minister (1 Ki 8:10-11). The unmistakable, tangible, holy presence of the God who had rescued Israel & set them apart as God people.

Moses, you recall, asked to see God. But the fullness of God’s glory would have overwhelmed Moses to death. So, God hid Moses in a cleft of rock, guarded by God’s hand, until God had passed by (Ex. 33:22). Children often ask why *“no one can see God and live”* (Ex. 33:20). We must assure them that God does not want us dead – God protected Moses! But God’s holiness would overwhelm us. (Fire can incinerate us, not because fire is bad, but because we are not fireproof.)

I was listening to a podcast on Thursday⁶; James Smith reflecting on his friendship with the late musician Rich Mullins. Mullins wrote the song *“Our God is an awesome God, he reigns from heaven above with wisdom power and love”*. Smith observed that we sing it thinking “God is amazing”, but Mullin’s perspective as songwriter was that we need to be afraid! God is awesome, dangerous, holy. To experience God’s glory is to tremble in awe. As the song goes *“There’s thunder in His footsteps and lightning in His fists”*.

Jesus Glorified

In Jesus, God’s glory came nearer than ever before. Veiled, not by a cloud, but in human flesh. In the prayer Jesus prayed (Jn 17:1ff) he was preparing to reveal the fullness of God’s glory. He was about to take off his flesh. The fullness of God’s glory is revealed, but we are not destroyed! Instead, Jesus dies, for us, on the cross. Moses was shielded in a cleft of rock. We are shielded in God’s very being – the Rock of Christ! To see the cross, is to see God’s glory! And we too die – we die to self. Hence the hymn *“When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died my richest gain, I count but lost and pour contempt on all my pride.”* We realise that, in our pride, conceit and selfishness we’ve lost the way. The flames of the Holy Spirit consume us, purifying not destroying.

Sharing in Christ’s Glory

God is not in any way like us – God is “wholly other” as theologians put it. Isaiah prophesies:
*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts (Is 55:8–9).*

To our great shame the church does not always humbly acknowledge this.

But, to God’s great glory, God has chosen to bind himself to us, to include us in God’s glory. Listen to what Jesus says, *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God,*

⁶ <https://apprenticeinstitute.org/2020/05/20/conversation-with-dave-mullins/>

and Jesus Christ". God accepts us, just as we are, into fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's glory is shared with us.

Glory in our Suffering

Now we have to say something that's not easy to hear. Foolishness to some, a stumbling block to others. If God's glory is revealed through the suffering of Christ, then God's glory is displayed when we suffer with and for Christ. I'm not talking about suffering from making stupid decisions. Any fool can suffer that way and we often do. When we suffer because we follow Jesus, God's glory is revealed. Stephen, being stoned, moments before death, saw the glory of God. And Paul, who'd approved the execution could not deny that he'd seen God's glory in Stephen.

I'm sure some of you would empathise with my prayer, "*Lord, in that case, I'm happy with less glory – spare me suffering*". None of us choose suffering. We simply follow Jesus. But, when we follow the King who rules the world, and that leads us into hardship, it's easy to think – "*something's gone wrong*".

Friends, some of you are suffering. You are serving the sick in hospitals because you love Jesus. It is risky but you feel called to it. We see God's glory in you. Some of you love your employees because you love Jesus. You suffer anxiety and material loss on their behalf– we see God's glory in you. Some of you have so taken to heart the call to pray that you feel pain and grief as you intercede for those you know, and many you don't. Some of you have experienced loss of income, yet as you follow Jesus, you share time and money generously. In some of you Jesus' prayer "*may they be one as we are one*" has been sowed into your heart. You love the Church, serve her people and you suffer when the Church is hurt by discontent, discord and disharmony. God's glory is seen in you.

May God's life, eternal life, sustain you, strengthen you and may the glory of Christ's joy radiate from your very being, even in your suffering. **Amen.**