

Worship at Home May 10th 2026, 6th Sunday of Easter

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Jon Skeet.

Introduction: Hello, and welcome to Worship at Home for May 10th. I'm Jon Skeet, and I worship at Tilehurst Methodist Church when I'm not out and about as a local preacher in the Circuit. My wife Holly will be joining us to read our Bible passages later in the service.

It's good to share worship with you today, as we celebrate the sixth Sunday in Easter.

Our call to worship this morning is from psalm 66.

Call to worship: Psalm 66:8-9

⁸Praise our God, all you nations.
Let the sound of the praise you give
him be heard.

⁹He has kept us alive.
He has kept our feet from slipping.

Hymn: STF 311 The day of resurrection

1 The day of resurrection,
earth, tell it out abroad !
The passover of gladness,
the passover of God !
From death to life eternal,
from earth unto the sky,
our Christ has brought us over
with hymns of victory.

2 Our hearts be pure from evil,
that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal
of resurrection light ;

and, listening to his accents,
may hear, so calm and plain,
his own 'All hail !' and, hearing,
may raise the victor strain.

3 Now let the heavens be joyful,
let earth her song begin,
the round world keep high triumph,
and all that is therein ;
let all things seen and unseen
their notes of gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord is risen,
our joy that has no end.

St John of Damascus (c. 675–c. 750) *translated by* John Mason Neale (1811–1866)

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Prayers

We offer our prayers of adoration and confession.

Lord, we worship and adore you. We recognise you as the author of all creation. We are awestruck by your power, like thunder in a storm, but also marvel at your intricate love, like dew on a spider's web. You created us to seek you. We kneel before you, offering our lives in your service, that we may play our part in your kingdom of love and peace.

And yet, Lord, even as we think of your greatness, we are aware of how often we fail you. We remember times we have hurt others, lashing out in anger and greed. We think of situations where we could have shown your love, offered your comfort, and yet we did nothing. We know there are times we're not even aware of where we have let you down.

We are sorry. We turn back to you, and ask your forgiveness. We rely entirely on the grace offered us through Jesus Christ – trusting in his promise, and rejoicing that we are truly forgiven. Amen.

Reading: Acts 17:22-31

²² Then Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus. He said, “People of Athens! I see that you are very religious in every way. ²³ As I walked around, I looked carefully at the things you worship. I even found an altar with “To an Unknown God” written on it. So you don’t know what you are worshipping. Now I am going to tell you about this ‘unknown god.’

²⁴ “He is the God who made the world. He also made everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn’t live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ He is not served by human hands. He doesn’t need anything. Instead, he himself gives life and breath to all people. He also gives them everything else they have. ²⁶ From one man he made all the people of the world. Now they live all over the earth. He decided exactly when they should live. And he decided exactly where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that people would seek him. And perhaps they would reach out for him and find him. They would find him even though he is not far from any of us. ²⁸ ‘In him we live and move and exist.’ As some of your own poets have also said, ‘We are his children.’

²⁹ “Yes, we are God’s children. So we shouldn’t think that God is made out of gold or silver or stone. He isn’t a statue planned and made by clever people. ³⁰ In the past, God didn’t judge people for what they didn’t know. But now he commands all people everywhere to turn away from their sins. ³¹ He has set a day when he will judge the world fairly. He has appointed a man to be its judge. God has proved this to everyone by raising that man from the dead.”

Reading: John 14:15-21

Jesus Promises That the Holy Spirit Will Come

¹⁵ “If you love me, obey my commands. ¹⁶ I will ask the Father. And he will give you another friend to help you and to be with you forever. ¹⁷ That friend is the Spirit of truth. The world can’t accept him. That’s because the world does not see him or know him. But you know him. He lives with you, and he will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you like children who don’t have parents. I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore. But you will see me. Because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father. You will know that you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Anyone who has my commands and obeys them loves me. My Father will love the one who loves me. I too will love them. And I will show myself to them.”

Hymn: STF 106 God, whose almighty word

1 God, whose almighty word	hear us, we humbly pray,
chaos and darkness heard,	and where the gospel day
and took their flight,	

sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light !

2 Christ, you have come to bring
on your redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
O to all humankind
let there be light !

3 Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy Dove,
speed forth your flight ;

move on the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light !

4 Blessèd and holy Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide
let there be light !

John Marriott (1780–1825) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 106

Sermon: *Introduction*

These readings are both about relationships. In Acts, Paul says “God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him”, as well as “in him we live and move and have our being” and “we are God’s children”. In John, Jesus says “the Spirit lives with you, and he will be in you”, “I will come to you” and “Because I live, you will live also.”

There are so many more relationship-oriented verses I could quote from these passages, but I think I’d end up basically reading the whole of both of them again.

While both of them talk a lot about relationships, they definitely have different emphases – naturally, given their different audiences. Let’s start by looking at what Paul was trying to get across to the Athenians, then we’ll look at the relationships Jesus talks about in John’s Gospel, then try to put the two together.

Acts

Paul starts off by mocking his audience in a way, because the Athenians recognise an “unknown God”. I do wonder what Paul would think of me, when I’m aware there’s so much of God’s nature that I don’t understand. While I accept there’s an odd aspect to putting up an altar to an unknown God, almost in a “just in case” kind of way, I also think there’s something honest about it.

Moving on, Paul lays out his theology fairly briefly, with three main points.

This first point is that God is the creator of everything. We don’t invent God; God created all of us, and the universe. Part of worshiping God is understanding and acknowledging our place in creation. It’s in this point that Paul emphasises our relationship with God, and the need for us to seek God out.

Secondly, Paul brings up judgement: “He has set a day when he will judge the world fairly.”

Thirdly, Paul introduces the resurrection of Jesus.

Now, these second and third points have a logic which is unclear to me. “He has appointed a man to be its judge. God has proved this to everyone by raising that man from the dead.” How does the resurrection prove that Jesus will judge the world? And is this really the most important aspect of the resurrection for Paul?

If I were introducing someone to Christianity, I would approach the topic of resurrection as proof of *love* and with an emphasis on grace, not judgement. I’m not saying that Paul is *wrong* here – my own theology around judgement is very woolly and unclear, to be honest – but it just feels like it’s not the aspect of our relationship with Christ that I’d lead with. Of course, I expect that Paul’s full speech to the Athenians was rather longer than this; we don’t know what else he said.

Paired with a different Gospel reading, I’d probably take away a different message from this passage in Acts, but today, with John’s Gospel still ringing in my ears, it’s the relationship aspect that strikes me. I like the way that Paul highlights the *transcendent* aspect of God – that God is the “Lord of heaven and earth,” the creator of all things – while also bringing the *immanent* aspect of God, God’s presence with us and the need for us to seek God in relationship.

I suspect this would have been a novel concept to his listeners in Athens, and perhaps we should wonder at it more ourselves. We are perhaps so used to the idea that all-powerful, eternal, all-creating God should want a relationship with each of us, that we fail to step back and reflect on how amazing that is.

John

Let’s move on to consider the words of Jesus in John’s Gospel.

Just as a reminder, we’re still in the season of Easter. Today is *not* Pentecost, nor Trinity Sunday – but this feels like it’s laying the groundwork for both.

Almost every sentence in this passage is about relationships:

- Jesus asking the Father the Spirit.
- The rejection of the Spirit by the world.
- The Spirit living with us and being in us
- Jesus coming to us – instead of leaving us "like children who don't have parents". It's not just a matter of Jesus not leaving us "alone" but he uses words that are centred around relationships.
- Jesus being in the Father
- Us being in Jesus, and Jesus being in us

There are two kinds of relationships here. There are relationships between aspects of the Trinity – which I won’t go into today, because it’s not Trinity Sunday. There are also

relationships between us and God. What isn't mentioned here is about relationships between ourselves – human to human. But this is only half a chapter after "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

There are so many statements of relationships here, if we went through verse by verse, it would take a very long time, and I think we'd be missing the point. If there's one aspect that strikes you particularly, and you want to ponder that – go for it. Perhaps the Spirit living within us? Or us being "in" Jesus?

For me, the neon sign hanging over the whole reading is "God is relational." As far as God can be understood, God can best be understood in relationships. That's why it's so powerful when this reading is paired with Paul's sermon in Athens.

But I far prefer the way that Jesus talks about the resurrection: "Because I live, you will live also." Remember Jesus is saying this before the crucifixion and resurrection, but there's definite foreshadowing going on. And what does "living" look like in this context? It looks like being in relationship with God. Hopefully we've each spent the Easter season marvelling at the mystery of atonement. Part of that is forgiveness - but it's so much more than that. It's grace – grace that isn't a reset back square one, to some neutral state, but a positive rebuilding of relationships.

Response

So how do we respond to these readings? How should our lives be changed by them?

First, we should take heed of what Jesus actually says - obey his commands. That has to include "love one another" as Jesus has loved us. Not just "love your neighbour as yourself" but love one another as Jesus has loved us. We will fail at that - we are not perfect in love as God is - but we are called to try. What I find inspiring and challenging is thinking about this so soon after reflecting on grace. If we are able to offer grace to one another – if we even *try* to do so – that's amazing and powerful.

Second, we should rejoice in "life in all its fullness". Between the two readings, we are told what a full life looks like. It's one where we "move and exist" in God. It's one where we live with the Spirit, and the Spirit is in us. It's one where we are shown God's love in Jesus.

Third, we should *expect* the Spirit. Jesus promises us a helper, an advocate! Pentecost is just two weeks away. We need to recognise the Spirit at work within us and within our communities – again, in relationships. If we look for the work of the Spirit in the se relationships, we will surely be blessed.

God is in relationship with you – with all of us – and wants that relationship to flourish and deepen. We can see how much God values that relationship in the presence, life and ministry of Christ. We should then see that grace-filled relationship as a model for our relationships with others, strengthened and blessed by the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

We offer our prayers for God's people and the world. You may wish to pause to offer your own prayers for people and situations you know of.

Lord, we pray for your church. We pray for the complex relationships between people in different denominations and within individual churches, all seeking to know you better. Enlighten us, teach us how to hold grace-filled conversations, that we may learn from one another and catch more glimpses of your glory.

Lord, we pray for the nations. We pray particularly for nations at war – thinking of Ukraine and Russia, the United States, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine... but also those countries which don't make the news as often, but where violence is still a part of everyday life. We remember everywhere that injustice, greed and corruption are prevalent. Lord, show us how you want us to live with one another, and help us mend our relationships.

Lord, we pray for your creation. We think of the beautiful pictures from Artemis 2, showing how beautiful this world is – but highlighting how fragile it is, and how much we have abused it. We pray for those facing natural disasters, including those caused by the climate emergency. Teach us how to live *in* your creation and *with* your creation, respecting all life and treasuring the planet you have provided.

Lord, we pray for each other. We pray for those suffering from health challenges, whether physical or mental, and we pray for those who care for them. We pray for those with financial or employment difficulties. We pray for those involved in difficult family and social situations. Lord, we pray for your strength and love to be shared and felt.

All of these prayers we ask in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

You may wish to say out loud the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation you prefer.

Hymn: STF 503 Love divine, all loves excelling

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| 1 | Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art ;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart. | serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without
ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love. | |
| 2 | Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive ;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, | 3 | Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be ;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee :
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise ! |

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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Blessing

Lord, bless us this day and every day, living in us and with us. May we treasure and grow our relationship with you, and extend your grace to our relationships with one another.
Amen.

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