

Worship for Sunday 27th September 2020

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Call to Worship

Psalm 25 v 4 - 7

Teach me your ways, O LORD; make them known to me.
Teach me to live according to your truth, for you are my God,
who saves me. I always trust in you. Remember, O LORD,
your kindness and constant love which you have shown from long ago.
Forgive the sins and errors of my youth.
In your constant love and goodness, remember me, LORD!

Hymn: StF 293 All heaven declares

- 1 All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord.
Who can compare with the beauty of the Lord?
Forever He will be the Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee and worship Him alone.
- 2 I will proclaim the glory of the risen Lord,
who once was slain to reconcile us to God.
Forever You will be the Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee and worship You alone.

Noel (b 1955) and Tricia (b 1960) Richards

Prayer of Approach and Adoration

Lord, what marvellous things have been done
by those who put their faith in you!
Walls have been brought tumbling down:
walls of hatred and suspicion, of prejudice and indifference.
Mountains have been moved:
mountains of apathy and despair, of cynicism and doubt.
Lord, what marvellous things have been done
by those who put their trust in you!
Lord, what marvellous things you do
in the lives of those who put their trust in you:
changing old ways of thinking; creating new ways of living;
revealing the transforming power of your love,
the love that builds up and binds together.
Lord, what marvellous things you do
in the lives of those who put their trust in you!
Almighty God, you revealed yourself to us in Jesus Christ
as a God who loves us to the uttermost,
who will never let us go, a God who is faithful to his children,
a God whom we can trust with our lives.

We thank and praise you for always being there for us,
ready to receive us when we leap into your arms;
overjoyed to accept us as we are and to be invited to help us to be what we can be.
Faithful and trustworthy God, we thank and praise you. Amen

Prayer of Confession

We bring to our almighty and perfect God
the shortcomings of our lives, the frailties of our days,
the disappointments of our hearts.
We admit and confess our sins in the hearing of our loving God,
and in the presence of our family of faith.

We come to the Lord with the burden of our own sins: selfishness,
stubbornness, willfulness, pride, greed, envy, malice, insensitivity, cruelty.

Silence

We come to the Lord with the burden of the sins of our community:
neglect, loneliness, derision, poverty, prejudice.

Silence

We come to the Lord with the burden of the sins of the whole world:
the abuse of power, warfare, famine, torture, injustice.

Silence

Precious Lord, we hear your voice and trust in your coming peace.
We rely on your strength, and promise our co-operation.
We know your love, and look toward holiness in you. Amen

Reading **Philippians 2 v 1 - 13**

Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own.

The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – his death on the cross. For this reason, God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name. And so, in honour of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees, and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So then, dear friends, as you always obeyed me when I was with you, it is even more important that you obey me now while I am away from you. Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation, because God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose.

Hymn StF 362 Meekness and majesty – this is your God

- 1 Meekness and majesty, Manhood and Deity,
In perfect harmony, the Man who is God.
Lord of eternity dwells in humanity,
Kneels in humility and washes our feet.
*O what a mystery, meekness and majesty.
Bow down and worship for this is your God,
This is your God.*
- 2 Father's pure radiance, perfect in innocence,
Yet learns obedience to death on a cross.
Suffering to give us life, conquering through sacrifice,
And as they crucify prays: 'Father forgive.'
*O what a mystery, meekness and majesty.
Bow down and worship for this is your God,
This is your God.*
- 3 Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible,
Love indestructible in frailty appears.
Lord of infinity, stooping so tenderly,
Lifts our humanity to the heights of His throne.
*O what a mystery, meekness and majesty.
Bow down and worship for this is your God,
This is your God.*

Graham Kendrick (b 1950)

Reading Matthew 21 v 23 - 32

Jesus had gone into the temple and was teaching when the chief priests and the leaders of the people came up to him. They asked, "What right do you have to do these things? Who gave you this authority?"

Jesus answered, "I have just one question to ask you. If you answer it, I will tell you where I got the right to do these things. Who gave John the right to baptize? Was it God in heaven or merely some human being?"

They thought it over and said to each other, "We can't say that God gave John this right. Jesus will ask us why we didn't believe John. On the other hand, these people think that John was a prophet, and we are afraid of what they might do to us. That's why we can't say that it was merely some human who gave John the right to baptize." So they told Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Then I won't tell you who gave me the right to do what I do."

Jesus said: I will tell you a story about a man who had two sons. Then you can tell me what you think. The father went to the older son and said, "Go work in the

vineyard today!" His son told him that he would not do it, but later he changed his mind and went. The man then told his younger son to go work in the vineyard. The boy said he would, but he didn't go. Which one of the sons obeyed his father? "The older one," the chief priests and leaders answered. Then Jesus told them: You can be sure that tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you ever will! When John the Baptist showed you how to do right, you would not believe him. But these evil people did believe. And even when you saw what they did, you still would not change your minds and believe.

Address

Chris & I appreciate watching detective programmes on the television. We never quite manage to guess how Poirot, Morse or Vera, let alone Miss Marple, Jimmy Perez, Sidney Chambers or George Gently (etc. etc.) get their villain. Recently, we have also enjoyed some very vintage programmes such as Van De Valk and Rumpole. In each case the interview in the cells or at court can be the crucial moment, with the criminal not quite being asked a direct question but one which will trap them into revealing their guilt.

In the gospels Jesus is put on trial more than once. Of course it happens on Good Friday, but before that there are many attempts to catch him out by the cross questioning of the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders. They daren't come out and ask Jesus if he is the Messiah, God's chosen, in case they get an answer they don't want anyone else to hear. Instead they ask "What right do you have to do these things? Who gave you this authority?" Jesus doesn't evade the question, but neither does he give a straight answer. Instead he answers them with other questions; "Who gave John the right to baptize? Was it God in heaven or merely some human being?" They are stuck between a rock and hard place. If they say God, why didn't they believe him and why was he imprisoned and killed? But also they are afraid of the people who believed John was a prophet, who might rise up against them if they say he was merely a human being.

The short parable that follows is also a test. Is it better to say "yes" and not go to work, or say "no" and then go? It is a very human dilemma, dealing with trust and honesty. The implicit question is; is it better to agree to follow law of God but then not actually obey it, or to say you don't believe and then in reality you do have faith and act upon it. Like last week's workers in the Vineyard, is it too late to repent? The last will be first and the first will be last. The point of Matthew telling this story is to remind his readers that it is never too late to follow Jesus' teaching and to become a worker in the vineyard.

And, if you want to know what obedience looks like, then read Philippians chapter 2. The great hymn of praise about Jesus, the humble servant who was willing to forget self, give his life in devotion to others and even die on a cross so that God's grace and mercy would be revealed. Paul uses Jesus as the exemplar for the first and all Christians. Don't give up, don't just say you believe, press on and live for the sake of others not yourself. Live as Christ lived. Say "yes" to God and then go through with it, living as a humble disciple willing to go wherever you are called.

Prayers of Intercession

Wise and loving God, you call us to live in obedience to your will that we might have life in all its fullness.

We pray for ourselves that, inspired by your Holy Spirit, we may give ourselves in obedience to you.

This is our prayer: **help us to know and to do your will.**

We pray for those in power, who have to make difficult decisions which will affect the lives and well-being of many.

We pray for . . .

This is our prayer: **help us to know and to do your will.**

We pray for those who are the victims of warfare or poverty, who are calling out to us for aid.

We pray for . . .

This is our prayer: **help us to know and to do your will.**

We pray for those we know who are ill or anxious or bereaved, who need to be aware of our care for them.

We pray for . . .

This is our prayer: **help us to know and to do your will.**

We pray for those involved in the upbringing of children, who are trying to show them right from wrong.

We pray for . . .

This is our prayer: **help us to know and to do your will.**

We pray for the church, as we face the challenge of Christian living in a modern society and world.

We pray for . . .

This is our prayer: **help us to know and to do your will.**

Wise and loving God, emptying yourself of all but love you came, in Christ, to be alongside us. May we follow his example by being obedient to the way of love even to death itself. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn StF 477

*Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart,
teach me to move in the pow'r of Your Spirit,
teach me to walk in the light of Your presence,
teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.
Teach me to love with your heart of compassion,
teach me to trust in the word of Your promise,
teach me to hope in the day of Your coming,
teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.*

1 You wrote the rhythm of life, created heaven and earth,
In You is joy without measure.
So, like a child in Your sight, I dance to see Your delight,
For I was made for Your pleasure, pleasure.

Chorus

2 Let all my movements express a heart that loves to say 'yes',
A will that leaps to obey You.
Let all my energy blaze to see the joy in Your face;
Let my whole being praise You, praise You.

Chorus

Graham Kendrick (b 1950) and Steve Thompson (b 1964)

A Meditation and Personal Petition

I need more faith, Lord.

I believe in you, but I get scared of the demands I think you might make if I give myself wholly to you.

I need more faith, Lord,

not because I long to do miracles but because I am afraid to open myself up to other people and to you.

I need more faith, Lord,

for when the times of testing come, times of sorrow, pain, anxiety, times when your strength alone will do.

I need more faith, Lord,

to live life boldly and to the full, to know the depths and heights of love, to know you.

Lord, in my little faith, I pray to receive more.

Lord, hear my prayer. Amen

Dismissal and Blessing

God calls you to live by faith in him.

Your faith will guide you, inspire you, support you.

The Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you;

the Lord look on you with kindness and give you peace. Amen.