

Sunday 19 July 2020

This short act of worship (by the Revd Philip Wagstaff, a minister in the South Petherton and Crewkerne Circuit in Somerset) has been prepared for you to use whilst you are unable to attend church. Spend a few moments with God knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Call to worship

O come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise
to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him
with songs of praise!
O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand. (Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7)

Hymn: Amazing Grace (StF 440)

<https://youtu.be/NFL36m1VfDY>

Amazing grace -- how sweet the sound --
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

God's grace has taught my heart to fear,
his grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.

John Newton (1725-1807) (alt.)

Opening Prayer

In the risen Christ, Jesus' disciples were filled with new hope and they saw that you called them to speak your message of renewal, commitment, forgiveness and freedom. We thank you that you have called us to share that hope, even in the uncertainty that we often feel.

You dwell with us, your love enfolds us and we find peace in your presence.

We thank you that Jesus brings new insights into the world and that through his life, death and resurrection you continue to speak with us today. Jesus reached out his hands in healing, in friendship and in blessing; may we do the same in his name today.

We thank you that you continue to reach out into the life of the world; that in our deepest uncertainty you bring the certainty of your love; in the place of deepest darkness you bring your light and into our lives you bring your forgiveness.

Creator God, we pray that you continue to inform our compassion, be our vision and bring light, hope and peace to us and to all the world. Amen.

Romans 8:12-25

Matthew 13:24 – 30, 36 – 43

Reflection

Jesus often used the natural world as a means of helping his disciples explore the kingdom of God. In today's Gospel reading Jesus gives us one of the parables of the kingdom which tells us about the way that plants grow. Here both the good crop and the weeds which are planted later begin to grow; as they grow, they merge together.

Jesus knew about the impact of good and evil which was to find its full force as he walked the way of the cross. He knew about human nature. He knew that goodness, truth and justice are in the world but oppression, injustice and conflict are there also. Just like the plant and the weeds which grow together in this parable, so the complexity of human experience both good and bad exist alongside one another.

The crop and weeds grow together, as do good and evil and so does opportunity and oppression, hope and despair, light and darkness. It is only when the harvest is brought in that the weeds and the crop can be separated. Here is a parable of the end times, but it was also a parable of the hope of the kingdom which means that forgiveness is always offered and when accepted has a transformational impact on the way that life can be lived and hope is shared.

What though might this mean for us today? We live in an imperfect world, where human beings do the best of things and the worst of things. Jesus knew that, finding the best when he took the smallest offering of 5 loaves and 2 fish which fed the crowd of well over 5,000 people and yet finding the worst in a crowd crying, 'Crucify'.

Paul, in our reading from his letter to the Romans, tells us that the whole creation eagerly awaits redemption. Here is the deeper hope, a moment when all may find redemption offered through the cross and the renewal that it brings. After all, as Jesus shows us, there is hope for all in what God has done and in what God is doing. May that hope be seen in our response to the world as we discover and share God's love which continues to bring light into the darkness of our mixed up, imperfect world.

- The parable says that weeds and the good crop grow together; can good and evil ever be untangled in this world? What challenge does this present to our living as God's faithful people in the world today?

Prayers for others

We pray for the world around us; for the environment; for peace where there is conflict; for racial and social justice to be seen throughout the world.

We pray for our communities; for those who are shielding; for those who are fearful, for those working for the good of others in many different ways in our community. We pray for all who work in the NHS and for all key workers and those on whom we rely. We pray for our church community as we seek new ways of fulfilling our calling as the Church in these times. We pray for our families, friends, and neighbours. We pray for those who are ill and for those who are struggling financially or emotionally at this time. We pray for those who are grieving as we remember those who have died.

In the stillness, bring your own prayers to God...

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Everyday God (StF 45) (verses 1-8, 10)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1oNP4vaW_c

Earth's creator, everyday God,
loving Maker, O Jesus,
you who shaped us, O Spirit,
recreate us, come, be with us.

In your presence, everyday God,
we are gathered, O Jesus,
you have called us, O Spirit,
to restore us, come, be with us.

Life of all lives, everyday God,
love of all loves, O Jesus,
hope of all hopes, O Spirit,
light of all lights, come, be with us.

In our resting, everyday God,
in our rising, O Jesus,
in our hoping, O Spirit,
in our waiting, come, be with us.

In our dreaming, everyday God,
in our daring, O Jesus,
in our searching, O Spirit,
in our sharing, come, be with us.

God of laughter, everyday God,
God of sorrow, O Jesus,
home and shelter, O Spirit,
strong and patient, come, be with us.

Way of freedom, everyday God,
star of morning, O Jesus,
timeless healer, O Spirit,
flame eternal, come, be with us.

Word of gladness, everyday God,
word of mercy, O Jesus,
word of friendship, O Spirit,
word of challenge, come, be with us.

Our beginning, everyday God,
our unfolding, O Jesus,
our enduring, O Spirit,
journey's ending, come, be with us.

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

Blessing

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon us, now and always. Amen.