

# 12<sup>th</sup> July 2026 – Morning Service

## Listen to The Word

Rev Jem Hawkins

### Call to Worship: Psalm 119: 103-105

How sweet are your words to my taste,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
Through your precepts I get understanding;  
therefore I hate every false way.

Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path

### Introduction

The reading above, which is a lectionary reading for today, is taken from the longest psalm (and counted as the longest chapter) in the Bible: Psalm 119. This psalm speaks in depth, and at length, about keeping the commands and precepts of God through life. This is a difficult task, and the psalmist seeks an answer, and finds it (and shares it) in the verses above: the Word of God!

And the phrase “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” is a true help – but even better – as Christians we know The Word who was with God in the beginning (John 1:1) and who became flesh to be with us (John 1:14) and **show** us the True Way of Life (John 14:6).

These words from Psalm 119 are also precious to me, as it was not too long after I made a commitment to accept God’s love and follow Jesus, that Amy Grant sang of these verses. In a way which has always helped me in that journey as a follower of Jesus.

### Song – Thy Word

*Ch) Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
And a light unto my path  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
And a light unto my path*

1) When I feel afraid  
And I think I've lost my way  
Still You're there right beside me  
Nothing will I fear  
As long as You are near  
Please be near me to the end

2) I will not forget  
Your love for me and yet  
My heart forever is wandering  
Jesus be my guide  
And hold me to Your side  
I will love You to the end

*Amy Grant & Michael W. Smith © 1984 Curb Word Music; Meadowgreen Music Company*

### Prayer of Adoration

Heavenly Father, who spoke The Word and brought into existence the universe and all that is, both seen and unseen, known and unknown. Creator God, you have made us human beings in your image, that we might know You and worship you in our lives and actions. Forgive our wayward hearts when we seek selfish gain or hurt those around us. Forgive our greed and self-centredness, and bring us closer to You. We praise You for The Word who became flesh and made His dwelling among us; whose true grace and love brings us hope, forgiveness and renewal. Lord, continue to be with us even when we make mistakes. May your Holy Spirit guide us in the Way of Jesus. Praise be to God our Creator who is alive in Jesus and in our hearts through His Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## StF 20 – Be still for the presence of the Lord

- 1) Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The Holy One is here.  
Come, bow before Him now  
With reverence and fear.  
In Him no sin is found,  
We stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The Holy One is here.
- 2) Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire,  
With splendour He is crowned,  
How awesome is the sight,  
Our radiant King of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around.
- 3) Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place,  
He comes to cleanse and heal,  
To minister His grace.  
No work too hard for Him,  
In faith receive from Him;  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place.

David J Evans © 1986 Thankyou Music

## Reading: Deuteronomy 30: 11-14a

This commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

## Reading: John 1: 1-5, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth

## Thoughts

The Word which existed before the beginning of creation, who made people in the image of God, is the Word of creation and fellowship – creating people that we may be in fellowship with God as well as each other.

The Word which gave guidance to the people of God through the prophets, through giving direction, as the pillar and cloud in the wilderness spoke on Earth.

The Word was spoken to Moses on Sinai to tell us how to live, and written on stone tablets, but not on people's hearts.

The Word became obscured by rules – yet was never too far away. As stated in Deuteronomy 30 – the Word has always been within reach, if only we would reach out for the Word. The Word has ways been audible, if only we listen – not to the loud, the spectacular, the comfortable – but the still, small voice, as Elijah did on the mountain side in the midst of the noise and the storm (1 Kings 19: 11-13)... if only we listen!

But people didn't listen to The Word so... the Word became flesh and made His dwelling amongst us.

The Word of creation, who made people to be in fellowship with God and each other, became flesh so that we can **know** the Word and, knowing the Word, be new creations – be born again as children of God. In fellowship with God and each other, through His Spirit.

And that is where we are... 2000 years on. We can know the Word, and be a new creation in God. But the creative Word is not just passive, but is continually renewing and being renewed; to be alive and known from generation to generation (Psalm 78).

The Word speaks to us – if only we listen!

The Word speaks through us, if only we open our hearts and our mouths.

How will we listen, and speak, the Word of God to God's creation?

### **StF 511 – Speak in the stillness**

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| 1) Speak in the stillness, God we pray,<br>Come to our hearts and meet us here.<br>Bring us your peace for each new day<br>- the gift of grace to earth from heaven. | 4) Lift us to see with heaven's eyes.<br>We long to soar on eagles' wings<br>As we press on to claim your prize<br>- the gift of grace to earth from heaven. |
| 2) We speak as though we have not heard<br>And live as if we do not know<br>Your love in Christ, the living Word<br>- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.        | 5) So may we be renewed in love,<br>Held and sustained by you alone.<br>Strengthened by you that we may prove<br>A gift of grace to earth from heaven.       |
| 3) When, in the anxious rush of days,<br>We lose our hold on faith and you,<br>Reclaim us with your calm embrace<br>- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.        |                                                                                                                                                              |

*Gareth Hill © Song Solutions CopyCare*

So Jesus, the Word became flesh, to be alongside us humans, to teach us the Way to live as God's children. Surely now we will listen and hear and understand. Surely?

### **Reading: Matthew 13: 10-17**

Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"

And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

““You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

For this people's heart has grown dull,  
and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed,  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them. ’

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it!

## Reflection

*Surely that is not us, Lord?* We come to church and we sing hymns and worship songs and we listen to prayers.

I asked myself that question and thought... why do we come to church?

- To sing the hymns we like?
- To hear our favourite readings?
- Be entertained?
- To be comfortable?

Then we come for the wrong reason!

- Do we come only when a certain preacher is taking the service? & not when certain preachers are?
- If there are kids in the service, or it's too noisy do we switch off?
- If it is too quiet, do we stop concentrating?
- If there are new songs, or different from our preferred styles, does it just rankle?

Then we miss the point and we close our ears! For the Word we need to listen to is not the preacher or the hymns or the format or the comfortable, but the **Living Word of God**. Sometimes spoken through the preacher or the hymns or the prayers or the silence or the noise – but always spoken in our hearts.

If only we listen. To listen, to hear! To let that still, small, voice of God speak to us. To be here, in fellowship with God and each other – for this is the point of the creative Word; of The Holy Spirit; and of the Church!

And speak The Word to the next generations in a way that they can hear, and hearing – to know. And knowing, to follow. The Word of acceptance, belonging, fellowship and love. The Word in us. The word through us.

The Word of God seen and known and followed through Jesus our saviour and friend!

## Prayer

Take a moment to think about people who are precious to us and have gone home to God... We lift them to God's loving embrace.

Take a moment to think of our friends and family, our carers and good neighbours... We pray God bless them with kindness and love.

Take a moment to bring to mind our uncertainties and concerns. Lord, hold us in Your hand and equip us to deal with all that is before us.

Take a moment to think of people around the world who are afraid, hurting, marginalised, treated unfairly. May Your Word speak for Justice and fairness and reconciliation through Your people.

Take a moment to think of God with us in Jesus, His Living Word to guide us, His Sacrifice to offer new life to our world.

Take a moment and recognise God with us.

Into Your hands, we place our prayers and ourselves. In Jesus' name, **amen**.

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

## Reading: Isaiah 55: 11-12

My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

## StF 487 – You shall go out with joy

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| You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace,<br>And the mountains and the hills shall break<br>forth before you.<br>There'll be shouts of joy, and the trees of the field<br>Shall clap, shall clap their hands | And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,<br>And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,<br>And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,<br>And you'll go out with joy. |
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*Stuart Dauermann & Steffi Geiser Rubin © 1975 Lillenas Publishing Company*

## Blessing

May the Word speak to your heart, be seen in your life and heard in your speaking.  
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all,  
now and evermore. **Amen.**