

13th July 2025 – Morning Service

Rev Chris Watson

Call to Worship

God of the past, who has fathered and mothered us

We are here to thank you

God of the present, who inspires and encourages us,

We are here to discover you.

God of the future, who promises and leads,

We are here to be open to you

God of the past, present and future,

May our thanks, discovery and openness be always for you,

In this place, and this time, and now and for evermore. Amen

StF 57 – Let all the world in every corner sing

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Let all the world in every corner sing:
My God and King!
The heavens are not too high,
His praise may thither fly;
The earth is not too low,
His praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing:
My God and King! | 2) Let all the world in every corner sing:
My God and King!
The church with psalms must shout,
No door can keep them out;
But above all, the heart
Must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing:
My God and King! |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

George Herbert

Prayers¹

Almighty God, we come before you to worship you. We come with all your people in heaven and on earth, to lift up our hearts and voices, and give the praise and honour due to you, our God and King.

We know that our words can never fully express your greatness, that our minds can only begin to recognise something of your wonder, but we bring what we are, and we bring this time of worship, offering all to you as a sign of our love and a simple expression of our praise.

We praise you again for our world – all the beauty of creation.

We praise you for the life you have given us – so full of blessings.

We praise you for all you have done in Christ – for the richness of life you offer through him.

We praise you for your love upon which we can depend – your love that is always with us.

Almighty God, accept our worship. Touch our hearts with the nearness of your presence, deepen our faith, strengthen our commitment, and broaden our vision, so that we may grow as your people, and play our part in working for your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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.**

StF 64 – Praise is rising

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Praise is rising, eyes are turning to You,
We turn to You.
Hope is stirring, hearts are yearning for You,
We long for You.
'Cause when we see You,
We find strength to face the day;
In Your presence all our fears are washed away,
Washed away. | 2) Praise is rising, eyes are turning to You,
We turn to You.
Hope is stirring, hearts are yearning for You,
We long for You.
'Cause when we see You,
We find strength to face the day;
In Your presence all our fears are washed away,
Washed away. |
| Ch) <i>Hosanna, hosanna,
You are the God who saves us,
Worthy of all our praises.
Hosanna, hosanna,
Come, have Your way among us;
We welcome You here, Lord Jesus.</i> | E) Hosanna, Hosanna,
Hosanna, Hosanna. |

Brenton Brown & Paul Baloche © 2005 Thankyou Music

Reading: Deuteronomy 30:9 – 14

Then the Lord your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

StF 545 – Be thou my vision

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light. | 4) Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
Be thou mine inheritance now and always, -
Be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art. |
| 2) Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
Be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
Be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
Be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee. | 5) High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all. |
| 3) Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power. | |

Irish 8th Century translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne, versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hall

Reading: Luke 10:25 – 37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Sermon

I would like to begin by talking about soap and singing, or rather ‘Soap Operas’. Fans of this genre will recognise the names; there's Coronation Street, EastEnders, Home and Away and of course the one on the radio, The Archers. Coronation Street is based on the pub there and how its clientèle interact with each other and their neighbours, EastEnders is about the people living in a square in the East end of London.

The one I am thinking about in particular though is the Australian one, Neighbours, which used to grace our screens. The theme song was “That is when good neighbours become good friends” The storyline followed the lives of the people and families that lived in a particular street and their neighbourhood. Storylines in the past for these soaps have covered everything from murder to childbirth - every aspect of life has come under scrutiny in one way or another. If the “neighbours” in all of these soaps acted towards each other the way they should, the neighbourhoods would be peaceful but would not make good television. In other programmes such as documentaries, stories about disputing neighbours and “Neighbours from Hell” have become items we are all familiar with.

Our reading this morning was from Luke's Gospel and relates how Jesus responded to a question concerning neighbours. An expert in the Law, that is the Law of Moses, stood up to test Jesus by asking him a question as to how he, the lawyer, could gain eternal life. Jesus replies in, true rabbinical style, by asking him a question in return and asking the Lawyer how he understood the answer. The Lawyer gives the textbook answer:

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself’.

Jesus tells him to go and do it but the Lawyer wanted more and so asks, “Who is my neighbour?”

Jesus then goes on to tell the story of “The Good Samaritan” a story we may know well and may have heard numerous sermons on, so this morning I would like us to look at the question rather than the story.

Jesus related the story to answer the question “Who is my neighbour?” One obvious answer is the person who lives next door, in the surrounding area, but this is too easy and flippant an answer. The real answer is anyone who is in need, anyone we meet is our neighbour. But why was the question asked at all?

One of the basic concerns of the Mosaic Law was how other people should be treated and fair treatment for all. In Leviticus 19, we read instructions, such as these given to the Israelites: *‘When reaping a harvest leave the edges of the field and when working in a vineyard leave any grapes which fall so the poor and aliens can gather wheat and grapes. Don't defraud your neighbour, judge your neighbour fairly, don't endanger your neighbour's life’.*

God's people are given instructions concerning personal morality, relationships and how to live together in peace. The basis and backing for these laws is the very name and nature of God. One of the leading Jewish teachers of the time, Hillel, had summarised the whole law as love for God and love for your neighbour. Jesus tells the Lawyer that he must love everyone, even those deemed enemies or beneath his attention, as himself, and this command follows on from the first, which is to love God.

What does that mean for us?

The first commandment then is to love God but how are we to do that? Sometimes it is difficult to love people we can see and touch, but how do we love what is Spirit? How can we love God.? To love someone properly we have to have some knowledge of them, of their character. For any relationship to grow, to survive, time has to be given to it; we have to spend time together getting to know each other talking together. If we have a friendship and we never talk to, see or communicate, with that friend, the friendship will become an acquaintanceship, just someone we once knew and eventually that relationship will die. Like any relationship our relationship with God needs time and energy to be spent. We need to pray, talk to God. We need to learn about Him by studying, discussing, thinking about the Bible and what it tells us about him, his character, his likes and dislikes. We need to spend time learning from others, not just on a Sunday morning. The more time and attention we give to this relationship the more it will deepen and grow.

So we are to love God with all our heart, we are to love him with the very core of our being, loving him in all of our life. We are to love him with our soul, with the seat of our emotions. We cannot love and be detached, love is an emotional thing, it involves feelings. We shouldn't be ashamed to show or feel emotions in worship, in all we do. Our will is also involved because we can decide to give or withhold love and worship. We can override our emotions and many of us do. We should love God with our mind. We are not asked to put aside our intellect, our mind. our understanding, but rather we are to understand what God has done for us, who he is, what his character is and so to love him by knowing him. We are to apply our minds and understanding in the reading and studying of his word. We are to love him with all our strength. Our strength is our might, power, abilities. Every gift and ability we possess should be used to worship and love God. All of us have abilities and strengths that we can offer in worship, in service to God and to his people, to his church either here or elsewhere. We are to love God in an holistic way, with everything that makes us who we are, our entire being used to worship, to love him. All we do say and think in any and every situation should reflect our love of God.

Love your neighbour as yourself. We can't love God in isolation because if we love him, we love what he loves, which is everyone else. Loving God spills over into love for our neighbour. We know that our neighbour is not just literally the people living next door, we learn that from the story about the Good Samaritan. Neighbours are everyone, especially those in need.

How do we love our neighbours as ourselves?

Sometimes we are so keen to follow the example laid down in the story of the Good Samaritan that we overlook our nearest neighbours. Your neighbour includes the person sat next to you this morning or the person who usually occupies the chair by the side of you, in front or behind. Are they here today? if not do you know why? Do you care enough to find out why they are not here? Do they need some help, care? Do you love them enough to put aside your cares, needs, to provide what they need. Loving your neighbour is about putting them first. It means listening to them, to their opinions and even if you disagree and even know they are wrong, letting them have their say without always having to correct with your opinion. There should be less looking out for number one - we are all quick to know and point out when we are losing out, being hard done by. Neighbours are also those further away from home, in the war torn countries, in countries suffering droughts and floods. How good are we as neighbours, as loving neighbours, how much interest do we pay to global affairs, to organisations which operate on ethical grounds, which invest in ethical companies, to Fairtrade? What ethical choices do we make?

So Jesus tells us to love God and our neighbour, the two go together. It is no good loving God in isolation nor is it any good loving our neighbours, just doing the social justice side of things, the good works, without reference to God. For us, the two should go hand in hand. It's not about what we do that puts us right with God, it's not about good works, it's not about how well you sing on Sundays, how you perform in church. You can come every week to church and it mean nothing to you because it is all about our relationship with God. It is about obeying God's command, and it is a command not an optional extra. We have to actually love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbour as much as ourselves.

In conclusion the Old and New Testaments command us to love our neighbour as ourselves, to treat others as we would have them treat us, because God loves us and wants to show us how to love everyone. Neighbour is a global term. In our day and age the world is shrinking, we have the means to connect through travel, television, through modern technologies, newspaper and radio. We no longer have the luxury of hiding our heads in the sand and pretending that we don't know how other people live and suffer. We know about people who are paid a pittance to produce items we take for granted. We know about fair Trade organisations, about child poverty and prostitution. All who are in need here or elsewhere are our neighbours.

A question, in closing, for you - How can I, how can you, be a more loving neighbour? Amen.

StF 256 – When I needed a neighbour

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) When I needed a neighbour
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour were you there? | 4) When I needed a shelter
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter were you there? |
| Ch) <i>And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?</i> | 5) When I needed a healer
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer were you there? |
| 2) I was hungry and thirsty
Were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty were you there? | 6) Wherever you travel
I'll be there, I'll be there
Wherever you travel I'll be there |
| 3) I was cold I was naked
Were you there, were you there?
I was cold I was naked were you there? | E) <i>And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
I'll be there</i> |

Sydney Carter © 1965 Stainer & Bell Ltd

Prayers of Concern

Almighty God, we come to you in prayer and petition. We pray for our communities where we live, work and rest. We pray that Your light may shine in the darkest corners, illuminating where we need to bring Your Word. We pray for a softening of hearts and a turning of minds towards You. We pray for your justice and mercy to flow out into our communities.

Lord, in Your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our churches. May they be beacons of hope in our communities and across our land. We pray that all we do is for You and of You, that people may see Your Light in the darkness of the World.

Lord, in Your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our local and national governments and those in positions of authority. May the people that we elected speak up for those that they represent, represent all with fairness and work for the good of all.

Lord, in Your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for world leaders. We ask for wisdom and compassion, for truth and justice, and for Your will to be done in all their decisions and actions. We pray that they act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with you, O God.

Lord, in Your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the environment and that all may see their own responsibility for its care. We recognise that we are just stewards of your world, help us to care as much as we should and do as much as we can.

Lord, in Your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for nations in conflict or oppression. Save and protect those in danger and peril in these places, Lord. Stay the hand of the oppressors and flood their hearts with compassion for your people. As hard as it is, Lord we pray for those who stir up and perpetrate acts of hatred and violence turn their hearts of stone into love and peace.

Lord, in Your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all nations in crisis including our own, Lord. We pray for people to turn to you as we seek your kingdom. Build your Kingdom here, and come again, we pray.

Lord, in Your mercy **hear our prayer.**

Almighty and Merciful God, we bring our prayers to you through the loving mercy of our Lord, and Saviour, Your Son, Jesus Christ and may Your Spirit rest with us. **Amen**

StF 397 – The Spirit lives to set us free

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) The Spirit lives to set us free,
Walk, walk in the light.
He binds us all in unity,
Walk, walk in the light. | 4) We know His death was not the end,
Walk, walk in the light,
He gave His Spirit to be our friend.
Walk, walk in the light. |
| <i>Ch) Walk in the light,
Walk in the light,
Walk in the light,
Walk in the light of the Lord.</i> | 5) By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
Walk, walk in the light,
The Father's kindness is revealed.
Walk walk in the light. |
| 2) Jesus promised life to all,
Walk, walk in the light.
The dead were wakened by His call.
Walk, walk in the light. | 6) The Spirit lives in you and me,
Walk, walk in the light,
His light will shine for all to see.
Walk, walk in the light. |
| 3) He died in pain on Calvary,
Walk, walk in the light,
To save the lost like you and me.
Walk walk in the light. | |

Damian Lundy © 1978 Kevin Mayhew Ltd

The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit IS with us all, now and evermore. Alleluia! **Amen.**

¹ Taken from *Prayers for all Seasons*, Nick Fawcett