

17th August 2025 – Morning Service

Tina Gittings

Call to Worship

Be fruitful within us, O God and fill our words with your love, our lives with your glory and our labour with your blessing. (Ann Gilbert, Cornish Methodist Preacher (1735-1790))

StF 88 – Praise to the Lord the Almighty

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| 1) Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy
health and salvation!
All ye who hear,
Brothers and sisters, draw near,
Praise him in glad adoration. | 4) Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness
of sin is abounding,
Who, when the godless do triumph,
all virtue confounding,
Sheddeth his light,
Chaseth the horrors of night,
Saints with his mercy surrounding. |
| 2) Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper
thy work and defend thee;
Surely his goodness and mercy here
daily attend thee:
Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
Who with his love doth befriend thee. | 5) Praise to the Lord! O let all that
is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath, come now
with praises before him!
Let the amen
Sound from his people again:
Gladly for aye we adore him. |
| 3) Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,
Fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee,
Then to thy need
He like a mother doth speed,
Spreading the wings of grace o'er thee. | |

Joachim Neander translated by Cathering Winkworth & Rupert E Davies

Prayer of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving

Lord, Almighty God, who loved us into being we come into your presence humbly, to bring our praise and our thanks for all you are to us and for your touch on our lives. And we come to confess that we fall short of all you would have us be.

Lord, we praise you for your goodness that will not be defeated and for your glory that will not be diminished.

For your majesty which shines out into the darkness of your world.

For your authority which is the ultimate answer to all our concerns.

For your sovereignty which is the reason for our worship and adoration.

And for your love which holds us and heals us and makes us whole.

We come to confess that we are not the people you intended us to be, neither are we the people we would like others to think we are.

There are things we have said, done, or thought that we would rather no one else knew about.

We are ashamed when we look at your world spoilt by greed, tainted by selfishness, stained by injustice.

Our world has been made that way by our greed, our selfishness. and our unjust dealings. We come not to ask for forgiveness alone but for cleaning and renewal.

Help us to reflect your grace and to become channels of compassion and mercy.

We give thanks to you that through the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we are able to know that we are loved and forgiven.

In the darkest of times, he comes to us upholding us, guiding us, correcting us but always with a love for us so great that it brought him to the cross.

We give you thanks for the coming of the Holy Spirit, who gives power to our worship and strengthens us and equips us for service

We join with all your creation to honour your name and to give praise for your glory.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord we offer our prayers and lives through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. 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 5: 1-7

I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard:

My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.

He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines.

He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

“Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it?

When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?

Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard:

I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed;

I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled.

I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there.

I will command the clouds not to rain on it.”

The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel,

and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in.

And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

StF 470 – Lord for the years

- 1) Lord, for the years
Your love has kept and guided,
Urged and inspired us,
Cheered us on our way,
Sought us and saved us,
Pardoned and provided,
Lord of the years,
We bring our thanks today.
- 2) Lord, for that Word,
The Word of life which fires us,
Speaks to our hearts
And sets our souls ablaze.
Teaches and trains,
Rebukes us and inspires us,
Lord of the Word,
Receive Your people's praise.
- 3) Lord, for our land,
In this our generation,
Spirits oppressed by
Pleasure, wealth and care;
For young and old,
For commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land,
Be pleased to hear our prayer.
- 4) Lord, for our world,
When we disown and doubt Him,
Loveless in strength
And comfortless in pain;
Hungry and helpless,
Lost indeed without Him,
Lord of the world,
We pray that Christ may reign.
- 5) Lord, for ourselves;
In living power remake us,
Self on the cross
And Christ upon the throne.
Past put behind us,
For the future take us,
Lord of our lives,
To live for Christ alone.

Timothy Dudley-Smith © Timothy Dudley-Smith

Reading: Luke 12: 49-56

"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

He said to the crowd: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?"

StF 564 – O Thou who camest from above

- 1) O Thou who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart!
- 2) There let it for thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.
- 3) Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and think for thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up thy gift in me -
- 4) Ready for all thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death thy endless mercies seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley

Sermon

Our reading from Luke is sometimes referred to as one of the “hard statements” made by Jesus. Gone is the baby in a manger, the boy on the verge of manhood being obedient to his parents after the visit to the temple. Gone is the man working as the village carpenter.

Here is Christ. The One who has come to bring fire upon the earth.
He stands before the crowd, with his authority, knowing and accepting his task.
To the Jewish people fire was the symbol of judgement. He was bringing judgement.

This was not what they had come to expect of the Messiah. The one they thought of as a king and conqueror who would lead them into a golden age. The shock they must have felt that there was to be judgement – fire cast upon the earth.

We have seen pictures and films of the devastation fire can cause. Homes and forests lost to the flames, reduced to ashes and rubble. Sometimes the power of fire is used to strip away the old in order that new life can flourish. Old vegetation that has taken over moorlands and forests excluding light, using nutrients and water, stifling the growth of anything but their own species is burnt away leaving room for other species to flourish and support different forms of life. That was his mission to create a place where those who accepted him could flourish and grow, the Kingdom of God on earth.

When Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace but division, he was giving a challenge to be different, to react to situations in a way which would set his followers apart. Families and friends would be divided in their acceptance or not of Jesus. He was warning them that to be a follower of his was not going to be easy, but also giving them the freedom to live according to God’s laws. What he was telling his followers to do was to put God’s law first and that this would set them apart, cause divisions and separation, even among families and friends. They were to be in the world but not of it.

Jesus rebuked the crowd telling them that although they were weatherwise, they were not aware of what was happening around them. They were burying their heads in the sand to the changes that did not fit with their fixed ideas of the Messiah as a victorious war leader. He was warning them to think for themselves before it was too late.

Jesus had a baptism to go through to fulfil his mission to bring judgement and change. I expect most of us have experienced a “baptism of fire” – an ordeal we have no idea how to cope with or even if we will get through it. Getting to the other side is a time of relief and joy in what we have achieved. For Jesus it was the cross. “I have a baptism to go through.” Jesus was not speaking of John’s baptism, but the cross. He speaks of the distress he is suffering until it is completed.

For me, this takes me to Gethsemane. His time alone with his Father, his tears, his sweat running red like blood and his words: “Not my will but yours”. On the cross in agony, near to death the words “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” and “it is done”. He had changed the world. He had no need for huge armies but had achieved it through his love and compassion, by giving his life for many.

The early Christians referred to their faith as the Way. A journey that we undertake not as day visitors or tourists returning to home and family each evening, but one we undertake as pilgrims, sometimes moving forward easily in confidence. At others times, the progress may be difficult and slow, but always moving forward in a Christ-changed world towards the Kingdom. Amen.

StF 696 – For the healing of the nations

- 1) For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord;
For a just and equal sharing
Of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
Help us rise and pledge our word.
- 2) Lead us forward into freedom;
From despair your world release
That, redeemed from war and hatred,
All may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
Fear will die and hope increase.
- 3) All that kills abundant living,
Let it from the earth be banned;
Pride of status, race, or schooling,
Dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
May we hallow life's brief span.
- 4) You, Creator-God, have written
Your great name on humankind;
For our growing in your likeness
Bring the life of Christ to mind;
That by our response and service
Earth its destiny may find.

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Prayers of Intercession

Almighty God, our Father, you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We pray for the life of the Church, especially church leaders, that they, with wisdom and prayerfulness, speak out to challenge war-makers, injustice, poverty and ill-treatment of the vulnerable. For those of our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their belief in Jesus Christ. Strengthen all your Church in the service of Christ; that those who confess your name may be united in your truth and live together in your love and reveal your glory to the world. Let your Holy Spirit breathe new life and enthusiasm into your Church.

We pray for the needs of the world. For peace and justice, for compassion and kindness. We pray for those places torn apart by war, from civil wars and foreign invaders. We pray for the people whose lives are devastated, families torn apart, children suffering and hope turned to dust. We pray for the aid agencies and their workers who seek to bring shelter and food to the weak and vulnerable in times of disaster and war. We pray for courage, patience and perseverance for those negotiating peace. Give wisdom to all in authority and direct this and every nation in the ways of justice and peace, that we may honour one another, and seek the common good. Let your Holy Spirit breathe love and compassion on this hurting world and give strength to those who seek to bring justice and mercy to the people.

We pray for the well-being of our own country which seems divided for many reasons, both social and political. Draw us together as we move towards a very different future seeking only the best for each other, having care for the vulnerable and weak, not seeking to take advantage, not seeking to further our own ends at expense and upset of others. Let your Holy Spirit bring the people together in friendship and support.

We pray for people who are in special need. Those who are ill, anxious, and unsure about the future. Those who grieve and mourn the loss of a loved one and the life they once shared. Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body mind and spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Let your Holy Spirit surround them with warmth and love so that they know you are near.

We pray for ourselves. In silence we offer up to you the anxieties and concerns, the guilt and fear that we are unable to put into words to speak of to those nearest to us lest we upset or dishearten them.

Silence

Lord, give us the understanding to hear your voice, the faith to know you are with us, and the courage to share our knowledge of you with the world and the strength to put others first. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we carry out the work you call us to, rejoicing in your love, revealing your grace and mercy, and the joy to be found in knowing you. We bring our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ who came to serve not be served. Amen.

StF 351 – In Christ Alone

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| 1) In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand. | 3) There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine-
Bought with the precious blood of Christ. |
| 2) In Christ alone! who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
The gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The word of God was satisfied -
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live. | 4) No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand! |

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend © 2001 Thankyou Music

Dismissal Prayer

Grant to us, O Lord, fullness of faith, firmness of hope and fervency of love.

For the sake of the gospel may we sit loosely on our wealth and daily embrace you in the poor of the world. As we rejoice in your generosity so may we give ourselves in the service of others; through Christ our Lord. (Sir Thomas More 1478-1535 executed by Henry the VIII)

The Grace

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.**