

# 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021 – Morning Service

Rev Josephine Soon

## Call to Worship

As we sense our own heartbeat, the flow of our breathing and the movement of our mind; may all signs of God's ongoing creation in us remind us of the very presence of God.

## Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. **Amen**

## StF 340 – Ye servants of God

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| 1) Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,<br>And publish abroad his wonderful name;<br>The name all-victorious of Jesus extol;<br>His kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.   | 3) 'Salvation to God who sits on the throne!'<br>Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son;<br>The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,<br>Fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.    |
| 2) God ruleth on high, almighty to save;<br>And still he is nigh, his presence we have;<br>The great congregation his triumph shall sing,<br>Ascribing salvation to Jesus our King. | 4) Then let us adore, and give him his right:<br>All glory and power, all wisdom and might,<br>All honour and blessing, with angels above,<br>And thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love. |

*Charles Wesley CCL No. 515642*

## Prayer of adoration

Your word is a lamp to our feet, our guide through the dark, the wisdom and truth that we follow each day.  
Your word is sweeter than honey, yet sharper than swords, is healing and justice and ours to obey.  
Your word is our understanding of grace, peace and love, the reason we gather to worship today!

## Prayer of confession

Divine Judge, You framed the earth with love and mercy and declared it good; yet we, desiring to justify ourselves, judge others harshly, without knowledge or understanding.  
Holy Spirit, keep us faithful in prayer that we may be filled with the knowledge of your will, and not ignore or pass by another's need, but plumb the depths of love in showing mercy.  
God of compassion, You know our faults and yet you promised to forgive. Keep us in your presence and give us your wisdom. Open our hearts to gladness, call dry bones to dance, and restore to us the joy of your salvation. **Amen.**

## Reading: Leviticus 9: 1-7 - The Priests Begin Their Ministry

On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. He said to Aaron, "Take a bull calf for your sin offering and a ram for your burnt offering, both without defect, and present them before the Lord. Then say to the Israelites: 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb—both a year old and without defect—for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for a fellowship offering to sacrifice before the Lord, together with a grain offering mixed with olive oil. For today the Lord will appear to you.'"

They took the things Moses commanded to the front of the tent of meeting, and the entire assembly came near and stood before the Lord. Then Moses said, "This is what the Lord has commanded you to do, so that the glory of the Lord may appear to you." Moses said to Aaron, "Come to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that is for the people and make atonement for them, as the Lord has commanded."

## StF 502 – I know that my Redeemer lives

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| 1) I know that my Redeemer lives,<br>And ever prays for me;<br>A token of his love he gives,<br>A pledge of liberty.                | 3) He wills that I should holy be;<br>What can withstand his will?<br>The counsel of his grace in me<br>He surely shall fulfil. | 5) Your love I soon expect to find<br>In all its depth and height,<br>To comprehend the eternal<br>mind,<br>And grasp the Infinite. |
| 2) I find him lifting up my head,<br>He brings salvation near,<br>His presence makes me free<br>indeed,<br>And he will soon appear. | 4) Jesus, I hang upon your word;<br>I steadfastly believe<br>You will return and claim<br>me, Lord,<br>And to yourself receive. | 6) When God is mine, and<br>I am his,<br>Of paradise possessed,<br>I taste unutterable bliss<br>And everlasting rest.               |

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## Reading: Hebrews 5:1-10

Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. And no one takes this honour on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

## Sermon: The need of a Great High Priest

Hebrews is the only book in the New Testament to teach that Jesus is our High Priest. From this week’s lectionary reading, we begin here in Hebrews 5 and run through to chapter 10 on the subject that Jesus is our High Priest. John Calvin, a French theologian, pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, made a statement that none of us will seek God until we first become displeased with ourselves as sinners,

*‘... [M]an never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself. For we always seem to ourselves right-eous and upright and wise and holy—this pride is innate in all of us—unless by clear proof we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity. Moreover, we are not thus con-vinced if we look merely to ourselves and not also to the Lord who is the sole standard by which this judgment must be measured....’*

Thus, if we want to grasp the importance of Jesus being our eternal High Priest, we must pray to God for a clearer understanding of His absolute holiness and majesty, and a deeper insight into our own sinfulness and uncleanness apart from our High Priest Jesus Christ. As a Methodist, you might have encountered many ministers [presbyters] in the past. We all have different expectations of what a Methodist Minister or a Parish Priest should or should not be doing. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that through Jesus’s life, death and resurrection, every Methodist is holding the status of priest-hood. That each of us must do what God has set before us to our very best effort. As children of God, we must be humble before God and get to know why He put a priest (you) in your household and a minister in your church.

There are three qualifications for Aaronic priests: their work (5:1); their identification with the people (5:2-3); and, their appointment (5:4). Jesus fulfils and exceeds these as a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:5-10).

### **What ought a priest do?**

Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins (Heb 5:1). There are many roles a priest can play: teacher, evangelist, director, overseer, preacher etc. Yet God says in both Old and New Testament that one distinctive responsibility of a priest is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

Note that not all offerings are 'for sins'. One example, Food Bank is a trendy channel for many Christians to offer gifts and sacrifice their time/life in this service. But these offerings are not 'for sins'. As Christians, we must see that our challenge is beyond physical or emotional needs. We must underscore the problem of human sinfulness in the presence of the Holy God. We will be deceitful. Because there is no way that we can stand in the presence of God until we see ourselves as sinners and the need to be cleansed by the Blood of Jesus.

Our fundamental distancing from God is because of our sins; sins separate us from the Source of all goodness in life. But God has made the gracious provision in His Son (John 3:16) for those who believe. Jesus Christ is the gift (of salvation and new life) and only sacrifice we need for all sins. So, the only way to be effective in God's mission and to draw sinners (included ourselves) to God is never about the food and drink nor our inclusive friendship. It is that we, priests and the mediator of God's Kingdom, offer Jesus Christ to sinners (all humankind) as the gifts and sacrifices for sins. It is all about Jesus.

### **Priest's relationship with others**

He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people (Heb 5:2-3). As even a priest, one must offer sacrifice for his/ her own sins; hence a human priest can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, taking the middle course between apathy and anger. At the same time, the author reminds us that we should not act indifferently toward sin, but neither should we be harsh with those repenting and turning to follow God's way.

Yesterday I read news of a 19 years old young lady who gave birth to a healthy baby. She strangled her baby to death as soon as the baby was born. When asked, she said she worried that her boyfriend would leave her if he knew about her giving birth to a baby. She worried that no one in her family or community would accept her because of having the baby. Feeling strong emotions during trials is not wrong but we must submit our emotions to the will of God. Fear, sorrow, grief aren't right or wrong experiences. The importance is that these emotions need to be acceptable in God's sight or they may be sinful. As Jesus Himself experienced emotional trials before and during the Cross. Jesus prayed, '...Lord, Your will be done.', 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not My will, but Yours be done' (Luke 22:42).

I believe this young lady, her boyfriend, her family and community are all good people. Many in the world are perhaps thinking like her and ignorant that sins can lead us into more troubles and are unaware that the sinless Son of God is our only solution; that she [and we] have been misguided to think and to find all the human solutions to settle her [our] situation. The question is: if we, humans, can be saved by own efforts and understandings, why would Jesus have to suffer and die for us in the first place? And if sin is so dreadful that required God nothing less than to give us His only Son to die on the Cross, then we need to turn to the Cross with gratitude that Jesus has borne our penalty and sins. The only way that we can solve our many problems is by faith in Jesus Christ, devoting ourselves to do only His will and commands no matter at what cost, as Jesus Himself was even to die on the Cross.

## Priest appointed by God NOT by Church

And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." (Heb 5:4-6).

Although during Jesus' time the Jewish high priest had degenerated into a political appointment, the author of Hebrews looks back to the original intention where God called Aaron (Exodus 28:1-3) to the office of high priest. Aaron served as the example for all that followed. God does not stop showing us that He is the One who appointed His chosen priests. They are sinners who are inadequate for this office. But through Jesus in His flesh, He was the BETTER high Priest. He is our Great High Priest.

I need a High Priest because I am a sinner and my God is eternally holy. I need Jesus Christ the Great High Priest to redeem me for my daily sins. I rely on Him for salvation and to be able to live daily in the presence of God. What about you?

## StF 338 – There is a redeemer

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| 1) There is a Redeemer,<br>Jesus, God's own Son.<br>Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,<br>Holy One.                                | 2) Jesus my Redeemer,<br>Name above all names,<br>Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,<br>O for sinners slain.         |
| Ch) <i>Thank You, O my Father,<br/>For giving us Your Son,<br/>And leaving Your Spirit till<br/>The work on earth is done.</i> | 3) When I stand in glory<br>I will see His face,<br>And there I'll serve my King for ever<br>In that holy place. |

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## Prayers of Intercession

Rejoicing that God will listen lovingly to our prayers, let us turn to him in all humility with our needs and the needs of our world:

For all in government, that their leadership may be one of service rather than of control.

For all who are persecuted for their religious beliefs, that their rights may be respected and their voices heard.

For ourselves, that our hearts may be open to the action of the Holy Spirit and our faith ignited and fanned into a flame.

For all who are sick or suffering, homeless or housebound, that they will know Christ's healing love.

For all who have died, that they may receive mercy and grace and rejoice forever in heaven.

God our Father, You have made us your daughters and sons in Christ. Open our hearts that we may hear more clearly your message of love and live more closely in accordance with your will. We ask this in his name, 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 323 – I will sing the wondrous story

- 1) I will sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
How he left the realms of glory  
For the cross on Calvary:
- 2) I was lost; but Jesus found me,  
Found the sheep that went astray,  
Raised me up, and gently led me  
Back into the narrow way:
- 3) Faint was I, and fears possessed me,  
Bruised was I from many a fall;  
Hope was gone, and shame distressed me;  
But his love has pardoned all:
- 4) Days of darkness still come o'er me;  
Sorrow's paths I often tread;  
But the Saviour still is with me,  
By his hand I'm safely led:
- 5) He will keep me till the river  
Rolls its waters at my feet;  
Then he'll bear me safely over,  
Where the loved ones I shall meet:

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## Blessings

God of suffering and glory, in Jesus Christ you reveal the way of life through the path of obedience. Inscribe your law in our hearts, that in life we may not stray from you, but may be your people. **Amen**