

18th June 2023 – Morning Service

Father's Day

Rev Chris Watson

Call to Worship

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

StF 41 – Blessèd be your name

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|---|---|
| 1) Blessèd be Your name In the land that is plentiful, Where Your streams of abundance flow, Blessèd be Your name. Blessèd be Your name When I'm found in the desert place, Though I walk through the wilderness, Blessèd be Your name. Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise. When the darkness closes in, Lord, still I will say | 2) Blessèd be Your name When the sun's shining down on me, When the world's all as it should be, Blessèd be Your name. Blessèd be Your name On the road marked with suffering, Though there's pain in the offering, Blessèd be Your name. Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise. When the darkness closes in, Lord, still I will say |
| Ch) <i>Blessèd be the name of the Lord, Blessèd be Your name. Blessèd be the name of the Lord, Blessèd be Your glorious name.</i> | Br) You give and take away, You give and take away, My heart will choose to say, Lord, blessèd be Your name. |

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Opening Prayers

God, who is both a Father and a Mother to us, we thank you for your love to us from before we were born; your guidance and protection as we have grown; your wisdom and strength when we have sought to be parents to others. We take time today to bring to mind our earthly fathers, to give thanks to you for all that they have done for us, all that they have been to us; to thank you for the good times we have shared together and to thank you for bringing us through hard times together. There are also those here for whom memories of their fathers are painful, or for whom there are no memories at all. Heavenly Father, may we find in you a loving embrace that more than makes up for the inadequacies of our earthly fathers. Gracious Lord, no human father is perfect and we who are fathers today confess our failings. We pray that you will help us to love our children as you love us, giving generously with wisdom and forgiving freely with justice. In the name of your Son, our brother Jesus, we pray. **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 439 – Abba, Father

Abba Father, let me be
Yours and Yours alone.
May my will forever be
Evermore Your own.

Never let my heart grow cold,
Never let me go,
Abba Father, let me be
Yours and Yours alone.

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Reading: Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us. May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

Reading: Luke 15:11-24

Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants." So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms round him and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.'

StF 519 – Father I place into your hands

1) Father, I place into Your hands
The things I cannot do.
Father, I place into Your hands
The things that I've been through.
Father, I place into Your hands
The way that I should go,
For I know I always can trust You.

2) Father, I place into Your hands
My friends and family.
Father, I place into Your hands
The things that trouble me.
Father, I place into Your hands
The person I would be,
For I know I always can trust You.

3) Father, we love to see Your face,
We love to hear Your voice,
Father, we love to sing Your praise
And in Your name rejoice,
Father, we love to walk with You
And in Your presence rest,
For we know we always can trust You.

4) Father, I want to be with You
And do the things You do.
Father, I want to speak the words
That You are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
That You will draw to You,
For I know that I am one with You.

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Sermon

In chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel we have three stories; the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost or prodigal son, all of whom are lost and found with great rejoicing. In the story of the prodigal son Jesus tells a story that is as relevant today as it was then, just the details and context are different.

There was a man who had two sons, there is no mention of a mother, perhaps he was a widower or the mother figure is not relevant to the meaning of the story. There are three main characters; the Father, and the two sons. When you read or listen to this story who do you empathise with? Are you the parent, the rebellious son or the dutiful son? Whose shoes could you wear?

Jesus tells the story about the Father. He didn't say he was a good Father, just a Father, but the implication is that the Father in this story is God. We all know the story - the younger son wanted to leave home, he wanted to go and explore the world, to live his own life on his own terms. He asked his Father for his inheritance so he could fund his lifestyle. The Father gave him what he asked for; he didn't try to hold onto him, he didn't try to restrict him but allowed him to make his own mistakes. The son leaves, seemingly without a backward glance, happy to be free, to have parties with new found friends until his funds run out and he is faced with reality, no money, no friends, no food and no support. He sinks as low as it is possible to be, living with and feeding pigs. No fate could be worse for a child of Abraham. He comes to his senses and decides to go back, not as a son but as a hired hand. The father sees him coming and runs to meet him, to embrace him.

There is no reprimand, no cold shoulder, no 'hope you have learnt your lesson' there is no waiting for an apology, just total acceptance, total joy that the son is back and he is welcomed with open arms. God is the loving Father in this story.

We refer to God as our Father but what does this really mean? I said that this story is relevant today as it was when Jesus told it. God is still the loving Father on which all parenthood should be based. How do we get this relationship with God?

All of us can be said to be made in the image of God and so in some way are the children of God, but to know God as Father, as Abba, we need a new relationship, as Nicodemus was told, a new birth of water and Spirit. We need to be born of the Spirit, we need to ask Jesus into our lives and so become adopted into the family of God and be given the spirit of sonship. Then we have the right to call God 'Abba Father'. The relationship of parent and child has rights and responsibilities. God gives us love, faithfulness and care; we need to show reverence, trust, loving obedience that children owe to a father. It is a two way relationship.

A final thought for you. Ephesians 6 says, and please note the end of this quote: *'Honour your father and mother; fathers, do not provoke your children to anger'*.

StF 518 – Father hear the prayer we offer

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| 1) Father, hear the prayer we offer: Not for ease that prayer shall be, But for strength that we may ever Live our lives courageously. | 3) Not for ever by still waters Would we idly rest and stay; But would strike the living fountains From the rocks along our way. |
| 2) Not for ever in green pastures Do we ask our way to be; But the steep and rugged pathway May we tread rejoicingly. | 4) Be our strength in hours of weakness, In our wanderings be our guide; Through endeavour, failure, danger, Father, be there at our side. |

Love Maria Willis

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, we pray for the members of our own family, the people we live with and those who live away. We thank you for the love and support that we have received from one another. We pray for the members of our families who are ill, sad or troubled. We commend into your care the children of our family and ask that you will guide their parents into wise and loving ways of nurture.

L: Lord, in your mercy **R: Hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for the family of the church and for our own church family here. We thank you, old and young alike, for the fellowship and love that we find in our life shared together in Christ. We bring before you the areas of tension within our church: the times when the interests of different groups conflict; the clashes over understanding what your gospel means. We pray for the children of our church, for Sunday Clubs, for the uniformed groups, for all the young people that gather in our buildings. We ask that the love and care shown to them may lead them into knowing you as Lord and Father.

L: Lord, in your mercy **R: Hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for family life, we pray for the elderly and those who feel lonely because they have lost people they love; for those who live at a distance from family and friends. We pray for families where there is tension, friction between the generations; disharmony between parents; stress and anxiety caused by hardship and ill-health. We pray for children; for those from broken homes; for those abused and neglected; for those made anxious by the tension in which they live.

L: Lord, in your mercy **R: Hear our prayer.**

In the name of our Brother, Jesus, through whom we have become your children. **Amen**

StF 477 – Teach me to dance

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| <i>Ch)</i> Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart, Teach me to move in the pow'r of Your Spirit. Teach me to walk in the light of Your presence, Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart. Teach me to love with Your heart of compassion Teach me to trust in the word of Your promise Teach me to hope in the day of Your coming Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart. | 2) Let all my movements express A heart that loves to say 'Yes', A will that leaps to obey You. Let all my energy blaze To see the joy in Your face Let my whole being praise You, Praise You. |
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1) You wrote the rhythm of life,
Created heaven and earth;
In You is joy without measure.
So like a child in Your sight,
I dance to see Your delight
For I was made for Your pleasure,
Pleasure.

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Blessing

Bless to us, O God, the moon that is above us, the earth that is beneath us, the friends who are around us, your image deep within us. **Amen**