

1st August 2021 – Morning Service

Martyn Filsak

Call to Worship - Psalm 118:22-23

The stone which the builders rejected has become the main corner stone.
This is the Lord's doing; it is wonderful in our eyes.

StF 15 – The splendour of the King

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| 1) The splendor of the King, clothed in majesty
Let all the Earth rejoice,
Let all the Earth rejoice
He wraps himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice,
And trembles at His voice | 2) Age to age He stands and time is in His hands
Beginning and the end
Beginning and the end
The Godhead Three in One
Father Spirit Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb |
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*Ch) How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God*

*Br) Name above all names
Worthy of our praise
My heart will sing how great is our God*

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CCL No. 515642

Prayers

Lord God, perfect Father of all who look to you and trust you for salvation, the Universe declares your majesty. You are awesome and powerful. Your Name is above every other name in the cosmos. Your ways are far above ours, your thoughts unsearchable. How precious is your love to us, how wonderful the knowledge that you are with us, helping us, defending us and working on our behalf. You show us what true love is so that we are able to share it with others. When you sent your Son to be our Saviour you spoke our language so that we can understand what love looks like. Through his self-sacrifice you made us your own for ever. You indwell us by your Spirit so that we are helped, encouraged and guided.

Praised be your Holy Name for ever! **Amen.**

When we lose sight of who you are, when we bring you down to our level and imagine that you are like human beings, when we fail to see your majesty and appreciate your beauty:

Lord, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

When we lose the sense of who we are in your sight, the awareness that you see us as the righteousness of God in Christ: loved, honoured, blessed and highly favoured, when we denigrate ourselves and fail to appreciate how much you love us: Lord, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

When we fail to see others through your eyes of love because we see ourselves wrongly, when we are selfish and do not share your goodness with those around us: Lord, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Gracious and merciful God, we hear your words of grace. Our sins are forgiven! Since we trust in Christ, we share his righteousness and are yours for evermore. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Reading: Ephesians 3:14-4:16

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Song – My hope is built on nothing less

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| 1) My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name | 3) His oath, his covenant, his blood
Supports me in the 'whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay |
| <i>Ch) On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand</i> | 4) When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh may I then in Him be found
Dressed in his righteousness alone
Faultless to stand before the throne |
| 2) When darkness veils his lovely face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil | |

Edward Mote CCL No. 515642

Reading: John 6:24-35

Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Sermon

You will hear a number of different metaphors in this message, all of them to do with our relationship with Christ. Our Ephesians reading gives us a couple of them:

"With deep roots and firm foundations may you, in company with all God's people, be strong..."

A house needs firm foundations to stand strong against the storms and floods. If we are to be strong as individuals and as a church, if we are to be able to weather the tempest of social upheaval and deceptive ideas, we need our lives and our fellowship to be founded upon Christ.

A tree needs deep roots in order to withstand strong winds and to receive water and nutrition from the ground. If we want the stability to be able to grow up to full maturity, we need to be deeply rooted in the truth of Christ and of the gospel.

Jesus gives us another picture when he speaks of himself as the bread of life, sent down from heaven to give life to the world. We need to understand the context of this passage. Earlier in the same chapter Jesus was surrounded by a hungry crowd of thousands of people and fed them by multiplying a lad's packed lunch of five barley loaves and two fish. Now this crowd goes again in search of Jesus and finds him. The people have looked for him because of the miracle that they had just witnessed, and it leads to a much deeper message conveyed in their conversation with him.

Jesus points out that the people have sought him because their hunger was temporarily satisfied. He, however, is the source of eternal life. To receive this imperishable food of eternal life, something that satisfies permanently and not just for a moment, they need to do one thing, that is to believe in the one sent by the Father, that is, in Jesus. Any earthly hunger, once satisfied, will return again. Look at society around us and we see a hunger within people, a yearning for love, acceptance, peace, purpose, something much deeper than material things can provide. Yet many people try to satisfy those needs with things that were never designed to do that: human relationships, money and possessions, work, status. They climb the ladder of success and maybe years later realise that it is leaning against the wrong wall. They may even try to meet their needs with inherently harmful practices such as giving way to drunkenness, recreational drugs or sexual promiscuity.

Jesus points to a different route, one that really works! The only way that we can be truly satisfied and fulfilled is to accept that Jesus is the only source of true life. To believe in him means that we accept him as the bread of life and find that all our deepest yearnings are fulfilled in him. Those who believe will never be spiritually hungry or thirsty again. Jesus puts things in their proper place in life. With him first in our lives, everything else falls into place. We are set free to have meaningful interactions with other people, to have a healthy relationship with work and with material goods, and to be able to love others as we begin to understand just how much the Lord loves us.

To use the metaphors in our Ephesians reading, we now have the correct foundation on which to build our lives and his Church. We have deep roots in the solid ground of the Word of God. We are held firm and receive the nutrients that we need to grow.

On the solid foundation of Christ is built the community of the Church. With deep roots in the truth we are made stable and we grow. By studying the Bible and praying as individuals and with one another we grow up into maturity. We are not meant to stay as spiritual babies but to grow up and become stronger and wiser. We learn to distinguish between truth and falsehood and to recognise and counter the deceptions that are in the world and sometimes even make their way into the church. We live in a broken culture that looks for fulfilment in all the wrong places, but we have a message to proclaim that is able to heal our society and lead people to the one Lord who offers true and perfect love. With deep roots and firm foundations, we are protected against the culture of despair in our society, against the false ideas that there is no such thing as true love but that everything somehow comes down to self-interest, and against the false view prevalent in the world that society can only be fulfilled by breaking free of the outdated ideas of the church. We can begin to grasp just how great the love of Christ is, and understand its self-giving purity, then we can share this love and the Saviour who offers it to a society that is so hungry for it.

Let us have firm foundations in Christ, and deep roots in the truth!

Let us proclaim Jesus, the bread of life, to a hungry world!

Thanks be to God for sending Jesus the life-giver. Amen!

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession

Lord God, we give you thanks for the Word of God by which we are nourished, and the Word made flesh, our Saviour Jesus Christ. In him we are assured of life everlasting, which cannot be shaken. We thank you for the firm foundation on which the Church is built. **Amen.**

We pray for people who feel that they lack security and stability, who feel tossed about by the storms of life, adrift from anything solid. We pray for refugees, the homeless, the unemployed. Grant that all their physical needs are met, along with the sure knowledge that they have a Saviour whose love is strong and immovable.

L: Lord our God **R: Grant us deep roots and firm foundations.**

We pray for nations and peoples who are suffering the results of conflict and want in their lands. We ask that governments and rulers are given wisdom to work towards a world of peace and stability where all people can flourish. We pray that the forthcoming climate summit would yield positive action to benefit all people.

L: Lord our God **R: Grant us deep roots and firm foundations.**

We pray for people who are facing difficult circumstances in their health or that of a loved one. Comfort those who are approaching the end of their earthly lives and grant strength to the bereaved. We pray for all who provide care to others, whether in hospitals, care homes or in the community, and for those looking after a loved one at home. Speed forward the distribution of vaccines so that confidence can return to our world.

L: Lord our God **R: Grant us deep roots and firm foundations.**

Give to your Church in this nation and throughout the world your wisdom to navigate uncharted territory. Confirm us in your truth and help us to be faithful to it. Bless our Circuit and churches as we seek to follow your guidance and become all that you call us to be. Enable us to reach out to others with your love and truth so that our society and culture can be healed and restored.

L: Lord our God **R: Grant us deep roots and firm foundations.**

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **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 677 – Christ is made the sure foundation

- 1) Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ the head and cornerstone,
chosen of the Lord and precious,
binding all the church in one;
holy Zion's help forever,
and her confidence alone.
- 2) To this temple, where we call thee,
come, O Lord of hosts, today:
with thy wonted loving-kindness
hear thy people as they pray;
and thy fullest benediction
shed within its walls alway.
- 3) Here vouchsafe to all thy servants
what they ask of thee to gain,
what they gain from thee forever
with the blessed to retain,
and hereafter in thy glory
evermore with thee to reign.
- 4) Praise and honour to the Father,
Praise and honour to the Son,
Praise and honour to the Spirit,
ever Three and ever One,
One in might, and One in glory,
while unending ages run.

John Mason Neale CCL No. 515642

Blessing

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be amongst us and remain with us now and evermore. **Amen.**