

## 20<sup>th</sup> August 2023 – Morning Service

Martyn Filsak

### Call to Worship - Psalm 100:1-2

Let all the earth acclaim the Lord! Worship the Lord with gladness! Enter his presence with joyful songs.

### StF 331 – King of Kings, Majesty

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| 1) King of Kings, majesty.<br>God of heaven living in me,<br>Gentle Saviour, closest friend,<br>Strong deliverer, beginning and end,<br>All within me falls at Your throne. | 2) Earth and heaven worship You,<br>Love eternal, faithful and true,<br>Who bought the nations, ransomed souls,<br>Brought this sinner near to Your throne;<br>All within me cries out in praise. |
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*Ch) Your majesty, I can but bow.  
I lay my all before You now.  
In royal robes I don't deserve  
I live to serve Your majesty.*

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### Prayer of Adoration

Lord our God, we bless your name for you are worthy of all praise. Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. You are holy and there is no other God, nor anyone like you. In your love you rescued us through your Son, taking away our sin and giving us his righteousness through our trust in him. You have sent your Holy Spirit to dwell in us so that we are never alone. We see your glory reflected in the world around us, in the sun, moon and stars, in the oceans and mountains. We see your provision as we contemplate sunshine and rain, the growth of trees and plants and the harvest of the fruits of the earth. We acknowledge your tender care towards us. Accept our praise and worship today, for we love you. **Amen.**

### Prayer of Confession

You bless us with your bounty and grace, yet still we are imperfect in our devotion and we fail you in word and deed. We battle with our old human nature and yet long to be perfected. As we confess our sins and shortcomings we are assured afresh of your forgiveness. You affirm your irrevocable calling on our lives and give us firm standing in the knowledge that we are yours forever. Our sins are forgiven! We are grateful. Thank-you. **Amen.**

### Reading: Genesis 45:1-15

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.

You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’

“You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. Tell my father about all the honour accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.” Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

## **Address Part 1**

The story of Joseph is a compelling one. Here is a man who provoked the jealousy of his brothers, who then sold him into slavery. He is falsely imprisoned for something that he didn’t do, then released and becomes the second-ranking person in the whole of Egypt. He feeds an entire region of the earth in time of famine through skilful administration and supernatural wisdom, then is reconciled to his brothers.

As with many Biblical stories, there are parallels with the life of Jesus. Joseph was rejected by his brothers, so was Christ rejected by his spiritual brothers, the Jews. Because Joseph was sold into Egypt, he was given the opportunity to provide food for the whole region and bless many nations. In the same way, because Jesus was rejected by his brothers, the Jewish people, the apostles took the gospel to the Gentiles and the whole world was blessed. In Egypt, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers (he would have taken on the clothing and make-up of the Egyptians as well as having looked different through the effects of time) and they then were able to recognise him. When Jesus comes a second time, as the Scriptures attest that he will, the Jews will recognise him as Messiah and look upon the one that they pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

There is therefore a sequence to God’s plan. The gospel was to be given first to the Jewish people, then to the Gentiles. Jesus came primarily to give the message to the Jews during his earthly life. He lived in Israel and ministered largely within its boundaries. Although many Jewish people received him, many of the leaders rejected him. The Apostles continued for a while to preach only to Jews, but the time came when they recognised that the Gospel message would be more readily received by the Gentiles, and it spread throughout the world. Prophetic scriptures tell us that eventually the Jews will recognise their Messiah and all Israel will be saved (Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11). This sequence will help us to understand the gospel reading, which we will hear after our next song.

## **StF 20 – Be still for the presence of the Lord**

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| 1) Be still, for the presence of the Lord,<br>The Holy One is here.<br>Come, bow before Him now<br>With reverence and fear.<br>In Him no sin is found,<br>We stand on holy ground.<br>Be still, for the presence of the Lord,<br>The Holy One is here. | 3) Be still, for the power of the Lord<br>Is moving in this place,<br>He comes to cleanse and heal,<br>To minister His grace.<br>No work too hard for Him,<br>In faith receive from Him;<br>Be still, for the power of the Lord<br>Is moving in this place. |
| 2) Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;<br>He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned,<br>How awesome is the sight, our radiant King of light!<br>Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.          |   |

## Reading: Matthew 15:21-28

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.' Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.' The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said. He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.' 'Yes it is, Lord,' she said. 'Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.' Then Jesus said to her, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed at that moment.

## Address Part 2

This passage at first sight may seem difficult to make sense of. Was Jesus really ignoring the need of this woman? Why did he seem to make it so difficult for her to receive from him?

Firstly we need to remember that Jesus was kind and generous and wanted people to both receive him and receive from him. Secondly, recalling our first reading and the earlier part of the address, we remind ourselves that God's revelation of himself to the world through Messiah Jesus had a sequence: firstly to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Jesus had a clear understanding of his mission, which was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. However, he also responded to the faith which he saw in people's hearts, whoever they were, and was willing to grant this woman her request to see her daughter healed on the basis of her faith in him. There is support in other parts of scripture for healings to Gentiles, for example the healing of the Roman Centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10) and, centuries earlier, the restoration (under the guidance of a young Israelite girl and the prophet Elisha) of the health of Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5).

I also suggest that Jesus, by his delay, was deliberately drawing out of this woman the reality of what was in her heart. She initially approached Jesus by trying to get his attention with the words "Son of David." She was a Gentile and yet was sounding Jewish. Was she trying to put on a front of Jewishness in order to impress Jesus? Did Jesus need to break through this veneer of Jewishness in order to uncover the reality of who she was? Jesus loved who she really was, not the person that she may have wanted him to think that she was.

I wonder if the Lord sometimes delays answering our prayers in order to uncover our real faith, and to grow that faith in the process. Do you sometimes find that if you are praying into a situation over a long period of time without seeing any apparent change in circumstances, you notice that you yourself are changing? Your faith matures, and your prayers themselves change and become more God-centred and less self-absorbed as time goes on.

Also, do we sometimes approach God by trying to make ourselves sound more worthy of his blessing? We could use religious language thinking that the Lord will respond to that more readily than if we just speak what is in our hearts. We could try to sound entitled and believe that in some way we are more likely to have our prayers answered because of our self-perceived virtue, religious pedigree or family background. Jesus, of course, takes no notice of any of our self-appropriated sense of entitlement. He is looking for empty hands and an expectant heart, then he acts.

In the Gospels, when people came to Jesus relying in some way on their own goodness, Jesus responded by telling them how hard it was to enter the kingdom of God. However, to those who came simply with their need and their faith, and without any pretension to goodness, he provided welcome with joy and met their needs. That's why the tax collectors and prostitutes and general "sinners" received from him so easily. When we come to the Lord with needs, it's important to come without any pretension of entitlement, recognising that we have no righteousness of our own. We come with empty hands and with humility and faith. That is what really gets Jesus' attention!

## StF 556 – Just as I am

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| 1) Just as I am, without one plea<br>But that you died and set me free,<br>And at your bidding, 'Come to me!'<br>O Lamb of God, I come!     | 4) Just as I am - your love unknown<br>Has broken every barrier down -<br>Now to be yours, yes, yours alone,<br>O Lamb of God, I come!             |
| 2) Just as I am, though tossed about<br>With many a conflict, many a doubt,<br>Fightings within and fear without,<br>O Lamb of God, I come! | 5) Just as I am, of that free love<br>The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,<br>Here for a season, then above,<br>O Lamb of God, I come! |
| 3) Just as I am, you will receive,<br>Will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;<br>Because your promise I believe,<br>O Lamb of God, I come!  |  |

*Charlotte Elliott adapted by Jubilate Hymns    © The Jubilate Group    CCL No. 515642*

## Prayers of Intercession

Father God, we give you thanks and praise because you have opened up to us the Kingdom of God. Although we were far away from you, we are now brought near through the Lord Jesus Christ. We belong through faith to your holy nation, and nothing can remove us from your strong hand. We thank you that you love us as we are, and care enough to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

We pray for the nations of our world. Your love beckons all to follow you, and yet many choose a different way. Nation has gone to war with nation and there is unrest in many societies. We pray for Jesus the Prince of Peace to reign and bring forgiveness and reconciliation where there has been conflict.

We pray for the earth's resources to be shared equitably with all. Where there are famines caused by flood or drought or human failure we pray for those who seek to help. May this help be provided in a way that does not disenfranchise those receiving it, but may it promote dignity and self-determination.

We pray for our own government and all those in positions of influence in our society, that they may act with love, courage and integrity, standing up for all of the nation's citizens without favour to any particular group. Guard our national institutions for health, justice, education, social care and emergency responses and bless those who work in them.

We pray for your guidance and blessing upon our own circuit and churches as we pursue the way of spiritual growth and outreach. We seek the Holy Spirit. We remember those within our congregations and others known to us who need particular provision right now, whether it be healing, comfort, encouragement, wisdom or peace. We know that you provide out of the riches of your glory.

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 416 – There's a wideness in God's mercy**

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| 1) There's a wideness in God's mercy<br>Like the wideness of the sea;<br>There's a kindness in his justice<br>Which is more than liberty.      | 4) For the love of God is broader<br>Than the measures of the mind;<br>And the heart of the Eternal<br>Is most wonderfully kind.           |
| 2) There is plentiful redemption<br>In the blood that has been shed;<br>There is joy for all the members<br>In the sorrows of the Head.        | 5) But we make his love too narrow<br>By false limits of our own;<br>And we magnify his strictness<br>With a zeal he will not own.         |
| 3) There is grace enough for thousands<br>Of new worlds as great as this;<br>There is room for fresh creations<br>In that upper home of bliss. | 6) If our love were but more simple<br>We should take him at his word;<br>And our lives would be illumined<br>By the presence of our Lord. |

*Frederick William Faber*

## **Blessing**

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

**Amen.**