

# 21<sup>st</sup> September 2025 – Morning Service

Martin Rider

## Call to Worship: Psalm 79: 9 (NIV)

Help us, God our Saviour, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.  
**Amen.**

Our opening hymn was written by David Evans in 1985 and was his reaction to some contemporary worship songs which he felt were over-familiar to the Lord. It is also a hymn to use if your church has a number of over-excited children present!

## 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<br>Is shining all around;<br>He burns with holy fire,<br>With splendour He is crowned,<br>How awesome is the sight,<br>Our radiant King of light!<br>Be still, for the glory of the Lord<br>Is shining all around. |   |

*David J Evans © 1986 Thankyou Music*

## Opening Prayers

Heavenly Father, how wonderful, how marvellous is your Name. You spoke life into the Universe, and you maintain your creation with your compassion. Your might and wisdom are beyond our imagining, yet you love and care for us, foolish and sinful though we are. At a time when we defied you and set up ourselves as your enemies, you took human form and lived among us a Christ Jesus. He showed us by word and deed how we ought to live holy lives, then died at Calvary for the sins of the whole world, breaking the hold of sin over us. His resurrection defeated death which no longer has the final word, and he offers us everlasting life through faith in him.

Amazing God, we acknowledge you as the only true God and we offer our worship and adoration to you. Drive away any distractions or anxieties, so we may dwell upon you grace and glory. May we sing your praise joyfully, offer our prayers in humility and listen to your holy word attentively in the beautiful name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gracious God, we praise and thank you for the blessings we receive from you, for all that you have done for and given us, for we know how faithful, generous and loving you are. We, on the other hand, are unworthy to receive your love, for our lives are marred by our failure to love and serve you wholeheartedly and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Even when we are trying our best, we say and do things that hurt others and still turn aside when we see others in need or distress, rather than helping them as we know we ought.

Forgive us Lord for our sins of commission and omission. Help us change our ways, so we lead Christ-centred lives, not self-centred ones. Restore us to righteousness and grant us a spirit to seek and do your will.

Merciful God, you hear and answer our prayers, offering us forgiveness and a new start. May the Holy Spirit grant us the power and love to serve you and our neighbours joyfully and faithfully henceforth, so our lives glorify your holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **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.**

Our second hymn is based on Hosea chapter 14, and was written by Martin Lekebusch an I.T. specialist, who was born into a Methodist family in 1962. He is now an elder at a Baptist church in Gloucester. The hymn was written when Martin was attending a Methodist church in inner-city Birmingham. He describes the congregation at that time as “a very mixed bag with a strongly evangelical character to it, with a charismatic aspect – but also an aspect of social engagement.”

### StF 429 – Lord we turn to you for mercy

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| 1) Lord, we turn to you for mercy:<br>May our prayerful words express<br>Something of our heartfelt sorrow<br>For the sins we now confess. | 4) Your forgiveness lifts our burdens,<br>Setting heart and spirit free<br>To fulfil our true potential,<br>All that we were meant to be. |
| 2) We have trusted far too often<br>In our human strength and skill;<br>We have proudly disregarded<br>What we knew to be your will.       | 5) For you teach a way of wisdom<br>We may clearly understand:<br>Walking with the God of mercy<br>Step by step, and hand in hand.        |
| 3) Yet by your immense compassion<br>You invite, accept, restore,<br>Leading us to greater wholeness<br>Than we ever knew before.          |   |

*Martin Lekebusch    © 1999 Kevin Mayhew*

### Prayers of Intercession

Heavenly Father, in response to your loving-kindness to us, help us to serve as your earthly hands, feet, eyes, ears, and voice as we reach out to people around us, especially those who need support and friendship. Help us serve you in the power of the Holy Spirit, so we may exceed our expectations, but even where we fall short, we pray that you will reach out in compassion to warm the hearts of and inspire people with greater power and influence to heal some of the world's brokenness, for nothing is beyond your powers.

Lord of all, hear our prayer for the leaders of the nations of the world. Warm their hearts and inspire them to govern with mercy and justice. Teach them to negotiate when disputes arise and to compromise in order

to avoid warfare. News of the conflicts in Ukraine and the Holy Land fills us with grief, with reports about the injuries, deaths, deprivation, and destruction. We pray for a just ending to the fighting in those lands and we pray for an end to strife in other countries, too, including Congo, Sudan and Somalia. Lord, so much needs to be done, but let peace begin in our own hearts, in the way we treat our neighbours.

Heavenly Father, we pray for victims of global warming, where strong storms, floods, drought, and wildfires are wreaking great destruction. Help all humankind to take greater care of this planet over which we have been made stewards. Let us waste less, recycle more, pollute less, and use only the resources we need, so that future generations inherit a healthier planet.

Lord of shalom, we remember people from our church or community, friends or family-members who are sick, in body, mind, or spirit. For those who are in any kind of need, or trouble, for neighbours who are lonely or who have lost someone dear. In a time of silence, we name people about whom we are especially concerned, confident that you will understand their need and will reach out to them.

Heavenly Father, may we offer practical support wherever possible to those for whom we pray, but we ask that you will enfold them with your love which offers healing, hope, renewed strength, courage and, not least of all, lasting peace.

Holy God, we offer our prayer for the churches in our Circuit and neighbouring Circuits, and for the Church throughout the world. Unite us in Spirit, love, and truth. Teach us to work together and give us the courage to bring the Gospel to a sceptical and sometimes hostile world which desperately needs good news.

Abba, Father God, bless us, our families, and friends. Inspire us in our discipleship and teach us to reveal the light of your love in all we do and say, and by sharing the abundance of the love you bestow upon us with both friend and stranger, in the name of Christ Jesus, our Saviour. **Amen.**

We continue our worship with a hymn by Matt Redman, who became a Christian at 10 and attended the Anglican church of St Andrew's Chorleywood, in Herts. There he learned to play guitar, and at 20, he began leading worship services and released his first album. In 1993, Matt Redman and his pastor, Mike Pilavachi, founded Soul Survivor, a global Christian movement and yearly music festival aimed at youth.

### **StF 437 – When the music fades**

1) When the music fades,  
All is stripped away,  
And I simply come;  
Longing just to bring  
Something that's of worth  
That will bless Your heart.

*Pre- I'll bring You more than a song,  
Ch) For a song in itself  
Is not what You have required.  
You search much deeper within  
Through the way things appear;  
You're looking into my heart.*

*Matt Redman © 1997 Thankyou Music*

*Ch) I'm coming back to the heart of worship,  
And it's all about You,  
All about You, Jesus.  
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it,  
When it's all about You,  
All about You, Jesus.*

2) King of endless worth,  
No one could express  
How much You deserve.  
Though I'm weak and poor,  
All I have is Yours,  
Every single breath.

## Reading: Luke 16: 1-13 (NIV)

Jesus told his disciples: 'There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, "What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer."

'The manager said to himself, "What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg – I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses."

'So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?"

"Three thousand gallons of olive oil," he replied.

'The manager told him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifteen hundred."

'Then he asked the second, "And how much do you owe?"

"Thirty tons of wheat," he replied.

'He told him, "Take your bill and make it twenty-four."

'The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

'Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

'No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.'

Our next hymn was written by Noel and Tricia Richards. Noel was born in Llantrisant, near Cardiff in 1956 and was inspired to become a hymn-writer and composer after he saw Graham Kendrick at Colston Hall when Noel was 15. He married Tricia in 1978, and they have complemented one another in producing several albums of fine hymns and worship songs.

## StF 430 – My lips shall praise you

*Ch) My lips shall praise You,  
My great redeemer;  
My heart will worship,  
Almighty Saviour.*

2) Love that conquers every fear!  
In the midst of trouble You draw near,  
You are the restorer of my soul.

1) You take all my guilt away,  
Turn the darkest night to brightest day,  
You are the restorer of my soul.

3) You're the source of happiness,  
Bringing peace when I am in distress,  
You are the restorer of my soul.

*Noel & Tricia Richards © 1991 Thankyou Music*

## Address

The parable of the unjust steward or dishonest manager is not a commendation of dishonesty, heaven forbid, though at first glance it could be taken as such. The steward was often a slave employed by an absentee landlord, almost as a trustee, or financial planner. His task was to manage the estate's finances with a view to increasing profits. For some reason, Jesus' steward incurred his master's displeasure and was

told to present an account of his dealings after which he would be dismissed. Faced with the prospect of labouring, for which he was unfit, or begging, for which he was too proud, the steward decided upon a course of action that was shrewd, not dishonest, dealing.

Although he told his master's debtors to pay less than they actually owed, he was not really cheating his master, for consumer goods were traded at high interest rates: the steward could have received 100% commission for the olive oil, so by telling the debtor to pay for fifty barrels of oil, the original value was repaid to his master. Similarly, the steward set aside the commission on the wheat, so the debtor actually repaid the real value, not the inflated one. In other words, although the master received no profit, he made no loss either and, from the steward's point of view, he had made a number of friends from the debtors he had let off lightly – and they might help him until he got back on his feet.

In this parable, Jesus was directing his followers to use their possessions shrewdly, but honestly, so that their dealings would benefit others, who might then follow the Lord. Furthermore, by using their material wealth for God's kingdom on earth, they would build up treasures in heaven and be welcomed in the eternal kingdom. While some Christians believe that aggressive secularists like Richard Dawkins are our greatest enemy, I beg to differ; materialism is.

We live in a hemisphere where gaining as much wealth and accumulating as many possessions as possible has become many people's prime motivation in life. The cultivation of celebrity, of transient fame through reality television series have led many young people to aspire to such tawdry ambitions, rather than the solid careers that most in their parents' and grandparents' generations sought when they were at school. I am not criticizing youngsters directly, for they face pressures we were never exposed to; moreover, too often, they lack good role-models at home, or in school, in politics, or in the media. After all, **the current debt on credit cards in the UK is more than £1.5 trillion – slightly lower than the National Debt and credit card debts amounts to about £30000 per person!** With inflated housing costs and increasing gap between wealthy and poor, it is little wonder that too many youngsters feel that mundane jobs offer no way forward if they aspire to society's material values, for these values depend far too much on wealth and far too little on loving one's neighbour. Can we show by example that there is a better way?

Christ advocated that we should use 'dishonest wealth' to 'make friends for ourselves' – in other words, use what God has given us to help people in need, rather than store it up and let it be our master, for if we give all we can to the poor, we not only ease their plight, but demonstrate kingdom value in a most practical way!

The dishonest manager or unjust steward would have been criticized by Christ for exploiting his master's customers by charging high rates of interest, yet when a crisis arose, he abandoned the repayment of interest, so that only the original cost was repaid and his master did not lose by the transaction, though he made no profit. However, his borrowers were relieved of their crippling debts.

Currently, the United Kingdom and much of Europe are worrying about the rising cost of living which is serious enough, but faced with threats by Russia and China, governments are being called to raise expenditure on defence to 5%, so without tax-rises, cuts will need to be made to health, social care and/or education budgets. Our government has already reduced its foreign aid budget which may have tragic consequences, for our hardship pales into insignificance compared with the plight of the Developing World. Remember, our northern half of the world has 10% of the world's population, but controls 90% of the world's resources. Over the years many developing nations have been encouraged by the IMF and World Bank to borrow beyond their means and are unable to even repay the interest on their loans, as a result of which they cannot even provide basic services.

Every week more than two hundred thousand children from developing nations die as a direct result of poverty: not only because of starvation, but through a lack of clean water, a lack of even rudimentary sanitation, and through simple diseases that are easily treated in this country. The Sumatran tsunami killed two hundred thousand people on Boxing Day 2004, and was headline news in the media for weeks afterward, yet a similar number of deaths in poor nations on a weekly basis is seldom, if ever, reported. If governments are unwilling to help the world's poor, we can play our part by supporting Christian Aid, or All You Can, who, although they don't have governments' resources, direct their aid to those who most need it, not into the coffers of corrupt politicians in the Developing World.

It is evident that the current high energy and food price rises are going to push many people in this country into poverty this winter. As a Church or by working with our Circuit or other Churches, we can help to look after our neighbours by continuing to support food banks, becoming hosts for warm-spaces where the vulnerable can be sheltered, by running holiday clubs to help and feed children on free school meals, who might otherwise go hungry. Any or all of these initiatives will challenge our resources, but, if you are still unconvinced that we should give as much as we can – in lobbying as well as aid – to support the poor here and abroad, remember this: God gave the most precious thing he possessed to redeem us from slavery to sin. His only Son, Jesus, died a most terrible, agonising death for our redemption. What should we offer to break our neighbours free from the chains of poverty? John Wesley taught: **'Earn all you can; save all you can and give as much as you can as long as you can.'** I believe this creed offers us a way forward. May we respond to God's amazing gift of his beloved Son by giving all we are able, materially, in time and in loving service, in Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.

Our closing hymn reminds us of our need for the light of God's love to guide us through life. It was written by Bernadette Farrell, a gifted Roman Catholic hymn-writer, a social activist from West Yorkshire, who was the first Deputy Director of Citizens UK and whose hymns span all denominations.

### StF 706 – Longing for light

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| 1) Longing for light, we wait in darkness.<br>Longing for truth, we turn to you.<br>Make us your own, your holy people,<br>Light for the world to see.   | 3) Longing for food, many are hungry.<br>Longing for water, many still thirst.<br>Make us your bread, broken for others,<br>Shared until all are fed.        |
| Ch) <i>Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.<br/>Shine through the darkness.<br/>Christ, be our light!<br/>Shine in your Church gathered today.</i> | 4) Longing for shelter, many are homeless.<br>Longing for warmth, many are cold.<br>Make us your building, sheltering others,<br>Walls made of living stone. |
| 2) Longing for peace, our world is troubled.<br>Longing for hope, many despair.<br>Your word alone has power to save us.<br>Make us your living voice.   | 5) Many the gifts, many the people,<br>Many the hearts that yearn to belong.<br>Let us be servants to one another,<br>Making your kingdom come.              |

Bernadette Farrell © 1993 Bernadette Farrell

### 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.**