

23rd January 2022 – Morning Service

Andy Haynes

Call to Worship Psalm 19 v 1

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands

StF 21 - Born in Song

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Born in song!
God's people have always been singing
Born in song! Hearts and voices raised
So today we worship together;
God alone is worthy to be praised. | 4) Sing the song!
God's Spirit is poured out among us.
Sing the song! He has made us anew.
Ev'ry member part of the Body;
Given his power, his will to seek and do |
| 2) Praise to God!
For he is the one who has made us.
Praise to God! We his image bear.
Heav'n and earth are full of his glory;
Let creation praise him everywhere. | 5) Tell the world!
All power to Jesus is given.
Tell the world! He is with us always.
Spread the word, that all may receive him;
Every tongue confess and sing his praise. |
| 3) Christ is king!
He left all the glory of heaven.
Christ is king! Born to share in our pain;
Crucified, for sinners atoning,
Risen, exalted, soon to come again. | 6) Then the end!
Christ Jesus shall reign in his glory.
Then the end of all earthly days.
Yet above the song will continue;
All his people still shall sing his praise. |

Brian Hoare © Brian Hoare / Jubilate Hymns CCL No. 515642

Prayer of Adoration

As we bow before You now in prayer, we thank you Lord for Your unfailing love towards us, we praise You for the miracle of life itself, for the wonder of creation, and for all that Your hands have provided. We give You thanks for the privilege of prayer, that we are able to come before You in this way to give You all the honour and all the praise You deserve, for You are worthy, You are Holy, You are a God of mercy and of Justice. Thank you Lord God for the opportunity of worship, for the freedom to glorify Your name, to exalt You. For we long to be in Your presence and feel the warmth of Your embrace.

Loving God, As we come before you in prayer, help us to focus our thoughts on You, letting all distractions fall away. Creator of all, Sustainer of all, Saviour of all, Your glory and majesty are beyond our understanding, Your power too awesome to behold. And yet Your love enfolds us as we bless your holy name. We thank You for the gift and work of the Holy Spirit, through whom we see your power - in lives transformed, in the troubled comforted, in moments of guidance and calling. Creator of heaven and earth, you love us more than we can know, You call us to be part of the family of God, You have provided a means of salvation to all who repent and believe, and all this has been made possible through Your greatest gift to us, the gift of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us when we pray to say together:-

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 391 – O breath of life come sweeping through us

- 1) O breath of life, come sweeping through us,
Revive your church with life and power;
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit your church to meet this hour.
- 2) O Wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in your tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore; for this we plead.
- 3) O Breath of love, come, breathe within us,
Renewing thought and will and heart;
Come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
Revive your church in every part.

Elizabeth Ann Head CCL No. 515642

Reading: Luke 4:14 – 30

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and every one praised Him. He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written:-

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him. He began by saying to them 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' All spoke well of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His lips. 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' they asked. Jesus said to them 'Surely you will quote this proverb to me: "Physician, heal yourself!" And you will tell me "Do here in your home town what we have heard that you did in Capernaum"' 'Truly I tell you' He continued, 'No prophet is accepted in his home town. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed – only Naaman the Syrian.'

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove Him out of the town, and took Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw Him off the cliff. But He walked right through the crowd and went on His way.

StF 264 – Make way

- 1) Make way, make way, for Christ the King
In splendour arrives.
Fling wide the gates and welcome Him
Into your lives.
- 2) He comes the broken hearts to heal
The prisoners to free.
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,
The blind shall see.
- Ch) *Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
For the King of Kings (For the King of Kings)
Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
And let His Kingdom in.*
- 3) And those who mourn with heavy hearts,
Who weep and sigh;
With laughter, joy and royal crown
He'll beautify.
- 4) We call you now to worship Him,
As Lord of all.
To have no gods before Him
Their thrones must fall!

Graham Kendrick © 1986 Thankyou Music CCL No. 515642

Sermon

Luke has recorded for us in chapter 2 of his gospel, the time when Jesus, aged 12 years old, was 3 days in the temple, sitting with the Jewish teachers. Verse 47 tells us that ‘everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and his answers.’ In chapter 3 Luke deals with the teaching of John the Baptist right up to the point where Jesus himself was baptised by John in the river Jordan. Megan spoke of this on Sun 9th Jan. Verse 22 tells us that ‘the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven; ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased.’ Notice the involvement here of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit – the Trinity is evident in the Baptism.

Following this, Luke tells us at the beginning of chapter 4 that Jesus ‘was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil’. Note that even good people are tempted by Satan. Therefore we all need to be on our guard! After all these events, Jesus is ready to begin His ministry, and this is where we pick up the story from our lectionary reading for today, beginning at Luke 4 verse 14 ‘Then Jesus returned to Galilee, and the power of the Holy Spirit was with Him.’

Notice how many times we have been told that the third person of the trinity was with Him. There lies another lesson for us all today – if Jesus needed the Holy Spirit to enable Him to do His Father’s work, how much more should we be relying on his help in all we do in our lives – especially our church life! And the news about Jesus spread throughout the countryside, and everyone praised him. By verse 16 we are told that ‘He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. He stood up to read’

The scroll that was handed to Him was that of Isaiah, and we are told that Jesus then found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” (Isaiah 61 v 1&2a). Then we are told that Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes were fixed upon Him. All spoke well of Him and were amazed. It seems they marvelled at the eloquent words He spoke. ‘So, all’s fine then,’ I hear you say. ‘All appears to be going very well.’ And you’d like to think so, wouldn’t you? Bit like us today – we’ve gathered on line to praise Jesus, we are well impressed with His teaching, all is good, and we’ll be back next week for more.

But then Jesus drops a bombshell on them by saying in verse 21 “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”. Immediately they begin to question who He is! “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” In Matthew’s gospel (13v55), as in Mark’s account (6v3), it says “Isn’t He the carpenter’s son, isn’t His mother Mary, aren’t His brothers James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t His sisters living here?” Jesus responds (v24) by saying that “no prophet is accepted in his home town”. He further illustrates this by giving the example of Elijah, saying there were many widows in Israel at the time of the famine, and yet the prophet was sent to the widow at Sidon. Jesus also tells them that there were many lepers in Israel at the time of Elisha, but only Naaman of Syria was healed.

Jesus was well aware of these historic incidents, and knew how the people of God had strayed away and not been faithful in times past. I wonder sometimes if we aren’t the same today, and that is why we see the apathy towards Christianity in our own nation?

Jesus certainly hit a nerve here because at hearing His words we are told that they dragged Jesus out of the synagogue and took Him to the top of the hill to throw Him over the cliff! I’d like us to put ourselves in their shoes for a minute though – or should I say sandals! They had seen Jesus grow up in Nazareth. And although He had been a good and upright citizen (for he knew no sin), His miraculous ministry only began after his baptism. So it appeared to them that Jesus was just an ordinary good guy from an ordinary family. Now, suddenly, Jesus is asking them to accept the fact that He was the one the prophet Isaiah spoke about 700 years earlier. To be fair, it was a big ask. It was a rather difficult pill for them to swallow! Just like it is for us today when we are called to do things we don’t want to do!

How often do we honestly put ourselves out for the work of the kingdom?

We tend to volunteer for the jobs that we enjoy, and still often moan about them.

Do we think Jesus is a good guy – but object if He calls us to do something against our will?

If we pick the bits of His teaching that sit well with us – but ignore any challenging instructions, then aren't we the same as these folk at Nazareth? Because on hearing what Jesus said, they dragged Him out of the synagogue and hauled Him to the top of the hill to throw Him over. If we'd have been faced with this same situation, wouldn't we have reacted the same as they did – physically removing Him from the synagogue. Well, I suggest not quite. We'd have had a meeting first – then chucked him out!

But seriously, these were God's chosen people – I ask the question, what should they have done?

They could have taken a lesson from Jesus, for there are many examples of Him praying to the Father. Couldn't they have prayed for guidance? Shouldn't we be doing the same in all situations – seeking God's guidance? Instead, we fall into the trap of going with the flow, following the crowd, acting on gut feelings. Sometimes life's so busy that we don't have time for prayer – we just get on with the action. But prayer is the best action we can take, and it should be the power house of the church.

But because of their doubt and lack of faith Jesus could not perform His miracles there. (V 23 b) "Do here in your home town what we have heard you did in Capernaum". They could have known forgiveness of sin, they could have had their eyes opened, but they remained spiritually blind. They could have been healed but they rejected Jesus. And that's true of many people in this day and age. Many know His name, but it's a swear word to them. Many know the stories, but they choose to ignore them. Science is the new Bible. Everyone wants proof, but they fail to seek the truth. But before we get carried away and condemn and judge the world, perhaps we should examine ourselves. After all, the people who rejected Jesus were in the synagogue. They knew the scriptures. They were people of God. Believers.

That's quite worrying isn't it? For we too are believers, we have a knowledge of scripture. And more than that – we have the full story of Jesus, we know what happens next, we have the complete picture. But how many doubts and distractions cause a hindrance to what God could be doing amongst us if we only had the faith to make it possible? Just as Jesus couldn't perform any miracles in that place due to their lack of faith, I wonder how many times we perhaps hinder the work of the Holy Spirit because of our lack of belief? The people in our story saw things as they were, they refused to see things differently. Are we acting the same and refusing to move forward for God? A question worth considering?

So I said there were no miracles performed in that place. Not quite true, for there was at least one we know about! Verses 29&30 "they took Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off. But He walked right through the crowd and went on His way". We are told they were all furious. They drove Jesus out we are told, and took Him up the hill. How did He get away I ask? Perhaps they were blinded by bright sunlight? I say that because in 2 Kings v 6 we are told that Elisha prayed to God and the Syrian army were temporarily blinded as they were about to attack the Israelites. Or perhaps in their anger and temper they were arguing amongst themselves about what to do next? I say that because in 1 Samuel 14 we are told that the Philistine army became confused and panic stricken, turning on themselves instead of fighting Israel's army. Perhaps they got confused and ended up disagreeing with each other. I say that because in 2 Chronicles 20 we read the story of the Ammonites and the Moabites attacking the Edomites and then each other, when they were actually supposed to be combining forces to attack Judah. God's hand at work in all these obscure situations.

And so this was the miracle – Jesus's time had not yet come, He had much work to do, and He miraculously walked from their midst unharmed. God pulled Him out of their and He went on his way. The Son of God had been in their presence but they failed to recognise Him, and because of that they received none of the blessings He could have bestowed upon them. We must be sure that this doesn't happen to us, to be aware of His presence, trusting in the word, being faithful and true so that we are open to the work He calls us to do by the power of the Holy Spirit abiding in all those who believe in Jesus. Amen

StF 354 – Jesus is the name we honour

- 1) Jesus is the name we honour;
Jesus is the name we praise.
Majestic name above all other names,
The highest heaven and earth proclaim
That Jesus is our God.
- 2) Jesus is the name we worship;
Jesus is the name we trust.
He is the King above all other kings,
Let all creation stand and sing
That Jesus is our God.
- Ch) *We will glorify, we will lift Him high,
We will give Him honour and praise.
We will glorify, we will lift Him high,
We will give Him honour and praise.*
- 3) Jesus is the Father's splendour;
Jesus is the Father's joy.
He will return to reign in majesty,
And every eye at last will see
That Jesus is our God.

Philip Lawson-Johnston © 1991 Thankyou Music CCL No. 515642

Prayers of Intercession

Dear Lord God, as we have studied Your word and seen how Jesus was rejected in His own town, so we realise that this rejection is a world-wide issue to this day, where men and women do not accept Your Son, and do not know of His love and sacrifice made for the salvation of all who believe. And so help us to be conscious of this, and to realise that you have called us to be witnesses of that love, to be a light shining in a darkened world, pointing others to Christ. So help us to reach out to the lost, finding confidence in your promises, and becoming aware of the opportunities You bring our way to evangelise to our fellow human beings everywhere. But before we do so, expose to us any unconfessed sins within us, that would hinder such prayers we offer for others, for as James tells us 'The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective' So help us to become prayer warriors for the sake of the gospel.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

Help us to pray for the needs of the world and it's people. Sickened by the ever increasing violence and turmoil around the globe, we pray for innocent victims of war and hatred. We bring before you now all the troubles in Kazakhstan, aware that there are an ever increasing number of dangerous places to live in our world today. We think of Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Mali, Lybia, Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria, to name but a few; the list goes on. We think of the threat facing Ukraine, and pray for peace and freedom there. And so dear Lord, we pray that You will convict the world of sin, soften the hearts of those who rule in terror, remove the spiritual blindness from their eyes, and help them to understand the truth. We particularly cry out for persecuted believers everywhere. We admire their bravery, standing firm in their belief and facing imprisonment and torture as a consequence. Give them protection we pray, and bring justice to those who aim to destroy their faith.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

Father God, we bring before you now our own nation. We have become a people who seek temporary pleasure. We no longer fear you, but live for ourselves instead. We have not been a faithful people in these recent times, and as a result, our peaceful and quiet nation has turned into a chaotic one.

So many bad things are happening all around because we have given the enemy a foothold over our lives. Violence and crime are increasing, drug addiction and theft, stabbings and loss of life, so please Lord turn our hearts away from different idols that we have created and help us to walk in ways that honour your Holy name.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

Dear Lord, we pray now for our local communities. Give our councillor's and leaders wisdom in the decision making that affects our neighbourhoods. We pray for local businesses that they will prosper as they offer services and supplies for the benefit of local residents. We pray for those involved in our health care, and pray for our schools, and local services

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

We pray now for all those who work in the churches of our circuit, bless them and guide them in all they do. We pray for a strong future, that between us we can make an impact for the kingdom. Bind us together in love that we may better serve each other and the local community in all that we strive to do in Jesu's name. We bring before You now, those members who are ill and infirm, those who are bereaved, the lonely and the suffering. Whatever their need Lord, we pray your presence be near them, that You comfort them in their hour of need, that Your healing hand be upon them, and this we ask in Jesu's name. And so dear Lord, give us courage and wisdom that we may face the coming week ready and willing to freely speak of the love of God, walking in a way that is worthy of our calling, being loyal servants, supporting each other as we move forward in faith and obedience.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

Amen.

StF 418 – We have a gospel to proclaim

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) We have a gospel to proclaim,
Good news for all throughout the earth;
The gospel of a Saviour's name:
We sing his glory, tell his worth. | 4) Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
Empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
That we might share his victory. |
| 2) Tell of his birth at Bethlehem -
Not in a royal house or hall,
But in a stable dark and dim,
The Word made flesh, a light for all. | 5) Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
By all creation glorified.
He sends his Spirit on his church
To live for him, the Lamb who died. |
| 3) Tell of his death at Calvary:
Hated by those he came to save,
In lonely suffering on the cross,
For all he loved his life he gave. | 6) Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim:
We sing his glory, tell his worth. |

Edward Joseph Burns © Canon Edward J Burns CCL No. 515642

Benediction

Words of Jesus: 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. **Amen**