

27th March 2022 – Morning Service

Mothersing Sunday

Jill Martin

Call to Worship

God of compassion, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth: strengthen us each day, that in joy and sorrow we may know your presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

StF 88 – Praise to the Lord

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|---|---|
| 1) Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health
and salvation!
All ye who hear,
Brothers and sisters, draw near,
Praise him in glad adoration. | 4) Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of
sin is abounding,
Who, when the godless do triumph, all
virtue confounding,
Sheddeth his light,
Chaseth the horrors of night,
Saints with his mercy surrounding. |
| 2) Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work
and defend thee;
Surely his goodness and mercy here daily
attend thee:
Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
Who with his love doth befriend thee. | 5) Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me
adore him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with
praises before him!
Let the amen
Sound from his people again:
Gladly for aye we adore him. |
| 3) Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life
and restore thee,
Fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever
before thee,
Then to thy need
He like a mother doth speed,
Spreading the wings of grace o'er thee. | |

Joachim Neander CCL No. 515642

Prayer of Adoration

Eternal God, we praise you, for you are the source of all light and life. Your word made the whole of creation, in all its beauty and splendour, bringing order out of chaos, light out of darkness. We praise you that the evidence of your creative activity is all around us still. We praise you, Father, for your supreme revelation of yourself in our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the clear vision of your love that we see in him. Inspire us now with the life and light he came to bring, that our praises may be worthy of him and resound to his honour and glory: for his sake **Amen**

Prayer of Confession

Father, you us better than we know ourselves, and in the light of your glory all the darkness of our sin is revealed. In your presence we confess our failure to respond fully to your commandment to love, our reluctance to follow you, our desire to please others rather than to serve you. We confess that we have only feebly responded to that clear revelation, given to us in Jesus, and that we have allowed the light of his glory to be obscured by our own apathy and indifference. Father, you know us better than we know ourselves; but we know that we are sinners. Grant us an awareness of sins forgiven and your abundant grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

StF 687 – One human family God has made

- 1) One human family God has made,
And all for each to care.
One world, to be the home of all,
With all its wealth to share.
One Christ, to manifest on earth
Love's ultimate design.
One Church to know the mystery
Of broken bread and wine.
- 2) One race, one world - yet torn apart,
We spurn the way of love.
But still ahead, the Christ leads on
And calls his Church to move
From love of power to power of love,
To give the word to all -
To trust the love that conquered death,
Outside the city wall.
- 3) And are we brave enough to join
With that great company -
The cost not less than all we have
And are or hope to be -
The bitter cup of human sin
To drink with him who died,
And take his love outside the wall
To all the crucified?
- 4) Claim him who claims us for his own,
To share his pain and grief,
To bear the scars that stamp us his -
The hallmark of belief.
As partners of the living Christ,
Who risk the path he trod,
With wondering love we find we share
The timeless joy of God.

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Reading: Exodus 2:1-10

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river-bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. 'This is one of the Hebrew babies,' she said.

Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?' 'Yes, go,' she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.' So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water.'

Reading: Luke 2:33-35

The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

Sermon

This Sunday 4th in Lent we join together to celebrate Mothering Sunday. For the first time in my life I am joining with those who have lost their mum. My mum passed in January and I do miss her but more than that I celebrate her passing knowing that she is now free from all the things which restrained her in this life; lack of mobility, rules which kept her trapped in her house and stopped her from meeting her friends. She has broken through earthly barriers and is free safe in the promise of Jesus "today you will be with me in Paradise"

In our passage from Exodus, we learn that the Hebrews who were once welcomed by Pharaoh through the work of Joseph, are now threatening Pharaoh because of their number in Egypt's population. Time has passed and Egypt no longer has no need of the Hebrew people as citizens - they have become enslaved and made to work for Pharaoh. Indeed so concerned is Pharaoh about their growing number he orders all male children born should be put to death. We are told of an unnamed Levite woman (in Chapter 6 we find out her name is Jochebed) who bore a male child. She knew that her child was vulnerable and did all she could to protect and hide him. She realised that she could not keep him secret and safe so she attempted to hide him in the bulrushes, wrapped in a papyrus blanket. Was her plan to hide him permanently or to retrieve him under cover of darkness at the end of each day? Her daughter kept watch and saw Pharaoh's daughter notice the basket in its hiding place, and watched as she sent her maidservants to retrieve it then open it to find the baby. Pharaoh's daughter realised the baby was a Hebrew child and that her father had condemned all male Hebrew children to death, yet she chose to defy him and raise the child as her own in the home of Pharaoh. The child's sister appeared and volunteered her mother to feed and wean the baby and take him to the Palace once he was weaned. These women - an Egyptian princess and a Hebrew mother - broke the rules of the most powerful man in Egypt, Pharaoh himself.

They put the child in the basket at the centre of their lives, the child who would grow up to commit murder, and escape from justice by travelling to Midian, transforming his life to become a shepherd and meeting God in a burning bush. A man who, chosen by God, faced Pharaoh and eventually led the Hebrews out of the slavery of Pharaoh and out of Egypt and become a new nation, the Holy people of God who would change the world by acknowledging God as the One God, Creator. The mother of Moses the Law Giver, who led the Hebrews to freedom.

Luke the Gospel writer, doctor and Gentile tells in his Gospel of a God who loves humanity so much that he gives himself in human form to save the world. Mary, a young girl betrothed to Joseph says yes to God. She knows the consequences of her yes, of being punished by stoning or being put on the street, disowned by family and left for dead. But Mary says yes, she has to trust and have great faith that it is indeed God's will. She believes and continues to believe that the child she carries is indeed the Son of God and will be named Jesus. The fear of telling Joseph of her news. The long journey to Bethlehem, the fear and cold and hunger, the pathetic accommodation, the dark and frightening place where she gives birth to the Son of God. Visited by shepherds (unclean according to Jewish law), fleeing Herod and moving into Egypt trying to protect her first born son. Taking on the responsibilities of raising the Son of God, feeding and caring for him knowing not what is to come. Watching him grow into adulthood, a carpenter like Joseph, the pain and fear when he left to fulfil his ministry. How many days and nights did she worry and pray for him? Yet she accomplished her task as mother and watched as he died on a cross, how did she feel as she saw and heard the voices of Romans, Jews and Gentiles amongst the crowd? Was it failure, she had done her best to protect her child and then this painful ending, did she regret her decision, feel angry with God because of how it ended or did she feel peace that she had been a part of it? Mary, the mother of God.

Susanna was the 25th of 25 children. Her father, Dr. Samuel Annesley, was a Dissenter from the established church in England. At the age of 12 Susanna stopped attending her father's church and joined the Church of England. She and Samuel Wesley were married on 11 November 1688, Samuel was 26 and Susanna 19. The couple had 19 children; 9 of them died as infants, 4 of those who died were twins, a maid accidentally smothered one child. At her death only 8 of her children were still alive.

Susanna's life was not an easy one, money was a constant problem and two fires in her home and the loss of children must have challenged her faith, but she prayed constantly and kept her trust in God. Her husband left her and their children for a year because of a minor dispute. Susanna had to stay strong. Susanna managed her time carefully and by apportioning time in the evening to her children individually she joined them in conversation and prayer. She began to teach them formally as each reached the age of five, under no circumstances were the children permitted to have any formal lessons until the day after their fifth birthday. They attended classes for six hours and on the first day were supposed to learn the

whole of the alphabet. All her children except two managed this and to Susanna these two seemed backward. The children, both sons and daughters, got a good education learning Latin and Greek and were tutored in the classical studies which were traditional in England of the time.

During a time when her husband was in London, defending a friend against heresy he appointed a locum to bring the message. The man's sermons were solely about repaying debts. The lack of diverse spiritual teaching made Susanna assemble her children on Sunday afternoons for family services. They would sing a psalm and then Susanna would read a sermon from her husband's or father's sermon file followed by another psalm. The local people asked to attend - at one point there were over 200 people who attended Susanna's Sunday afternoon service, whilst the Sunday morning service dwindled to nearly nothing.

Although she never preached a sermon or published a book or founded a church, she is known as the mother of Methodism. Two of her sons, John and Charles, applied the example, teachings and circumstances of their home life. Susanna died in 1742 at the age of 73. Was she aware of what she had achieved for God through her faith?

StF 611 – Brother, sister let me serve you

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| 1) Brother, sister let me serve you
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant, too. | 4) I will weep when you are weeping,
When you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through. |
| 2) We are pilgrims on a journey,
And companions on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load. | 5) When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony. |
| 3) I will hold the Christ light for you
In the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear. | 6) Brother, sister let me serve you
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant, too. |

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Prayers of Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks to God

For the love of our Father, the Maker of all, the giver of all good things

L: Let us bless the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God**

For the world's beauty and the changing seasons, and for the life that we have been given

L: Let us bless the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God**

For Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lived and worked among us

L: Let us bless the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God**

For his suffering and death on the cross and his resurrection to new life

L: Let us bless the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God**

For his rule over all things and his presence in the world

L: Let us bless the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God**

For the Holy Spirit, the giver of life who teaches and guides us

L: Let us bless the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God**

For the grace of the Spirit in the work of the Church and the life of the world

L: Let us bless the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God Amen**

Prayers of Intercession

Merciful God, the consequences of our human sin and folly are terrible to contemplate but we bring them in prayer to you, seeking salvation for the world, for humankind, for ourselves.

We pray for our world, devastated and destroyed by greed and lack of foresight; earth rendered barren, waters made toxic, species wiped out...[*Silence*]

Creator God, we pray for your world. **In your mercy save us**

We pray for humankind, dehumanised and divided by selfishness and ignorance, children weak with hunger, women exploited and downtrodden, men misshapen by war...[*Silence*]

Saviour God, we pray for humankind. **In your mercy save us.**

We pray for ourselves, damaged and distorted by lack of love or understanding, slow to trust in you, weakened by guilt, afraid to love wholeheartedly...[*Silence*]

Spirit of God, we pray for ourselves. **In your mercy save us.**

In the name of Christ, your gift of love and salvation to all the world. **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 503 – Love divine

- 1) Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.
- 2) Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.
- 3) Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley CCL No. 515642

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with kindness and give us peace. **Amen**