

29th June 2025 – Morning Service

Martin Rider

Call to Worship - Psalm 25:4 & 5

Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long. Amen.

We come to Almighty God to worship, to seek, understand and answer his call in our daily lives. Our opening hymn was written in 1998 by Brian Doerksen, a Canadian singer-songwriter, when he was only thirty-three years old. His earliest hymns were published when he was in his mid-twenties.

StF 24 – Come now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship.

One day every tongue will confess You are God.

Come, now is the time to give your heart.

One day every knee will bow.

Come, just as you are to worship.

Still the greatest treasure remains

Come, just as you are before your God,

For those who gladly choose You now.

Come.

Brian Doerksen © 1998 Vineyard Songs

Prayer of Adoration & Confession

Almighty and everlasting God, we come to worship you today, for you are good, merciful and your love endures forever. Our senses are filled with the wonders of your creation which you have spoken into existence. Your wisdom created this beautiful planet on which we live, the animal and plant life, warmed and lit by the sun and sated by rain to maintain the ecosystem on which we depend. We rejoice in the beauty and complexity of nature and we are awed by stars, moons and planets you have set in the vastness of space.

We realise how insignificant we are as a species which is why we are amazed that you love us so much that you took human form as Jesus, lived among us, taught us your true nature and how we may live as you call us to. Much more than that, Christ's death and resurrection have redeemed us from the power of sin and death, allowing us to draw close to you as your earthly children, a royal priesthood.

Abba, our heavenly Father, thank you for all you have done for us, given us and accomplished in us, for your love endures forever. Merciful Lord, your holiness makes us ever aware of our sinfulness, for we are sometimes lukewarm in our love for you and certainly don't care for our neighbours as we know we ought, in thought, word and deed. In your lovingkindness, help us amend our ways and forgive us for the wrong we have done and the good we have neglected to do.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. In his loving-kindness he declares our sins are forgiven. Therefore, Lord, fit us to love and serve both you and our neighbours, joyfully and faithfully in Jesus' beautiful name. **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 next hymn was also written by Brian Doerksen in 1989.

StF 628 – Faithful One

Faithful One, so unchanging
Ageless One, You're my Rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on You
I call out to You again and again.
I call out to You again and again.

You are my Rock in times of trouble
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm
Your love is the anchor
My hope is in You alone.

Brian Doerksen © 1989 Vineyard Songs

Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, although we live on a wonderful and self-sustaining planet, modern communications speak about so much pain and suffering, here and abroad, that we are driven to despair, especially as so many of the issues result from humankind's failure to care for our neighbours. Whilst we offer ourselves to play what part we can in repairing some of the brokenness around us, we know that our powers are limited. Nevertheless, we believe that all things are possible for you, so we pray that you will inspire and warm the hearts of people with greater power and influence, so they will bring about changes rectify the results of mankind's cruelty, folly, exploitation and indifference.

Lord of all, we pray for our church, all the churches in our Circuit and, indeed, for the World Church. May the living Spirit rekindle our desire to share good news with our neighbours, both local and further afield, not only in words but through acts of grace. Teach us to speak of the grace and glory of Christ Jesus with one voice and serve him in unity of mission, so we bring others to know and serve our Lord Jesus.

Heavenly Father, we bring you our concerns about wars are currently being waged in many parts of the world, particularly conflicts Ukraine, Gaza and the West Bank and between Israel and Iran. We grieve at the suffering we see in the Media, destruction, injury, death and displacement that results from mankind's inability to co-exist peacefully with neighbours. This is all the more appalling as we commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the end of the Second World, yet seem to have failed to learn the need for peace. May the Holy Spirit help the leaders of all nations to recognize that negotiation and same Spirit bring about just and lasting settlements to the conflicts we have named and for your shalom to be bestowed on all nations.

Heavenly Father, we pray for all involved in the recent airliner crash in India: not only those killed and injured, but their families and communities who have been plunged into grieving their sudden bereavement. We ask you to reach out to them, breathing comfort and healing upon them and may they receive the help they need to face life with renewed hope.

Jesus is the source of healing and well-being, so we pray for neighbours who are ill in body, mind or spirit, for those brought low by loneliness, fear or need and everybody who is experiencing the agony of bereavement. Wherever possible, Lord, empower us to offer support and friendship to them. In a time of silence, we remember friends and neighbours for whom we are especially concerned...[*Silence*]. Loving Lord, embrace them with the warmth and power of your love, so they may be healed, encouraged, granted reassurance and an enduring peace.

Abba, Heavenly Father, bless us, our families and friends. Keep us safe in your care and help us lead good lives, sharing the love you give in such abundance with all-comers, trusting in your grace and goodness evermore. **Amen.**

Reading: Galatians 5:1 & 13 - 25

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Amen.

Address 1

Paul's letter to the Thessalonian churches expressed his love for them and his pleasure at their faithfulness. But in the fifth chapter there is a warning. No doubt to his fury, Paul heard that some Jewish Christians had arrived in Galatia, declaring that the Gentile converts must be circumcised, observe Jewish festivals, traditions and the 613 Rules of Righteousness, effectively the same lifestyles as orthodox Jews. Paul taught that we are saved by faith, not by following the minutiae of the Law of Moses. The very reason that Jesus died at Calvary was to be the one perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, to atone for our sins and free us to love and serve God as our response to his grace: unearned, undeserved love.

Paul wrote that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus and She, the Spirit, frees us to love and serve one another and the Lord. We can do nothing to make God love us more that he already does, for he already loves us to the uttermost. The Spirit helps us to resist what Paul describes as the 'sinful nature', so we need to rely upon her guidance. Years ago, when I was a teacher, we had a Headmaster who said there were too many school rules and set about reducing them to four or five. It made life easier and happier for staff and pupils. Paul went better than the Headmaster. Ignoring the ridiculous number of Rules of Righteousness, Paul said that the Ten Commandments are observed if we simply love our neighbour as ourselves. The logic is straightforward: if we treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves, then we won't steal from them, hurt or abuse them and, if we love our neighbours as ourselves, we observe the first Commandment, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind and strength.

I can almost hear some of you saying, 'That's all very well, but what about the hateful, obnoxious people we encounter?' Don't worry, we are not being called to like them. Like the Good Samaritan in Jesus' parable, we are called to show compassion, even to our enemies. In Hebrew 'compassion' is covered by 'chesed' which is also translated as 'loving-kindness'. Consider this version of what Paul declared the fulfilment of Mosaic Law: 'Show loving-kindness to your neighbour as you would want for yourself'? I hope this makes it easier to live out. Amen.

StF 242 – A new commandment

A new commandment I give unto you:
That you love one another as I have loved you,
That you love one another as I have loved you.

By this the world shall know you are my disciples
If you have love for one another.
By this the world shall know you are my disciples
If you have love for one another.

Anonymous

Reading: Luke 9:51 - 62

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Amen.

Our penultimate hymn was written by John Bell and the late Graham Maule of the Iona Community, who often set hymns to Scots ballad tunes, in this case "Kelvingrove".

StF 673 – Will you come and follow me

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| 1) Will you come and follow Me if I but
call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and
never be the same?
Will you let My love be shown?
Will you let My name be known,
Will you let My life be grown in you and
you in Me? | 4) Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but
call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and
never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
To reshape the world around,
Through My sight and touch and sound
in you and you in Me? |
| 2) Will you leave yourself behind if I but
call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and
never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let Me answer prayer in you and
you in Me? | 5) Lord, Your summons echoes true when You
but call my name,
Let me turn and follow You and never
be the same.
In Your company I'll go
Where Your love and footsteps show
Thus I'll move and live and grow in You
and You in me. |
| 3) Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean
And do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean in you and you in Me? | |

John L Bell & Graham Maule © 1987 WGRG Iona Community

Address 2

It may have seemed that Jesus was having a hard day. Disciples, who had been sent ahead to find food and lodgings at a Samaritan town were rebuffed as soon as the locals discovered that they were travelling to Jerusalem. The Holy City was still a burning issue, and indeed, Jesus and his followers were lucky, for it was not unknown for Jews who travelled through Samaria towards Jerusalem to be attacked or even killed.

Anyway, the Sons of Thunder, James and John asked Jesus to call down fire from heaven to destroy that unnamed town, both to pay them back and to intimidate other Samaritan towns into behaving more respectfully. Jesus rebuked them, no doubt reminding them that the commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself', should be extended even to hate-filled Samaritans.

Jesus had just sorted out that problem when a man approached him, declaring, *"I will follow you wherever you go."* He realized that the enthusiasm of the boast betrayed a lack of understanding about the cost of discipleship. The would-be disciple had not considered how much he would have to surrender to follow our Lord. When Jesus replied, *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head,"* he did not mean he had to sleep rough on his travels, for women like Susanna, Joanna and Mary Magdalene supported the disciples and would have found places to stay overnight. No, he meant that he had uprooted himself from family and neighbours in Galilee, sacrificing the security of regular work and possessions for his ministry. Jesus knew that the man would have fallen away as he realized what he would have to surrender to follow, so he set him straight about the real cost of discipleship.

Next, he called another to go with him, but the man pleaded to be allowed to bury his father. Jesus' reply seemed at best hard-hearted, at worst, scandalous: *"Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."* After all, the Torah commands us to honour our fathers and mothers, including arranging for their burial. However, what the man actually asked was to be allowed to wait until his father had died and been buried before he committed himself to answer Jesus' call – that could be years hence. Jesus had no time for such a half – hearted person. You either follow wholeheartedly or stay where you are and are lost.

Similarly, a second man tried to excuse himself from following at once, by asking to be allowed to bid his family goodbye. At first glance his request seems perfectly reasonable, as I expect that Peter and Andrew had made swift arrangements to ensure that their families did not go short when they left. So why did Jesus reply, *"No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God"*? The man wasn't just going to return to say goodbye at all: he was going to open himself to arguments why he ought to stay with them a little longer, and then just a while more, until he lost that desire to follow Jesus at all. Of course Jesus doesn't reject anyone who wants to follow him. However, he does remind us the cost of discipleship. We are called to follow with whole-hearts, not half-heartedly, which means setting aside anything or anyone that will prevent us from giving ourselves entirely to our calling: ambitions; social status; possessions; where we live – even people. God's needs must come first.

Nor does it mean we should run away from our responsibilities – our duties to parents and neighbours are to be honoured – for love is the watchword of our call from Christ. We must not, however, use these duties as an excuse for not offering total commitment to our Lord's kingdom on earth. If we are going to be disciples, we must be resolute and committed, because we are putting ourselves at our Lord's disposal – remember our Covenant promise: *I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.*

This covenant must never be taken lightly, because God's commitment to humankind is indeed total: Jesus died in agony and shame to redeem us, even though we had rebelled against God. What amazing, boundless love shown to sinners like us. Such marvellous love requires a generous response from each of us. Jesus calls each of us to glorify God in his name, by sharing the love he gives with all others, for as Paul wrote, *'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'* May our spiritual fruit be good and sweet, a worthy offering to God and our neighbours. Amen.

We close our worship with a hymn written in 2008 by Jacqueline Jones, a contemporary Christian singer-songwriter, originally from South Africa and who was based in the UK for 5 years. She now lives in Christchurch, New Zealand and is a vicar's wife!

StF 662 – Have you heard God's voice

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|---|---|
| 1) Have you heard God's voice;
Has your heart been stirred?
Are you still prepared to follow?
Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
Though the way be rough and narrow? | 3) In your city streets will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?
Will you stop and eat, and when
friendships start,
Will you share your faith with the faithless? |
| <i>Ch) Will you walk the path that will cost you much
And embrace the pain and sorrow?
Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
The disciples of tomorrow?</i> | 4) Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
And believe it could be different?
Will you share your views using
words of grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint? |
| 2) Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
When the multitudes are silent?
Will you make a choice to stand your ground
When the crowds are turning violent? | <i>Ch) We will walk the path that will cost us much
And embrace the pain and sorrow.
We will trust in One who entrusts to us
The disciples of tomorrow.</i> |

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Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.