

30th May 2021 – Morning Service

Look and see

Rev Chris Watson

Call to Worship

Come and receive that which is beyond words, that which is beyond price, that which will never let you down. Come and receive the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Come.

StF 15 – The splendour of the King

1) The splendour of the King,
Clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice
Let all the earth rejoice
He wraps himself in Light,
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
And trembles at His voice

2) Age to age He stands
And time is in His hands
Beginning and the end
Beginning and the end
The Godhead Three in One
Father Spirit Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb

Ch) *How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God*

Br) Name above all names
Worthy of all praise
My heart will sing how great is our God

Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash & Jesse Reeves © 2004 worshiptogether.com Songs CCL No. 515642

Prayers

Almighty God, we acknowledge your voice in all creation. You spoke; and the universe came into being; you spoke; and gave form and purpose to its life. At your word the men and women of old began in faith to discover your truth. In Jesus your word became flesh and your loving purpose was revealed. Through him you called together the first disciples and enabled them to receive your Holy Spirit, moulding them into your Church. We believe that you speak still calling even people like us to your service. Open our minds, and hearts, to what you are saying to us now, that we may more clearly understand your purpose and more truly serve you.

Lord, we bring to you our prayers. Because you know us through and through you already know our failures, and our need of your forgiveness, but we believe that by naming them we open ourselves to your healing and we are confident that you are willing and waiting to forgive and to lead us to a new beginning. Call us again to your service and send us to live as your disciples.

We thank you, eternal God for every way in which you teach us your nature and purpose.

We thank you that Jesus came among us, human as we are, yet perfectly revealing you to us; that he taught your way of love and called people to live in your kingdom.

We thank you that the first disciples left everything to follow him and became the first stewards of the Gospel.

We thank you that in obedience they travelled far and wide, facing great danger and hardship to preach and teach in his name.

We thank you that you have sent your Holy Spirit to inspire and bless their work and to lead us into your truth. We thank you that you call us to be your followers too. **Amen.**

StF 106 – God, whose Almighty word

- 1) God whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight,
Hear us, we humbly pray,
And where the gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light!
- 2) Christ, you have come to bring
On your redeeming wing
Healing and sight,
Health to the sick in mind,
Sight to the inly blind,
O to all humankind
Let there be light!
- 3) Spirit of truth and love,
Life-giving, holy Dove,
Speed forth your flight;
Move on the waters' face,
Bearing the lamp of grace,
And in earth's darkest place
Let there be light!
- 4) Blessed and holy Three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
Boundless as ocean's tide
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world far and wide
Let there be light!

John Marriott CCL No. 515642

Reading: John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.' Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.' 'How can someone be born when they are old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!'

Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit[b] gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again." The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.' 'How can this be?' Nicodemus asked. 'You are Israel's teacher,' said Jesus, 'and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

StF 44 – Come on and celebrate

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| Come on and celebrate His gift of love, we will celebrate The Son of God who loved us And gave us life. We'll shout Your praise, O King, You give us joy nothing else can bring, We'll give to You our offering In celebration praise. | Come on and celebrate, Celebrate, celebrate and sing, Celebrate and sing to the King. Come on and celebrate, Celebrate, celebrate and sing, Celebrate and sing to the King. |
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Reflection

I quite enjoy doing word searches and crosswords, but I have to admit though that I am not very quick at them. I can look and look for a word and just not see it. In my defence the words can be in reverse order and placed diagonally. There are times when we can look at something in front of us such as word searches and no matter how hard we look we just can not see it. How many times have you looked for keys, for glasses, that elusive piece of paper. Sometimes our eyes see it but our brain doesn't translate what we are looking at. It's always in the last place you look, often right in front of you. Quite often we need fresh eyes to see the object, someone else to tell us where to look.

The reading was from the Gospel of John and it is the story of Nicodemus; a man who looked but didn't see. He was a member of the ruling council, a religious leader. No doubt you have heard the reading before and perhaps the usual sermon which goes with it, about light and darkness, ignorance and knowledge. It is about a religious leader coming to Jesus under the cloak of darkness in secret or perhaps at a time when Nicodemus knew he would get his full attention. He came to learn from him. There was something about Jesus, this wandering Rabbi which was different, which caught his interest. We could look at the story of Nicodemus, we could wonder at how a religious leader couldn't see what Jesus was explaining, we could trace his story through John's Gospel, to see him defend Jesus and then help with his burial. We could dwell on what it means to be reborn of water and the Spirit.

However I would like to draw your attention to verse 14 of this passage where Jesus says, *“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.”* The background to this statement is that the people of Israel were in the desert and were having to go round the land of Edom rather than through it. They were very nearly at the land promised to them by God but the King of Edom refused to let them go through his lands and so they had to make a detour. They were well and truly fed up and so they started moaning. In the past they had moaned that they were hungry and God had provided a type of bread called manna and quails, they had complained of thirst and again God provided water for them. Now they were fed up of the food provided and God was fed up of them. According to the account in Numbers chapter 21 God sent fiery serpents into the camp. People who were bitten by the snakes - and there were many - died. God's people realised that they had angered God, that this time they had gone too far so they went to Moses and asked him to pray to God to take the snakes away. So Moses prayed to God, and God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole so it could be seen all round the camp, anyone who looked on the bronze serpent would live. The problem was caused by serpents and the people had to look at the image of the problem.

In John's Gospel, Jesus tells his hearers that just as the bronze serpent was lifted up for healing of the physical bites so he the Son of Man must be lifted up. Looking at the serpent in belief, provided healing from a physical problem. The serpents were the cause and an image of that cause was also the method of healing. Jesus, the Son of God became a man for us; we, you and me, human beings caused the problem, the bite, and to be healed someone akin to us, a human being, but perfect had to be lifted up for us, to show us the way back to God, to our spiritual bites.

It is interesting to note here that God did answer their prayer, but not in the way they wanted. The Israelites wanted the snakes removed but God didn't remove the snakes, what he did was provide a cure for their bite. All the people had to do was to look at the bronze serpent. We often pray God to provide a particular solution don't we? And then when we get a different answer we sometimes don't even realise that we have had an answer. We often think we know what we need but we so often get it wrong, we only see the small picture. God however looks and understands the big picture. He knows exactly what each person needs and he knows each person here, he knows all our problems, worries and concerns. Psalm 139 in the Old Testament tells us that God knew all about us even before we were born or even formed. He even knows all our days.

More importantly though is the fact that he cares for each one of us, in spite of knowing us better than we know ourselves. How do I know he cares? John 3 verse 16 says so when we read...*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”*

This verse is about a God who loves the world, you and I, so much that he was willing to give everything for us, what's the catch? What do we have to do in return? How do we earn this love? God didn't send his son to condemn us, to catch us out, but to love us. We don't need to know the right doctrines, the right way to do things, the customs of the church. The role of the church is to show that love to all. To act as a signpost to the source of that love. How do we get to know this love for ourselves? All we have to do is follow the example of the people in the desert, we have to look to the figure lifted up on the cross. This is the good news of Jesus in a nutshell, that God loves us so much that he gave his all for us, we just need to accept it and look to Jesus.

StF 342 All hail the power of Jesu's name!

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| 1) All hail the power of Jesu's name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown him, crown him, crown him, Crown him Lord of all! | 4) Let every kindred, every tribe On this terrestrial ball, To him all majesty ascribe, And crown him, crown him, crown him, Crown him Lord of all. |
| 2) You seed of Israel's chosen race, You ransomed of the fall, Hail him who saves you by his grace, And crown him, crown him, crown him, Crown him Lord of all! | 5) O that with yonder sacred throng We at his feet may fall, Join in the everlasting song, And crown him, crown him, crown him, Crown him Lord of all! |
| 3) Hail him, the heir of David's line Whom David Lord did call, The God incarnate, Man divine, And crown him, crown him, crown him, Crown him Lord of all! | |

Edward Perronet adapted by John Rippon

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Prayers of Concern

We are your people, God. In this time and place, you have called us to pray for those in need
We pray for the people whose names the world kows, whose stories are told daily in the news.... [*Silence*]

L: God in your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

We pray for people in places of suffering, whose names only you and their friends and families know.
And whose lives you cherish.... [*Silence*]

L: God in your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

We pray for the people whose names and lives we know, those who today are in pain or distress or
trouble, those who are happy, those who are sad.... [*Silence*]

L: God in your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

We pray for ourselves, God. You know each one of us by name. Make us into the people you want us to be,
and when that hurts, reassure us how much you love us. God, we bring you ourselves and our prayers in
Jesus' 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.**

StF 351 In Christ alone

- 1) In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.
- 2) In Christ alone! who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
The gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The word of God was satisfied -
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.
- 3) There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.
- 4) No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

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Blessing

To the one whose goodness is without equal, whose love is beyond comparison, whose mercy is beyond understanding and whose power is beyond words, be praise and glory, worship and thanksgiving, now and always. **Amen**