

4th October 2026 – Morning Service

Bob Allaway

Call to Worship

I welcome you here in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who applied to himself the saying:
The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. (Matthew 21:42)

Let us praise him as the solid foundation for our lives and fellowship, as we sing:

StF 677 – Christ is made the sure foundation

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| 1) Christ is made the sure foundation
Christ the Head and Cornerstone,
chosen of the Lord and precious,
binding all the church in one;
holy Zion's help for ever,
and her confidence alone. | 3) Here entrust to all your servants
what we long from you to gain -
that on earth and in the heavens
we one people shall remain,
till united in your glory
evermore with you we reign. |
| 2) We as living stones invoke you:
come among us, Lord, today!
With your gracious loving-kindness
hear your servants as we pray;
and the fullness of your blessing
in our fellowship display. | 4) Praise and honour to the Father,
Praise and honour to the Son,
Praise and honour to the Spirit,
ever three and ever one:
One in power and one in glory
while eternal ages run. |

John Mason Neale

Opening Prayers

We thank you Lord Jesus that in this world of uncertainty, where more and more disturbing things are happening at this time, you can give us a sure foundation for our lives. In the love that took you even to death on the cross for us, we are assured of a love that will never let us down. In your resurrection in glory, we see the proof that you are everything you claimed to be, that your love will have the last word, and you will finally overthrow all the evil and injustice of this world.

Draw us, now, to take our stand by faith on the solid foundation of your teaching and example, and as we worship you together, to build one another up in that faith and hope. **Amen.**

StF 353 – Jesus is Lord!

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| 1) Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
for by his power each tree and flower
was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;
sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord! | 2) Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
in flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding –
yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free. |
| Ch) <i>Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!</i>
<i>Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!</i> | 3) Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death he rose; and all his foes
shall own his name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord. |

David John Mansell © 1980 Springtide

Reading: from Exodus 20 (NIV)

Our Old Testament reading today is a selection from Exodus 20; verses that make up The Ten Commandments. We will use them as an aid to recognise and confessing our sins.

After every commandment, please respond: **Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.**

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals,

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

Honour your father and your mother,

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

You shall not murder.

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

You shall not commit adultery.

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

You shall not steal.

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Lord, forgive our failures and help us to keep this law.

And be assured that you are forgiven, if you have put your faith in Christ of whom Paul wrote, to the Philippians:

Reading: Philippians 3: 8-12 (NIV)

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

StF 489 – All I once held dear

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| 1) All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain,
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this. | 2) Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all surpassing gift
of righteousness. |
| Ch) <i>Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing You
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.</i> | 3) Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die. |

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Responsive Reading: Psalm 19 (NIV)

The heavens declare the glory of God; **the skies proclaim the work of his hands.**
Day after day they pour forth speech; **night after night they reveal knowledge.**
They have no speech, they use no words; **no sound is heard from them.**
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, **their words to the ends of the world.**
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.
It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, **like a champion rejoicing to run his course.**
It rises at one end of the heavens **and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.**
The law of the Lord is perfect, **refreshing the soul.**
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, **making wise the simple.**
The precepts of the Lord are right, **giving joy to the heart.**
The commands of the Lord are radiant, **giving light to the eyes.**
The fear of the Lord is pure, **enduring for ever.**
The decrees of the Lord are firm, **and all of them are righteous.**
They are more precious than gold, **than much pure gold;**
they are sweeter than honey, **than honey from the honeycomb.**
By them your servant is warned; **in keeping them there is great reward.**
But who can discern their own errors? **Forgive my hidden faults.**
Keep your servant also from wilful sins; **may they not rule over me.**
Then I will be blameless, **innocent of great transgression.**
May these words of my mouth **and this meditation of my heart**
be pleasing in your sight, **Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.**

Sermon: Who can discern their own errors?

The writer of Psalm 19 is awestruck by the laws God gave to govern the heavens, giving the sun and stars their ordered patterns and movements, but he is not just impressed by their beauty. People of his day would have used such patterns to guide them as they travelled through the desert, or across the sea.

In the same way, he is awestruck by the laws God gave in scripture, to guide us on our path through life. But to both sets of guidance verse 12 of Psalm 19 applies, "Who can discern their own errors?"

This psalm makes the important point that God's laws in nature are there for anyone to observe (v1-4a) and the Hebrew actually says, "Their measuring line goes out into all the earth. In fact, if what we see is really there, others must be able to see it and measure it also."

When I was working in Chemistry, I took over the office of someone who had just returned to the USA and published some sensational results, that he claimed could solve all the world's energy needs. I was rather peeved that I had not discovered it, doing similar experiments. But when I later mentioned this to a fellow chemist, he told me, laughing, that no one else had been able to repeat those results, either. It turned out that the American's apparatus had been faulty!

Once again, this psalm draws a parallel with how we read God's Word (v11, 12a). People can easily fool themselves by twisting a Bible verse to say what they want it to say, or what others assures them it says. That is why we all need to belong to a local fellowship of honest friends who can take us aside and correct us in love, and the wider church of Christians who have independently seen the same things in Scripture, all around the world and down through history.

People will sometimes say, "I don't need church, I have personal faith in Christ, and that is all that matters." But without a fellowship of believers to help you discern your errors, your 'personal faith' can come to be in a false Christ of your own making, who only tells you what you want to hear!

To return to Psalm 19: We see here that, contrary to what some people think, there is no conflict between the work of science and Christian faith. One studies God's laws in nature, the other follows God's moral laws in his Word. In both cases, the evidence is there for anyone to investigate. If only one person can see something, and others trying to repeat his investigation cannot, then he is probably fooling himself.

However, the two work in parallel: they are not the same. You can no more learn the laws of physics by studying the Bible than you could learn the Ten Commandments by studying the night sky!

One point I must stress, not only is God's Word not there to tell us how natural things work, neither does our inability to explain such things 'prove' that God is there. Christian Faith is not a primitive explanation of things, to be displaced as science explains it better (as some seem to think). They also claim that, unlike science, religious faith is held because you are told to believe it, without any evidence. But that is plainly untrue of genuine Christian faith. Listen to Luke's introduction to his gospel: "many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye witnesses and servants of the word", since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account" (and what was Luke's profession? A doctor, as Paul tells us in Colossians).

Listen to how John starts his first letter, saying that he writes of "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched"; or Paul's account of the earliest creed in 1 Corinthians: 15, "what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve, last of all, he appeared to me also..." These Bible writers trusted in Jesus because they had seen the evidence for him, and Paul's words in 1 Corinthians: 15 particularly speak to me. I came from atheism to faith in Christ, when I tried to disprove his resurrection, and the evidence convinced me it was true!

But let's go back to Psalm 19 and, in particular, that key verse 12a.

I once saw a documentary about a mysterious plane crash. Before radar, an aeroplane was flying over mountains, in cloud, a journey they had made many times before. But this time, they had come down far too early and crashed into the mountains. What had gone wrong?

They knew they were flying in the right direction. They knew the wind speed when they took off. They knew how high they were above sea level. They knew how fast they were flying through the air, and how long the journey usually took them.

But they did not know that the jet-stream, the high-level wind, had moved and was blowing against them, so, although they knew how fast they were flying through the air, they could not tell they were much, much slower relative to the ground, and were still over the mountains. Without some reference point outside of them, by which to measure their progress, they were lost.

Do you get the point? The Psalm writer rejoices because, alongside the wonder of the scientific laws he can see in action in the heavens, and which will have helped people of his day navigate, as they travelled through the desert, or over the sea, he has God's moral law in Scripture that provides him with a moral compass to guide his journey through life (v7, 8, 11, 12a).

Well, how do you discern your own errors? The psalm's answer is: you test yourself by God's Word, and for us, that is the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, God's word made flesh.

I hope this may help anyone with hang ups about science and faith. But now, I want to challenge everyone: What provides you with your moral compass? What you feel is right? What is 'politically correct' in the world around? Or the teaching and example of one who loved us enough to die for us and was raised from death in glory to prove he is true? Let us follow him. **Amen.**

StF 111 – Lord of the boundless curves of space

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| 1) Lord of the boundless curves of space
and time's deep mystery,
to your creative might we trace
all nature's energy. | 4) You gave a growing consciousness
first sown when time began,
with all our longing to progress,
discover, shape and plan. |
| 2) Your mind conceived the galaxy,
each atom's secret planned,
and every age of history
your purpose, Lord, has spanned. | 5) In Christ the living power of grace
to liberate and lead
lights up the future of our race
with mercy's crowning deed. |
| 3) Your Spirit gave the living cell
its hidden, vital force:
the instincts which all life impel
derive from you, their source. | 6) Lead us, whom love has made and sought,
to find, when planets fall,
that Omega of life and thought
where Christ is all in all. |

Albert Frederick Bayly and Brian Wren © Oxford University Press

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, whose glory is declared throughout all creation, we pray for your world. For nations affected by war, poverty, injustice and division; for refugees and all who have been forced from their homes; and for those who work for peace and reconciliation, we ask for your guidance and mercy. Give wisdom to those who lead the nations, and help them to seek justice, peace, and the good of all people.

We pray for our own nation. For our Government and all in positions of responsibility, for those who serve in our public services, and for those who care for the vulnerable, we ask your blessing. Be close to those facing poverty, loneliness, illness, or uncertainty, and make us generous in responding to the needs around us.

We pray for our local community. Bless our neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces and families. Be with those who are lonely, grieving, sick or in need, and help us to be faithful neighbours and servants of others.

We pray for your Church throughout the world, that it may faithfully proclaim Christ and show his love in word and action. Bless our local churches, and our Vale of Stour Circuit. Strengthen our ministers, lay workers, local preachers, and all who serve. Give us unity, wisdom and courage as we seek to serve you and share the good news in our communities.

We pray for our own congregation and for those known personally to us who need your help. For the sick, the bereaved, the anxious, the lonely, and all who carry burdens that others cannot see, bring comfort, strength and hope. We bring before you those who are especially on our hearts. Lord, you know our needs before we speak.

Finally, we pray for ourselves. As the Psalmist prayed, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” Cleanse us from our sins, guide our thoughts and actions, and help us to live faithfully in your presence.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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 106 – God whose almighty word

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| 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! | 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! |
| 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! | 4) Blessèd 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

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.**