

5th July 2020 – Morning Service

Martyn Filsak

Call to Worship – Psalm 100:4

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name.

StF 24 – Come, now is the time to worship

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| 1) Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God,
Come. | 2) One day every tongue will confess You are God.
One day every knee will bow.
Still the greatest treasure remains
For those who gladly choose You now. |
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Prayers of Adoration

Lord God, Holy Trinity,
By your mighty word the heavens and the earth were made.
You journeyed on earth in Christ, and redeemed us to be your people
to belong to your family
to be loved and cherished.
In the Holy Spirit you dwell within us
giving us assurance that we are yours,
granting us transformation into your likeness, from glory to glory.
You dwell in our fellowship together.
In our weakness you are our strength.
In our work you are our rest.
In our searching you become our dwelling place, our security for ever.
Accept our love and worship, our response to your love for us.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Loving Lord
You opened your arms of love to us in Christ.
Forgive us when we close our hearts to others.
You gave to us amazing grace that cost you everything.
Forgive us when we count the cost of following you and decide to hold back.
In Christ you did not shrink from the path of suffering.
Forgive us when we are absorbed by our own desire to be comfortable.
You gave so much for us. We give so little for you. Transform us by your Holy Spirit that we may be all for you, as you are all for us.
We confess our failures and ask for your forgiveness.
We hear your words of absolution: our sins are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

Amen.

StF 78 – Give thanks

- 1) Give thanks with a grateful heart,
Give thanks to the Holy One,
Give thanks because He's given
Jesus Christ, His Son.
- 2) And now let the weak say 'I am strong',
Let the poor say 'I am rich',
Because of what the Lord has done for us.

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Reading: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

'To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others: "We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.'

At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. 'All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

Reflection – Rest

This is a message about rest. Let me make it quite clear what I'm talking about here. This is not about a rest from work. It's a rest in work. If that sounds illogical just stay with me here and it should become clearer. It's not about an external rest of the body but an internal rest of the soul.

When I worked for Sandwell Council and was based at Wednesbury Town Hall I commuted to work by train and Midland Metro. Travelling at similar times each day I got to know some of my fellow commuters. One of these was a Christian called David, who was often a great encouragement to me. Before we went our separate ways he would often say to me, "Have a good day, and have an easy day!" What did he mean? Was it ok for me to take time out to be slumped over my computer keyboard for half the day instead of working? I don't think so! I think it was more about recognizing that God is my strength and is well able to help me through the day. I think it was about not striving to do what is impossible for me but to know that God is my help in my weakness. It wasn't about not working hard, but about being at rest on the inside.

Did you know that you can be at work on the outside but at rest on the inside? Jesus talks about taking on his yoke. His yoke is easy. A yoke is a symbol of work. It is to allow oxen to pull a load such a plough. The Greek word for easy (chrestos) can also mean well-fitting. A well-fitting yoke can mean that an ox can do its work without getting a sore neck. When we are in the centre of God's will and doing what he wants us to do, then our yoke is well-fitting, because God tailors it to us.

This doesn't mean that we get an easy ride in life, that we will never get tired or need to rest, that we will never have any trouble. On the contrary, Jesus warned his disciples that in this fallen world we will have trouble, but that he has overcome the world and gives us his peace. Will you have to work hard? Yes! Will you ever feel physically exhausted and need to take time out? Probably! However, the rest of Jesus is an internal rest. It's a lack of needing to strive. It's an ease about who we are. It's a peace that comes from working within the will of God. It's a confidence of knowing that God has promised to meet all of our

needs and we don't need to worry about anything, that if we will be faithful in the things that he has given us to do, then he will take care of our needs in every detail.

This is about peace and rest within, a place of calmness, like the eye of a storm that remains quiet in the midst of chaos all around.

Here are a few points to help us to experience the rest that Jesus talks about here.

1. Be what God has made you to be. Do what he has called you to do.

Gillian had a difficult start to school life. She didn't concentrate well. She would shuffle about and fidget in class. Her mother was so concerned that she took Gillian to a doctor. During the consultation the doctor asked Gillian to stay in his office while he left for a while with her mother to speak privately. He turned the radio on before they left and music played. After they were gone, Gillian got up and danced around the room. By her own description she leapt on his desk, she leapt off his desk, she danced around the room and had a most wonderful time. The doctor, watching from a distance, turned to her mother and told her that there was nothing wrong with her child. She is a born dancer, he said. He urged her mother to take Gillian to a dance school.

She did! Gillian went on to join the Royal Ballet, then to produce shows. She directed over 60 productions in the West End and on Broadway. She worked with Andrew Lloyd Webber and choreographed several hit musicals. She eventually became Dame Gillian Lynne, having received an honour for her service to dance and musical theatre.

Don't be squeezed into someone else's mould or expectations. That can exhaust the soul. God has hard-wired certain abilities and desires into you. Follow him and you will find internal rest.

Learn to listen to God's plans for you. They are perfect and well-fitting for you. If you're not sure what those plans are then prayerfully try out a few things. You will soon find out what doesn't fit. What excites you? What energises you? That will give you some clues as to God's path forward for you.

2. Don't be a people-pleaser.

Ok, so we're meant to live at peace with everyone as far as possible. That's true, but it's impossible to please everyone all of the time and we're not called to do so. We are called to please God, and he will take care of the rest. Love others, yes. Serve them, yes, but don't expect that everyone will understand all of the time, or that they will support you all of the time. Sometimes you can't reach your destiny or please God without a few people getting mad with you along the way. Choose to please God above all else. Trying to please everybody can be exhausting for the soul. Also remember that not everyone will please you all of the time. They may do things in a different way from how you think they should. They may not do things that you like. Remember that most of the time they are not trying to get on your nerves but often just working out their lives in the way that they see fit. You're not responsible for what they do but only for your attitude towards it. Don't waste energy getting upset at others, but recognise that they may simply be serving God the best way that they know how.

3. Don't waste your time trying to change other people.

That's God's job. You might have a family member who has ways of doing things that you want to change and make more like your ways. Well, you can advise and encourage but if you find yourself getting frustrated and exhausted and making changing this person your life's work, then you are on to a loser. Rather set a good example, love and pray for the other person and trust God to do what only he can do. Pray for yourself too. It may be that you are the one who needs to change!

4. Stick with what God has given you to do.

Don't run from it in times of fear and difficulty. Several of God's servants tried that and found it exhausting. (Elijah and Jonah for example,)

5. Help others practically but don't have an over-developed sense of responsibility.

You can't help everyone in need. You can help some of them. You don't always have to help everyone who asks you for help, in the way that they think you ought to help them. That becomes difficult when it is a family member or a persuasive friend. That is why we need God's wisdom, and James says that if we pray for wisdom then God will grant it to us. As the late Bob Gass, author of the Word for Today, puts it, "if your name's not on it, don't pick it up." Don't think that you are the one who has to fix everything. Remember, you are not the Saviour, just the one who points others to the Saviour. Lose the cape! Drop the superhero complex, and enable the real Messiah to work through you to give people the help that he calls you to provide. Love without limit, and remember who the real Helper is.

6. Learn from Jesus

Never stop learning! If you're alive, keep learning. It will give you energy and purpose. It will help you towards God's rest. It's not just any learning though. Decide prayerfully how and what to study. Learn of Jesus, through the scriptures, through life's experience lived prayerfully and in openness to God's leading. Every day's a school day. Do life with God and ask him to teach you as you go along. We can't figure everything out on our own. There will always be things that we don't understand and we can wear ourselves out trying. God holds the mysteries that we don't understand but be assured of his love and overarching purpose that will not be set aside.

Are you weary today? Come to Jesus. Perhaps you've been serving God for years and not understood some of the truths of internal rest that the Bible teaches. Perhaps you don't even go near churches usually but have somehow stumbled upon this website and don't even know why you are watching this service. God wants to set you free and do miracles in your life. He wants to release you from guilt and striving and regrets and give you a new purpose. He died on a cross because of his love for you and to give you the riches of his Kingdom.

I invite you, if you wish to do so and can do it with sincerity, to join in this prayer:

Lord Jesus

Thank you that you love me and died for me so that I can belong to your family.

Forgive me for all that I have done wrong.

Forgive my striving to do things my own way.

I'm weary and tired of struggling.

I surrender myself to your love.

I accept your plans for my life.

Come and dwell within me and help me to live in your joy and find rest for my soul.

Thank you for making me your child. Amen

If this is new to you and you're not linked to a church, I urge you to find one locally wherever you are. Maybe phone a local minister and explain that you are new to the faith and would like to be a follower of Jesus. You will receive help and support to be all that God wants you to be.

God bless all who are reading this service.

StF 495 – Dear Lord and Father of mankind

- 1) Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.
- 2) In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow thee.
- 3) Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.
- 4) Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm!

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry CCL No. 515642

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Mighty God, you have created all things on earth and in the heavens by your power. We are wonderfully made, formed by your own hands for a purpose and belonging. In Jesus we are pointed towards that rest and fulfilment that comes from being all that you designed us to be. In him we are assured of eternal life and an everlasting inheritance in your grace. We give you our thanks and praise. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray. We pray for our own needs and those of the world. We remember all those who are weary and heavy laden, that they may hear your call and come to you for rest. We pray for those who are not at ease with themselves, but are carrying burdens that they don't know what to do with. We pray for all who carry guilt or regret, that they would know that you take their burdens and give them lightness and freedom and a future free of the shackles of the past.

L: Lord, hear us: **R: Lord, graciously hear us**

We pray for all who are ill, physically or mentally. Lord God, come close to them in Jesus and grant them healing and peace. We remember those in hospitals and care homes, and those who care for them. We pray for those who are awaiting treatment that may have been postponed because of the pandemic. Strengthen all who provide care for others at home. Comfort all who are separated from loved ones by distance or bereavement.

L: Lord, hear us: **R: Lord, graciously hear us**

We pray for our nation and world. Just as Jesus welcomed all who came to him, so may our society and our church be open and inclusive to people of all origins and backgrounds. Let all people be appreciated and celebrated for their uniqueness. We pray for parts of the world where there is conflict between different groups, and ask for your peace to reign. We pray for Hong Kong and ask for peace and good governance. Give wisdom to rulers and governments in addressing the needs of our environment and those of all people.

L: Lord, hear us: **R: Lord, graciously hear us**

We pray for your church worldwide and locally. Unite us in your love and help us to proclaim a clear message of grace. We pray for people encountering change, especially Ruth and Nigel as they prepare to go to new ministries, and Helen preparing to come to our circuit. We give thanks for Josephine's steps along the road to ordination. Help all those in our congregations coming to terms with changed circumstances and unfamiliar ways of living.

L: Lord, hear us: **R: Lord, graciously hear us**

Merciful God, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **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 550 – Forth in thy name

- 1) Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go,
My daily labour to pursue,
Thee, only thee, resolved to know
In all I think, or speak, or do.
- 2) The task thy wisdom has assigned
O let me cheerfully fulfil,
In all my works thy presence find,
And prove thy good and perfect will.
- 3) Thee may I set at my right hand,
Whose eyes my inmost substance see,
And labour on at thy command,
And offer all my works to thee.
- 4) Give me to bear thy easy yoke,
And every moment watch and pray,
And still to things eternal look,
And hasten to thy glorious day;
- 5) For thee delightfully employ
Whate'er thy bounteous grace has given,
And run my course with even joy,
And closely walk with thee to heaven.

Charles Wesley CCL No. 515642

Closing Prayer/Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, be among us and abide in us now and always. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.
Amen