

6th June 2021 – Morning Service

In or Out?

Rev Helen Croft

Call to Worship

Come, all of you, just as you are to worship. Whether today you feel strong or weak, full or empty, God welcomes you all into God's in-crowd. Come, just as you are, to worship.

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

Reading: Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.

I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Prayer¹

Holy God, Creator of Life, you call us out of our dark places, offering us the grace of new life.

When we see nothing but hopelessness, you surprise us with the breath of your spirit.

Call us out of our complacency and routines, set us free from our self-imposed bonds, and fill us with your spirit of life, compassion, and peace. In the name of Jesus, your anointed one, we pray. **Amen.**

StF 156 – From the breaking of the dawn

- 1) From the breaking of the dawn
To the setting of the sun,
I will stand on every promise of your word.
Words of power, strong to save,
That will never pass away;
I will stand on every promise of your word.
For your covenant is sure,
And on this I am secure:
I can stand on every promise of your word.
- 2) When I stumble and I sin,
Condemnation pressing in,
I will stand on every promise of your word.
You are faithful to forgive,
That in freedom I might live,
So I stand on every promise of your word.
Guilt to innocence restored;
You remember sins no more.
So I'll stand on every promise of your word.
- 3) When I'm faced with anguished choice
I will listen for your voice,
And I'll stand on every promise of your word.
Through this dark and troubled land,
You will guide me with your hand
As I stand on every promise of your word.
And you've promised to complete
Every work begun in me,
So I'll stand on every promise of your word.
- 4) Hope that lifts me from despair;
Love that casts out every fear
As I stand on every promise of your word.
Not forsaken, not alone,
For the Comforter has come,
And I stand on every promise of your word.
Grace sufficient, grace for me,
Grace for all who will believe.
We will stand on every promise of your word.

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend © 2005 Thankyou Music

CCL No. 515642

Reading: Mark 3:20-35

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.' And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.'

So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: 'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.'

He said this because they were saying, 'He has an impure spirit.' Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting round him, and they told him, 'Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.' 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle round him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'

Reflection

Before I entered into church ministry, I was a Civil Servant and part of my job was to interview managing directors and CEOs of companies. Many of them lauded it over their staff and felt they could do the same with me and my colleagues. For some of them, I also think being female didn't help. So on these occasions I used to 'power' dress – smart suit, heels, immaculate hair and make-up. It gave the impression that I could compete with them at their level. I pretended to be something that I wasn't. My outside didn't match up to my inside.

Prior to Covid, I'm sure there were many people living not how they wanted to – for some spending many hours working in order to keep their job, rather than spending the time at home with their family. But Covid brought to a head the many divisions and dissatisfaction that people had been feeling. We saw more clearly the various divisions that we probably already knew existed but maybe were too afraid to face and confront. We saw a divided economy yielding poverty and injustice, we saw a divided community bringing individualism, prejudice and violence. Jesus is the only one that can bring healing and wholeness to divided people and nations. Jesus came to show us a new way of being family and to build God's kingdom.

Now we need to remember in Jewish tradition, unlike our Western tradition, family was important. It was likely that you lived with your extended family in the same house, shared the same business, but today it's different. For example, I live over 150 miles away from my Dad and prior to moving here, I lived over 400 miles away and I'm sure I'm not the only one. But in Jesus' time, you would have been expected to live with or very near your family. So when Jesus' mother and brother comes to him and tries to encourage him to go with them, their motives were right, because they had a concern for Jesus' health and welfare. But if Jesus had gone with them, then he would have played right into the hands of the religious leaders – 'see, he agreed with his family – he needs help!'

Instead, Jesus uses this to teach a spiritual lesson – 'family' is made up of all those who do the will of God. Now Jesus wasn't suggesting that we ignore or abandon our families in order to serve God - only that we put God's will first above everything else in life. We must not permit even our loved ones to influence us away from the will of God. This new family will also be Kingdom builders. Those around at the time of Jesus had hoped that, when he came, he would defeat Rome. Instead, Jesus took 12 ordinary (mainly uneducated) men and founded a 'new nation' – a spiritual nation whose citizens had their names written down in heaven. It was to be made up of all those who trusted Jesus and did the will of God.

It will be a kingdom where we spiritually discern the will of God and we walk by faith and not sight. It is a kingdom where we discern the truth and that truth will determine what further truths God will teach us. It is a kingdom where Christ is stronger than anything that fragments our lives. It is a kingdom that brings love and forgiveness. It is a kingdom that will bring healing and wholeness not division and conflict. It is a kingdom where Christ will put our lives back together by the love of God and in so doing we will share this with others. It is a kingdom where we will have life and life to the full (John 10:10). It is a kingdom where we seek to serve and not be served. So, as we emerge from our Covid season, let us go forward as a Circuit and churches, building the kingdom of God by being family together and, for the sake of the kingdom of God, seeking his will and serving one another in love.

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. |

Prayers of Intercession²

Loving God, we are reminded that, in terms of this world's resources, we are the lucky ones – those with food in our belly and a roof over our head, with ample water and medicine, and with access to education, technology and so much else – our lives brimming over with good things.

Forgive us our complacency in the face of the world's evils, and our share in an order that not only perpetuates the divide between rich and poor, but actively widens the gap.

Hear now our prayer for the millions less fortunate than us – those for whom hunger is a daily reality and for whom a lifetime of poverty is all that the future seems to offer.

Teach us to give sacrificially in response to their need and, more than that, to work for change, doing all in our power to help build a fairer world until that day when your kingdom dawns and all wrongs are righted. We ask it in the name of Christ, who taught us to pray together saying.....

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 416 – There's a wideness in God's mercy

- 1) There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice
Which is more than liberty.
- 2) There is plentiful redemption
In the blood that has been shed;
There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the Head.
- 3) There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss.
- 4) For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of the mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.
- 5) But we make his love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify his strictness
With a zeal he will not own.
- 6) If our love were but more simple
We should take him at his word;
And our lives would be illumined
By the presence of our Lord.

Frederick William Faber CCL No. 515642

Closing prayer³

Loving God, You sent your Son into your world to gather us all into your kingdom. Be with us, as we hear and respond to your call to do the same. Amen

1: Written by Rev Nancy J

2: From 2000 Prayers for Public Worship by Nick Fawcett

3: From Roots