

# 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023 – Morning Service

Rev Peter Bradley

## Call to Worship

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

## StF 335 – Rejoice the Lord is King!

- 1) Rejoice, the Lord is King!  
Your Lord and King adore;  
Mortals, give thanks, and sing,  
And triumph evermore:
  - 2) Jesus the Saviour reigns,  
The God of truth and love;  
When he had purged our stains,  
He took his seat above:
  - 3) His kingdom cannot fail,  
He rules both earth and heaven;  
The keys of death and hell  
Are to our Jesus given:
  - 4) He sits at God's right hand  
Till all his foes submit,  
And bow to his command,  
And fall beneath his feet:
  - 5) Rejoice in glorious hope;  
Jesus the Judge shall come,  
And take his servants up  
To their eternal home:
- Ch) Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
Rejoice! Again I say: Rejoice!*
- E) We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;  
God's trumpet-call shall sound: Rejoice!*

*Charles Wesley*

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

All you angels in heaven,

**Praise the Lord!**

Sun, moon and stars,

**Praise the Lord!**

Fire and hail, wind and snow,

**Praise the Lord!**

Mountains and hills,

**Praise the Lord!**

Wild beasts and cattle,

**Praise the Lord!**

Young and old together,

**Praise the Lord!**

Let all creation

**Praise the lord! Amen.**

God of love, you have commanded us to love you with our whole being and to love one another.

We confess that we have turned away from you, with cold and indifferent hearts.

We have wandered from your ways and ignored your Spirit's voice.

We confess that we have not loved one another as Christ has loved us.

We have seen our brothers and sisters in need and yet refused to help.

We have compromised with injustice and failed to act with kindness.

God of love, forgive our failure to love. Make your face to shine upon us, and in your loving-kindness save us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## StF 519 – Father I place into your hands

- 1) Father, I place into Your hands  
The things I cannot do.  
Father, I place into Your hands  
The things that I've been through.  
Father, I place into Your hands  
The way that I should go,  
For I know I always can trust You.
- 2) Father, I place into Your hands  
My friends and family.  
Father, I place into Your hands  
The things that trouble me.  
Father, I place into Your hands  
The person I would be,  
For I know I always can trust You.
- 3) Father, we love to see Your face,  
We love to hear Your voice,  
Father, we love to sing Your praise  
And in Your name rejoice,  
Father, we love to walk with You  
And in Your presence rest,  
For we know we always can trust You.
- 4) Father, I want to be with You  
And do the things You do.  
Father, I want to speak the words  
That You are speaking too.  
Father, I want to love the ones  
That You will draw to You,  
For I know that I am one with You.

Jenny Hewer © 1975 Thankyou Music CCL No. 515642

## Reading: Genesis 8: 1-19

God had not forgotten Noah and all the animals with him in the boat; he caused a wind to blow, and the water started going down. The outlets of the water beneath the earth and the floodgates of the sky were closed. The rain stopped, and the water gradually went down for 150 days. On the seventeenth day of the seventh month the boat came to rest on a mountain in the Ararat range. The water kept going down, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains appeared. After forty days Noah opened a window and sent out a raven. It did not come back, but kept flying around until the water was completely gone. Meanwhile, Noah sent out a dove to see if the water had gone down, but since the water still covered all the land, the dove did not find a place to light. It flew back to the boat, and Noah reached out and took it in. He waited another seven days and sent out the dove again. It returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. So Noah knew that the water had gone down. Then he waited another seven days and sent out the dove once more; this time it did not come back.

When Noah was 601 years old, on the first day of the first month, the water was gone. Noah removed the covering of the boat, looked around, and saw that the ground was getting dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry. God said to Noah, "Go out of the boat with your wife, your sons, and their wives. Take all the birds and animals out with you, so that they may reproduce and spread over all the earth." So Noah went out of the boat with his wife, his sons, and their wives. All the animals and birds went out of the boat in groups of their own kind.

## StF 303 – I know that my Redeemer lives

- 1) I know that my Redeemer lives-  
What joy the blest assurance gives!  
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;  
He lives, my everlasting Head.  
He lives, my everlasting Head.
- 2) He lives, to bless me with his love;  
He lives, to plead for me above;  
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;  
He lives, to help in time of need.  
He lives, to help in time of need.
- 3) He lives, and grants me daily breath;  
He lives, and I shall conquer death;  
He lives, my mansion to prepare;  
He lives, to lead me safely there.  
He lives, to lead me safely there.
- 4) He lives, all glory to his name;  
He lives, my Saviour, still the same;  
What joy the blest assurance gives,  
I know that my Redeemer lives!  
I know that my Redeemer lives!

Samuel Medley

## **Reading: John 14:1-14**

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.'

Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.'

## **Sermon - 'God had not forgotten Noah.' Genesis 8: 1**

Phew! What a relief! God had not forgotten Noah. The different translations tackle this verse in Genesis in varied ways, all carrying subtle meanings. God took thought for, and God did not forget. Perhaps, though, that of the Good News Bible packs the real punch. God had not forgotten Noah. Although a link phrase put in by the story-teller, it was the message Noah needed to hear. To appreciate its full force, the story of Noah and the flood is best read at a sitting.

In today's reading, we only got the second half. We need to hear it as a whole, just as those who first heard it, told with all the dramatic tension of good story telling. Then we would begin to feel what Noah must have felt as the first rains came. The Arc floated and drifted as though crossing an endless ocean, twisting this way and that as eddies and whirlpools caught it. Days and weeks passing with no landfall in sight. No help at hand. Each counted new moon must have brought increased anxiety. None had ever been to sea before. Would they ever escape from this extra-ordinary journey into the unknown? They knew the ground beneath them when they floated off, but what was underneath them now? Maybe they shared the common human thought – God alone knows – followed quickly by the guilt-inducing question: Has God forgotten us?

How often this sense of remembering comes into our relationship with God, not least when things are dire! And surely there can't be many situations more dire than that of the two men who hung alongside Jesus on the Cross. Even though human bestiality seems to come up with new horrors in each generation, the Roman punishment of crucifixion takes a lot of beating. Intended to inflict unbearable pain, with the humiliation of being made a public spectacle, lifted high so that all could see, there were few more excruciating ways to die. But as that moment drew near, one of the men asked Jesus to remember him when that glorious day came and his kingdom was established. We don't know whether he was thinking in terms of some special favour. Perhaps he was echoing the prayer of the tax collector who came face to face with the Pharisees in the temple: God, have pity on me, a sinner. Maybe, he was simply offering his own prayer in extremis: Lord, in your mercy, remember me. That's a prayer that may resonate with many of us.

Being forgotten can be a devastating experience. The car was packed for the picnic, everyone piled in, full of excitement. It was not until they had gone some distance that someone realised that one of the children had been left behind.

They raced back to discover that the child had taken herself to bed with her comforter. For some years afterwards, whenever the family was going anywhere, she would plead, Mummy, please don't forget me.

To be forgotten is to have one's spirit crushed a little. In comparison to so many things it's very natural to feel insignificant, but that really comes home, and can leave us deeply hurt, diminished, when we are forgotten. Being remembered is so very important. Perhaps, though, there is an experience that is even more crushing. Jesus himself endured this when he was on the cross. For him, it felt that God had deliberately turned his face away, and forsaken him in the hour of his greatest need. No wonder he cried out. We need to understand the force of this to grasp something very important. God had not forgotten Jesus. The New Testament proclamation is not that Jesus rose from the dead. It is that God raised him from the dead. The resurrection itself is word in action, affirming that God had not forgotten. God does not forget.

Don't we really need to grasp the truth of this? Don't we really need to grasp it firmly simply because life is precisely what it is? Time and again situations arise in our own lives, to say nothing of happenings in the lives of those we know about, that bring the questions bubbling up from the depths within us. Even if humility makes us hesitate to call them our moments of dereliction, they emerge with disturbing power. We may not scream aloud the question – Where is God? – but oft-times we come close to it. Questions lodge in the mind and unsettle us. Doesn't God care? Has God gone off without us?

These questions are not new. Humanity has not changed much down the ages. Long ago, the people of Israel wrestled with just such issues. One possible solution was that God goes to sleep on the job. That would at least explain their continuing troubles. But no; not so, said the Psalmist: God neither slumbers nor sleeps. Part of our trouble is that our DNA does not carry all this from parent to child. Each generation, indeed each individual has to work these issues through for themselves. We cannot generically pass on a data bank of assured wisdom, or an inherent stimulus to an assured faith, in the same way that we can pass on familial characteristics or, sadly, various infirmities.

What we can pass on is the testimony of those who have tackled the issues before. So we receive the experience of those who have gone before us and, in particular, the witness of the scriptures. Both our Bible readings today in some way or other touch on this theme. Noah discovered that God had not forgotten him, and Jesus prepares his disciples for the time when, inescapably, they will feel they have lost him forever, indeed may even feel that, in choosing the way of the cross, he had thrown away everything that he had gained and abandoned them. Only later, would they discover just how wrong they were.

Jesus seemed to know exactly what they would be thinking, how the same old questions would hit them with fresh force. So, he offered them experience in advance of the event! What better way to affirm that he would not abandon them, nor forget them for one moment? They will feel utterly bereft but he is on a task on their behalf. I go to prepare a place for you. They will feel they have lost him for ever. Truth to tell, he says, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. He wanted them to experience the renewing power of the resurrection.

Of course, the penny didn't drop. So much so that when the experience became a reality, it astonished them. Praise be, then, that their surprise is part of the story that we have inherited. Praise be that their astonishment is part of what our ever-caring God has provided for us – even before we need it – to comfort us in our troubles. God had not forgotten Noah. And he will not forget you!

## StF 51 – Great is thy faithfulness

- 1) Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with thee  
Thou changest not, thy compassions  
they fail not;  
As thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:
- 2) Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:
- Ch) *Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness*  
*Morning by morning new mercies I see*  
*All I have needed thy hand hath provided*  
*Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*
- 3) Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Thomas O Chisholm © 1951 Hope Publishing Company

CCL No. 515642

## Prayers of Intercession

Lord, as you have called us to walk in your way, make us the people that you would have us be, guide us that we may do what you would have us do, that we may reveal your truth, and lead others to the fullness of life, that we may be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, that we may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

We pray for all who are in positions of authority, for all who will be called upon to make difficult decisions this week. We remember those who make decisions that affect the life of this planet. We pray for all who do research into healing and the renewal of the earth.

We pray for all who have enriched our lives, for all who have built up our community; for those who extended our vision, and for all who taught us the truth; for those who set us on a good path. We pray for our families and friends, for the people we work with and those we spend our leisure time with.

We pray for all who are confused about the truth, or about life, for all whose minds are disturbed, for all who have lost their way. We pray for all who live a lie and cannot face reality. We pray for all who are not at peace. We come to you with all who are troubled in heart.

Lord Christ, as you have gone before us and prepared a place for us, lead us until we come fully into your kingdom and walk before you in that life which is eternal. Father God, we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us, when we pray, to say:

## 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 470 – Lord for the years

- 1) Lord, for the years, your love has kept and guided,  
Urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
Sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.
- 2) Lord, for that Word, the Word of life  
which fires us,  
Speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze.  
Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,  
Lord of the Word, receive Your people's praise.
- 3) Lord, for our land, in this our generation,  
Spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;  
For young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.
- 4) Lord, for our world, when we disown  
and doubt Him,  
Loveless in strength and comfortless in pain;  
Hungry and helpless, lost indeed without Him,  
Lord of the world, we pray that  
Christ may reign.
- 5) Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,  
Self on the cross and Christ upon the throne.  
Past put behind us, for the future take us,  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

*Timothy Dudley-Smith    © Timothy Dudley-Smith    CCL No. 515642*

## Blessing

The good and gracious God guide you into the ways that lead to peace; and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you all this day, and for evermore. **Amen.**