

A service for 28th June, 2026 (StF)

Call to Worship: Psalm 13

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me for ever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me. Amen.

The Thirteenth Psalm displays King David's trust in the Lord's unfailing love, even in the depth of his trials and tribulations. We shall sing a hymn by Brian Doerksen, a Canadian singer-songwriter that echoes the Psalm. Hymn number 628, 'Faithful One, so unchanging,' We shall sing it through twice.

**Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you.
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm, your love is the anchor,
My hope is in you alone.**

© Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, Word of life throughout the universe, you first revealed yourself to human beings through your Law given to Moses and through the prophets, in order that we might know, love and serve you. However, when we rebelled against you and made ourselves your enemies, you displayed amazing grace and goodness by taking human form as Jesus Christ and living with us, not only to bring Good News in words and deeds of love which reveal your true nature, but to give his life at Calvary to pay the cost of the sins of the world. Through his resurrection, Jesus broke the power of sin and death and through the Holy Spirit he lives within each of us, encouraging, guiding and empowering us as we seek to serve in his name.

Thank you, O Lord, for all the good things that we enjoy, for the wide variety of blessings that you bestow on us: for everyone who has brought inspiration, love and joy into our lives and, especially, for loving us even when we are unloving, faithless and unlovable.

Merciful God, we confess that whilst you are holy and loving, our own lives are marred by our failure to live as you call us to. We say and do things that cause pain and offence; we spurn chances to help neighbours who are in need or distress and we are often neglectful in our discipleship, setting our own wants before the needs of others. We find it easier to condemn other than it is to forgive, even though we know how much sin offends you. We ask you to please help us change our ways, so that Christ is at the heart of all we do and say and, as we repent, we ask you to pardon us.

Gracious heavenly Father, we believe that you hear and answer our prayers, so we are confident that you have forgiven us and call us to serve you. From now on, let the Holy Spirit rule our words and deeds, so we live as you desire us to and use our gifts of the Spirit for the good of the Church and our neighbours, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

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.

We continue with a hymn about fellowship – sharing our life’s journey. It was written and composed by New Zealander Richard Gillard. It took him more than a year to complete, for he wrote the first verse in 1976 and the remainder in 1977. I think it was worth the wait! We shall sing hymn number 611, ‘Brother, sister, let me serve you’.

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

© Richard Gillard

In our prayers of intercession, for neighbours nearby and far away. Let us pray.

Almighty God, may the Holy Spirit enable us to serve you as you want us to by helping our neighbours and acting as your earthly hands, offering comfort, friendship and hope in Jesus’ name. Keep us active and diligent in our service, even if this means we are led from our comfort zone. Loving Lord, we know that some situations are beyond our scope, but nothing is impossible for you, so we pray that you will heal our wounded world by warming the hearts of people who possess greater power and influence than we do and inspiring them to reach out in compassion.

Lord of all, we pray that the leaders of nations learn to govern with justice and mercy, so their peoples may live in peace. Teach them to negotiate and compromise when disputes arise, to avoid disagreements from escalating into warfare. We pray for swift and just resolutions to conflicts in Ukraine, Palestine, Lebanon and Iran, Sudan,

Somalia, Congo and Myanmar. We pray too for victims not only of wars, but of terrorism, discrimination and persecution, remembering Jewish and Moslem communities under attack here in the United Kingdom and for communities affected by recent violent protests. Grant victims of hatred and intolerance the courage and support they need to find security and rebuild their lives.

Hear our prayer for people we know who are ill in body, mind, or spirit, recovering from injuries or operations, those who are troubled, anxious or lonely, people who live with a dementia, their carers and everybody who is bearing the pain of bereavement. In a period of silence, we pray for everyone we know who needs your help at this time

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Help us to reach out to them, Lord, offering them our friendship and practical support wherever possible, but we ask you to enfold them in the warmth of your redemptive love, so they may regain their health, find courage, hope and experience an enduring peace.

Lord God, we pray for our church, churches in our local Circuits and the World Church. May the Holy Spirit end our divisions and unite us in love and mission to bear good news to a world that dearly needs it. May the Christ light shine brightly through our words and actions as we seek to do his will, not only this week, but throughout our lives.

Abba, Father, bless us our families and our friends. Keep us free from harm and help us to share the abundance of your love with both friends and strangers, so we honour you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Old Testament reading is Jeremiah chapter 28 verses 5 to 9

Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD. He said,

"Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfil the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD'S house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognised as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true." Amen.

We continue our worship as we sing a hymn written in 1952 by George Briggs in answer to an appeal by the Hymn Society of America to celebrate the publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. We sing number 157, 'God has spoken – by his prophets', hopefully set to the lovely Welsh melody, "Hyfrydol".

**1. God has spoken – by his prophets,
Spoken his unchanging word,
Each from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
'Mid the world's despair and turmoil
One firm anchor holding fast:
God eternal reigns forever,
God the first and God the last.**

**2. God has spoken – by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
Brightness of the Father's glory,
With the Father ever one;
Spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time was born,**

Light from Light, to earth descending,
Christ, revealing God to all.

3. God is speaking – by the Spirit,
Speaking to our hearts again,
In the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations
One sure faith is standing fast;
God still speaks, the Word unchanging,
God the first and God the last.

© George Wallace Briggs (1875 – 1959)

Our Gospel reading is Matthew chapter 10 verses 40 to 42

"People who receive you receive me, and those who receive me receive the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous person because they are righteous will receive a righteous one's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because they are my disciples, I tell you the truth, they will certainly not lose their reward." Amen.

Our penultimate hymn was written by Marjorie Dobson, a Methodist local preacher from Country Durham. She was born in 1940 and became a local preacher when she was twenty. Reflect on her words and consider how we can serve Jesus as he calls us to – possibly in new ways. Hymn number 664, 'Lord, you call us to your service'. Hopefully, it will be sung to 'Angel Voices'.

1. Lord, you call us to your service,
Each in our own way.
Some to loving, caring, healing;
Some to preach, or pray;
Some to work with quiet learning,
Truth discerning,
Day by day.

2. Life for us is always changing
In the work we share.
Christian love adds new dimensions
To the way we care.
For we know that you could lead us,
As you need us,
Anywhere.

3. Seeing life from your perspective
Makes your challenge plain,
As your heart is grieving over
Those who live in pain.
Teach us how, by our compassion,
You may fashion
Hope again.

4. Lord, we set our human limits
On the work we do.
Send us your directing Spirit,
Pour your power through,

**That we may be free in living
And in giving
All for you.**

© *Marjorie Dobson (1940 – 2020)*

Sermon: *“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” Matthew 10: 40.* It may speak volumes about my character, but Jeremiah is one of my favourite prophets. He was called by the Lord between 16 and 20 years old, in the 13th year of **King Josiah, in 627 BC**, and served kings **Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah**, remaining until the destruction of Jerusalem in **586 BC**. At first he lived in **Anathoth**, and ventured to Jerusalem only for the great festivals; later he lived in Jerusalem, and was there during the terrible times of the siege and destruction of the city.

Today’s reading is set in August or September, 593BC, when Jeremiah rebuked the populist prophet, Hananiah. Four years earlier, the Babylonians had taken Jerusalem, deporting some Jews and putting Zedekiah as a puppet leader over the remainder, since when advisers had tried to encourage the king to form an alliance with Egypt, so Judah could rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah opposed the hot-heads and, as a result was hated by them. The would-be rebels began by calling Jeremiah, ‘Terror on every side’, then denounced him as a traitor and had him held first in a vile prison, then thrown into a slimy cistern from which he was saved by a courtier, **Ebed-Melech**.

The prophet Hananiah told the priests and congregation in the Temple that not only would the power of Nebuchadnezzar be broken within two years, but King Jehoiachin and the exiles would be returned with articles plundered from the Temple in 597. Jeremiah declared that he fervently hoped Hananiah’s prophecy was correct, but added that previous prophets had forecast war, starvation and disease, so people could only judge Hananiah’s declaration of peace if it was fulfilled in the course of time. Jeremiah was effectively telling the people that there would be no **‘quick-fix’**, much to Hananiah’s rage, for the slighted prophet tore off the wooden yoke from Jeremiah’s neck and broke it, signifying that the power of Babylon would similarly be broken. Six years later, Jeremiah was vindicated as Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple plundered and razed to the ground, while most of the population was led into exile. The Jews had not accepted or honoured God’s messenger and had thereby rejected the Lord himself.

The gospel reading follows Jesus’ instructions to the disciples before he sent them to spread the Good News, in deeds as well as words, to local towns and villages. Matthew probably intended that these words should be directed at people to whom the disciples went, rather than to the disciples themselves, for Jesus promised rewards to people who actively welcomed them. He went further, because he said, **“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”** What a thought that is: anybody who offers hospitality to the bearer of God’s message, effectively offers hospitality to Jesus and, by the same fact, offers it to God himself! After warning his followers earlier of the hardships and responsibilities they would face, Jesus was explaining what a privilege they carried, effectively serving as God’s ambassadors!

By welcoming the followers, people would be accepting God and his message of salvation, so they would receive a reward from the Lord, even if their hospitality was as limited as offering a disciple a cup of water, which is an act taken for granted in the Middle East and as such ordinarily merits no reward. The free offer of salvation is surely reward enough, yet Jesus suggested that welcomers would receive more.

Nowadays Christians frequently find our views challenged by society at large: Christ's Good News is often not accepted by an increasingly secular society because it does not offer instant gratification, or a 'quick-fix'. Just think of how politicians frequently offer quick-fixes when crises arise, or even 'oven-ready' solutions! How often is the general public misled by such offers? By comparison, Jesus challenges all-comers to look at themselves honestly, consider their relationships with God and with one another, then to consider what is happening around us in global terms. Whenever the Church has become involved in significant campaigns, such as nuclear disarmament, anti-apartheid, human rights, social justice, environmental issues, global terrorism and the plight of the world's poor, critics have often suggested we should keep our noses out of politics, but if we don't stand up for justice and mercy, then who will?

We may feel that we can do little as individuals, but even the equivalent of offering a cup of water – an outwardly insignificant act – can have greater effect than we might expect. In Johannesburg, during the early 1950s, a young black boy was walking along a road with his mother when they saw a white priest approaching them. Black people were expected to step into the gutter when a white person passed on the same pavement. Indeed, if they failed to do so, they would probably be shoved into the road by white men. However, before the boy and his mother could step into the road, the priest did so and raised his hat as a greeting. Soon afterwards the same priest was a regular visitor when that boy spent a long time in hospital. The priest's humility and kindness made such a deep impression on him that the boy offered himself for the priesthood. In time he rose to become Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who created and chaired the **Committee for Truth and Reconciliation**, which allowed those who had committed racial crimes during the apartheid era to confess their offences without retaliation. The Committee allowed a relatively peaceful transition to the Rainbow State, rather than the bloodbath that many had forecast. The white priest, who showed that God cares for all people by his actions and words, was Revd. Trevor Huddleston. Had they not met as they did, the course of South African history could have been vastly different, so we ought to remember to treat others as we'd like to be treated, because even simple acts of goodness can produce surprising results.

Let us, therefore, not set aside kingdom values in favour of quick-fixes, or cheap popularity. Let us continue to campaign for a better world, even when it means making sacrifices, for without sacrifices change will not happen. And if you hesitate at the idea of making sacrifices, think of the sacrifice Christ made for our redemption! **May we remember that we are God's ambassadors whose words and deeds should reflect the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, so people we meet are encouraged to receive him as their Saviour and friend, too. Amen.**

Our closing hymn was written by Jacqueline Jones, a contemporary Christian singer-songwriter, originally from South Africa, who was based in the United Kingdom for 5 years, but now lives in Christchurch, New Zealand and is enjoying the role of vicar's wife – at least I hope she is! We shall sing hymn number 662, 'Have you heard God's voice: has your heart been stirred?'

1. Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?

Are you still prepared to follow?

Have you made a choice to remain and serve,

Though the way be rough and narrow? Chorus:

Will you walk the path that will cost you much

And embrace the pain and sorrow?

*Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
The disciples of tomorrow?*

**2. Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
When the multitudes are silent?**

**Will you make a choice to stand your ground
When the crowds are turning violent? *Chorus:***

**3. In your city streets will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?**

**Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,
Will you share your faith with the faithless? *Chorus:***

**4. Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
And believe it could be different?**

**Will you share your views using words of grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint? *Chorus:***

*We will walk the path that will cost us much
And embrace the pain and sorrow.*

*We will trust in One who entrusts to us
The disciples of tomorrow.*

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Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.