

A service for 6th July, 2025 (StF)

Call to Worship: Psalm 30 verses 4 and 5

Sing to the LORD, you saints of his; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. Amen.

Our opening hymn was written in 1979 to celebrate the bi-centenary of John Wesley's preaching in Paradise Square, Sheffield. The words and melody of this one were composed during a train journey between London and Chesterfield and it was inspired by the opening of the 1933 "Methodist Hymn Book", which reads 'Methodism was born in song.' The author, Revd. Brian Hoare was New Testament Tutor at Cliff College and in 1979 he was serving as a member of the main committee that created "Hymns and Psalms". We shall sing hymn number 21, 'Born in song'.

1. Born in song!

God's people have always been singing.

Born in song!

Hearts and voices raised.

So today we worship together;

God alone is worthy to be praised.

2. Praise to God!

For he is the one who has made us.

Praise to God!

We his image bear.

Heaven and earth are full of his glory;

Let creation praise him everywhere.

3. Christ is King!

He left all the glory of heaven.

Christ is King!

Born to share in our pain;

Crucified, for sinners atoning,

Risen, exalted, soon to come again.

4. Sing the song!

God's Spirit is poured out among us.

Sing the song!

He has made us anew.

Every member part of the Body;

Given his power, his will to seek and do.

5. Tell the world!

All power to Jesus is given.

Tell the world!

He is with us always.

Spread the word, that all may receive him;

Every tongue confess and sing his praise.

6. Then the end!

Christ Jesus shall reign in his glory.

Then the end

**Of all earthly days.
Yet above the song will continue;
All his people still shall sing his praise.**

© *Brian Hoare (born 1935)*

Let us pray.

Creator God, we come to worship you this morning as we acknowledge your might and wisdom displayed all around us. We rejoice in the beauty and complexity of life here on earth, the vastness of space with its myriad galaxies moving according to your will. We are astonished that you should care for feeble, insignificant and flawed humankind, yet we know that you have sought to draw us into such a close relationship where we can call you, 'Abba', 'daddy'. Despite our sinfulness, you have reached out to us from the beginning of our history and you love us so much that you sent our Lord Jesus into the world to share our lives and experiences, so he could bring us Good News of Salvation. Through his death and resurrection, you have broken the power of sin and death over us and you live within us as the Holy Spirit, our guide, encourager and strength. May we pray to you in faith, sing your praise with gratitude, and listen to your word with eagerness, for we worship and adore your Holy Name.

We are here to thank you for this beautiful world over which you have given us stewardship. We ask a blessing on people who have loved, inspired and guided us through our lives and thank you, too, for all the good things that we enjoy, including opportunities and experiences that enrich our lives. Help us to count our blessings, for they sustain us when times are difficult, reminding us of your boundless love.

However, merciful God, in the face of your goodness and holiness, we know our own lives fall short of what we and you would have them be. In sadness we acknowledge that we have sinned against you in what we have thought, said and done. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and turn away from what is wrong, asking you to forgive us for the sake of our Lord Jesus.

Gracious loving Lord, we believe that you have not only heard our prayer, but have breathed forgiveness over us. May the Holy Spirit warm our hearts, so we love and serve both you and our neighbours with joyful, faithful hearts, in Jesus' beautiful 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 shall sing a hymn written by Revd. Bryn Rees in 1974. He was the Minister at Tetherdown URC, Muswell Hill, London at the time and his organist, Gerald Barnes composed one of four melodies for the hymn which, naturally, is called "Tetherdown"! Hymn number 255, 'The kingdom of God is justice and joy'.

- 1. The kingdom of God is justice and joy,
For Jesus restores what sin would destroy;
God's power and glory in Jesus we know,
And here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.**
- 2. The kingdom of God is mercy and grace,
The lepers are cleansed, the sinners find place,
The outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share,**

And hope is awakened in place of despair.

**3. The kingdom of God is challenge and choice,
Believe the Good News, repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross,
Our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.**

**4. The kingdom is come, the gift and the goal,
In Jesus begun, in heaven made whole;
The heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call,
And all things cry glory to God all in all!**

© Bryn Rees {1911 – 1983}

***In our prayers of intercession, we bring our concern for people nearby and far
away unto the Lord. Let us pray.***

Loving God, although we live on a wonderful and self-sustaining planet, we hear about so much pain and suffering, here and abroad, that we are driven to despair, especially as so many of the issues result from humankind's failure to care for our neighbours. Whilst we offer ourselves to play what part we can in repairing some of the brokenness around us, we know that our powers are limited. Nevertheless, we believe that all things are possible for you, so we pray that you will warm the hearts of people with greater power and influence and inspire them to bring about changes that rectify the results of mankind's cruelty, folly, exploitation and indifference.

Lord of all, we pray for our church, all the churches in our Circuit and, indeed, for the World Church. May the living Spirit rekindle our desire to share good news with our neighbours, both locally and further afield in words and acts of love. Teach us to speak of the grace and glory of Christ Jesus with one voice and serve him in unity of mission, so we bring others to know and serve him.

Heavenly Father, we bring you our concerns about wars currently being waged in many parts of the world, particularly conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and the West Bank and between Israel and Iran, but also in Myanmar, Congo, Sudan and Somalia. We grieve at the suffering caused by war that we see in the Media: destruction, injury, death and displacement, resulting from our inability to co-exist peacefully with neighbours. This is all the more appalling as we commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the end of the Second World, yet seem to have failed to learn the need for peace. May the Holy Spirit help the leaders of all nations to recognize that negotiation and compromise are far better than taking up arms when disputes arise. May the same Spirit bring about just and lasting settlements to the conflicts we have named and for your shalom to be bestowed on all nations.

Heavenly Father, we bring to you our fears that global warming is already threatening the ability of our planet to sustain life into the future, so we pray that governments, businesses and people in general will learn to use earth's resources carefully, recycle more and waste less for the sake of future generations. Help us to act now, to play our part in caring for the environment, so we honour our responsibilities as stewards of the planet.

Jesus is the Lord of shalom, the source of healing and well-being, so we pray for neighbours who are ill in body, mind or spirit, for those brought low by loneliness, fear or need and everybody who is experiencing the agony of bereavement. Wherever possible, Lord, empower us to offer support and friendship to them. In a time of silence, we remember friends and neighbours for whom we are especially concerned.....
Loving Lord, embrace them with the warmth and power of your love, so they may be healed, encouraged, granted both reassurance and an enduring peace.

Abba, Heavenly Father, bless us, our families and friends. Keep us safe in your care and help us lead Christ-centred lives, sharing the love you give in such abundance with all-comers and trusting in your grace and goodness evermore. Amen.

We sing a hymn written by Cecil Frances Alexander, the wife of a Nineteenth Century Irish bishop of Derry and Raphoe. She was a devoted Sunday School teacher and founded a school for deaf children. Hymn number 250, 'Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult'

1. Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult
Of our life's wild restless sea,
Day by day His clear voice soundeth,
Saying, "Christian, follow me."

2. As of old apostles heard it
By the Galilean lake
Turned from home and toil and kindred,
Leaving all for His dear sake.

3. Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store:
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying, "Christian, love me more."

4. In our joys and in our sorrows,
Days of toil, and hours of ease,
Still He calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than these."

5. Jesus calls us! By Thy mercies,
Saviour, may we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,
Serve and love Thee best of all.

© Cecil Frances Alexander (1818 – 1895)

The Gospel reading is Luke chapter 10 verses 1 to 11 and 16 to 20

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.'

They who listen to you listen to me; those who reject you reject me; but they who reject me reject him who sent me."

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

He replied,

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Amen.

We continue our worship with a hymn written by John Bell and the late Graham Maule of the Iona Community. They often set hymns to Scots ballad tunes, in this case “Kelvingrove”. We shall sing number 673, ‘Will you come and follow me,’

1. Will you come and follow me

If I but call your name?

Will you go where you don’t know

And never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown,

Will you let my name be known,

Will you let my life be grown

In you, and you in me?

2. Will you leave yourself behind

If I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind

And never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare

Should your life attract or scare,

Will you let me answer prayer

In you, and you in me?

3. Will you let the blinded see

If I but call your name?

Will you set the pris’ners free,

And never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean

And do such as this unseen,

And admit to what I mean

In you, and you in me?

4. Will you love the ‘you’ you hide

If I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside,

And never be the same?

Will you use the faith you’ve found

To reshape the world around

Through my sight and touch and sound / In you, and you in me?

5. Lord, your summons echoes true

When you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you,

And never be the same.

In your company I’ll go

Where your love and footsteps show.

Thus, I’ll move and live and grow

In you, and you in me.

© John Bell (b. 1949) & Graham Maule (1958 – 2020)

Sermon: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” Luke 10:18

Fifty years ago, when I was an officer in the Air Training Corps, any activity undertaken by my cadets had to be planned in fine detail, equipment double-checked, emergency plans set out and safety advice followed – not because Health and Safety rules were as stringent then as they are now, but because I knew that the buck stopped with me. If anybody was hurt as a result of an oversight, I knew I could face a Court Martial. Looking at the passage from Luke, it appears at first glance that when Jesus sent out seventy-two followers – seventy in some translations – his planning was negligible. Seventy would be a parallel of the number of helpers appointed for Moses in the wilderness; seventy-two the number of nations of the world in Genesis 10. He told the disciples, **“Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.”**

The followers’ mission was to go to the towns Jesus intended to visit to prepare them for his teaching. He warned them that it was dangerous and urgent work: there was no time to waste in idle chatter on their way. Like harvesters, they had to complete their work as quickly as possible – and pray that others would support their mission. However, when Christ told them not to take money, extra clothing or spare sandals, he was telling them to trust in God’s provision, rather than in their own resources and strength – an important lesson for us all, because we should never forget that we must rely on God’s grace, not our own ability and possessions when we seek to serve him. In effect, the seventy-two were being told to work outside their **‘comfort zone’**, where faith would uphold them in their real vulnerability and where the people they met would have an opportunity to be generous in their hospitality. Moreover, they were to accept the first offer of shelter and not seek a better billet, if they saw one during their stay.

Luke’s message to his contemporaries and us is this: if we want to serve Christ Jesus, we must not waste time; we must pray for and engage others, if possible, to help our mission; we must learn to depend on one another and on God’s grace, rather than on our own skills and resources; we should be willing to travel light, to rid ourselves of anything that is an encumbrance and, most of all, to be willing to leave our comfort zones, to take risks for the Lord. Don’t forget that the **Wesleys, George Whitefield** and other early Methodists left the security of church buildings to preach in the open to crowds of unruly roughs, some of whom hurled stones or vegetables at the preacher, or indulged in **‘rolling preachers in the mud’** – apparently a most popular sport in Northern England. Indeed, John Wesley was nearly thrown from a bridge in Walsall during the Wednesbury Riots of 1743 – he was only saved by an ex-prize fighter who carried him to safety on his shoulders. Wesley wrote this of crowds at Cradley and Stourbridge: **“Many of my hearers were wild as colts untamed, but the bridle was in their mouths.”** No comfort zones there, then.

It is very easy for churches to become inward-looking as numbers decline and survival seems the most important issue. However, we need to look for ways to serve the greater community, by co-operating with other churches or community groups, even in small ways. For several years my wife and I admired the tenacity and dedication of an eighty-year-old Salvationist who distributed “War Cry” and collected funds at the Kings Square in West Bromwich – he was a witness for Christ in that town. There are risks, but unless we make ourselves vulnerable, we won’t make a difference. If you wonder why we should make ourselves vulnerable, remember what Christ did in order to show his

Father's true nature; he made himself wholly vulnerable when he died on a cross for all our sins. You ask how much God loves us: as much as this...! (extend arms). All we need is faith!

May our faith in Christ Jesus empower us to go outside our comfort zone, just like the seventy-two; may it help us to see our neighbours as individuals with needs, irrespective of their faith, colour, gender, or politics, just as Jesus saw the needs of everybody he met. Lord, grant us the faith to show our neighbours the same kind of love, for if they can see Jesus' grace shining through our words and deeds, trust can be cemented, new relationships formed and God glorified. Amen.

Our closing hymn was written by Charles Wesley in 1749, one of a number hymns headed "Hymns for a Preacher of the Gospel". It was written when Charles was suffering with depression, but elder brother, John, edited it in such a way that it is a hymn full of conviction, well-suited to any preacher! Hymn number 661, 'Give me the faith which can remove / And sink the mountain to a plain'.

**1. Give me the faith which can remove
And sink the mountain to a plain;
Give me the child-like praying love,
Which longs to build thy house again;
Thy love, let it my heart o'erpower,
And all my simple soul devour.**

**2. I would the precious time redeem,
And longer live for this alone;
To spend, and to be spent, for them
Who have not yet my Saviour known;
Fully on these my mission prove,
And only breathe, to breathe thy love.**

**3. My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord,
Into thy blessed hands receive;
And let me live to preach thy word,
And let me to thy glory live;
My every sacred moment spend
In publishing the sinners' friend.**

**4. Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart
With boundless charity divine;
So shall I all my strength exert,
And love them with a zeal like thine;
And lead them to thy open side,
The sheep for whom their Shepherd died.**

© Charles Wesley {1707 – 1788}

Benediction

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