

Worship for Sunday 18th October 2020

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Call to Worship Psalm 96 v 1 – 9

*Sing a new song to the LORD! Sing to the LORD, all the world!
Sing to the LORD, and praise him! Proclaim every day the good news that he
has saved us. Proclaim his glory to the nations, his mighty deeds to all
peoples. The LORD is great and is to be highly praised;
Glory and majesty surround him; power and beauty fill his Temple.
Praise the LORD, all people on earth; praise his glory and might.
Praise the LORD's glorious name; bring an offering and come into his Temple.
Bow down before the Holy One when he appears;
tremble before him, all the earth!*

Love the Lord your God. Love your neighbour as you love yourself.
We worship God who loves us and inspires our love for others.

Hymn: StF 34 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

- 1 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
 bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
 with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
 kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!
- 2 Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,
 high on his heart he will bear it for you,
 comfort your sorrows and answer your prayerfulness,
 showing the pathway your feet should pursue.
- 3 Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
 of the poor wealth you would count as your own;
 truth it its beauty and love in its tenderness,
 these are the offerings to bring to his throne.
- 4 These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
 he will accept for the name that is dear;
 mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
 trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.
- 5 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
 bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
 with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
 kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!

John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875)

Prayer of Adoration

We praise you, wonderful God, for your wisdom.
You have given us laws for life,
 which are set out for the good of all.

You have given us your love for life,
 so that we may enjoy life in all its fullness.
Your wisdom is wiser than ours,
 your laws greater than any human law,
 your love stronger than any human love.
In Jesus you have set us a supreme example to follow,
by the Spirit you have given us the strength to obey.
Creator God, may our lives be lived in righteousness
 as an example to all. **Amen**

Prayer of Confession

Great God, we know that a righteous life is not just
 a matter of obeying the right rules, following the laws of the land.
A godly life means we have to love you and love our neighbours.

We ask for your forgiveness
 for the many times we have broken your commands:
 when we have put ourselves before others,
 when we have followed our own way and not yours,
 when our love for others has been feeble,
 and we have not expressed our love for you.

Forgive us, renew us, fill us with your Spirit,
 so that we can live under your authority
 and acknowledge you as the only Lord of our lives.

Then everyone will say 'what a wise and understanding people
the church is!' and come to know you as the Lord their God. **Amen**

Reading Isaiah 45 v 1 - 11

The LORD has chosen Cyrus to be king. He has appointed him to conquer
nations; he sends him to strip kings of their power; the LORD will open the
gates of cities for him.
To Cyrus the LORD says, "I myself will prepare your way, levelling mountains
and hills. I will break down bronze gates and smash their iron bars. I will give
you treasures from dark, secret places; then you will know that I am the LORD
and that the God of Israel has called you by name. I appoint you to help my
servant Israel, the people that I have chosen. I have given you great honour,
although you do not know me.
"I am the LORD; there is no other god. I will give you the strength you need,
although you do not know me. I do this so that everyone from one end of the

world to the other may know that I am the LORD and that there is no other god. I create both light and darkness; I bring both blessing and disaster. I, the LORD, do all these things. I will send victory from the sky like rain; the earth will open to receive it and will blossom with freedom and justice. I, the LORD, will make this happen."

Does a clay pot dare argue with its maker, a pot that is like all the others? Does the clay ask the potter what he is doing? Does the pot complain that its maker has no skill?

Do we dare say to our parents, "Why did you make me like this?"

The LORD, the holy God of Israel, the one who shapes the future, says:

"You have no right to question me about my children or to tell me what I ought to do! I am the one who made the earth and created human beings to live there. By my power I stretched out the heavens; I control the sun, the moon, and the stars."

Hymn StF 714 The God who sings a new world into being

- 1 The God who sings a new world into being shows the way for many voices, varied gifts to sound in symphony.
- 2 The God who shouts in fury when the powerful shame the poor will break the chains, and those who hide in fear he will restore.
- 3 The God who weeps when fields lie barren and the missiles fall throws wide his arms and offers in his love refuge for all.
- 4 The God who laughs as unexpected overturns routine releases us to risk in faith, and find what joy can mean.
- 5 The God who calls in hearts of those who hear his Chosen One forgives, transforms. empowers, renews us while we journey on.

Douglas Galbraith © Panel on Worship of the Church of Scotland

Reading Matthew 22 v 15 - 22

The Pharisees went off and made a plan to trap Jesus with questions. Then they sent to him some of their disciples and some members of Herod's party. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you tell the truth. You teach the truth about God's will for people, without worrying about what others think, because you pay no attention to anyone's status. Tell us, then, what do you think? Is it against our Law to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor, or not?" Jesus, however, was aware of their evil plan, and so he said, "You hypocrites! Why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin for paying the tax!" They brought him the coin, and he asked them, "Whose face and name are these?" "The Emperor's," they answered. So Jesus said to them, "Well, then, pay to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay to God what belongs to God." When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Address

Having just completed my Income Tax self-assessment for 2019-2020 I am very aware of money issues this week. Similarly, I know the church and Circuit treasurers have been working hard to finalise their accounts for the last year. In Lockdown there have been definite winners (as usual the biggest investors seem to have made money!) and losers (those who have been made redundant because Covid has forced their workplace to close), and then many people whose situation is complicated as they have spent less on holidays, travel to work and meals out but also have been furloughed and only got 80% or more recently 60% of their usual wage. What then do we render to Caesar and what to God?

The Pharisees were again seeking to catch Jesus out, with a question that they thought would cause him to condemn himself by his reply. But, of course, Jesus gets the better of them by putting the coin back into their pocket and asking them to decide where it ought to go. Have they actually been too involved in the Roman economy, looking after their own interests, rather than focussing on God and giving their offering to the Temple? It reminds me of the old joke about the church treasurer saying at the Church Council, "I have good news and bad news". "The good news is that we have enough money to pay all our bills and some left over for the mission of the church, the bad news is that it is still in your bank accounts".

Every day we, potentially, face a question about how we spend our money. Whether we are mega rich or super poor we have to make choices, because we control the money we have. In normal times, if we are rich it may be which car to buy or where to travel on holiday; if we are poor it may be a choice between food or shelter. In these unusual times it may be that we need to consider the needs of others before we do our routine things. You may have had letters from charities, theatres or tourist attractions, all begging for money to help them cope without their usual takings from visitors. Churches too have not been exempt from anxiety, though it seems that offering income has generally kept up, places have lost out from the lack of the income from bookings.

But if we are honest that is not really addressing the question that Jesus faced. How we spend our money is but a detail in the more significant question about what do we owe and to whom. I pay my taxes and benefit from the Government supported activities such as the Health Service. It is hard to put a value on that currently, it could mean the difference between life and death for me or so many other people. But it is God who gives me so much more than material wealth. I can't truly repay what I owe God, for the salvation offered through the gift of the Son Jesus. God gives free grace, asking nothing of me save that I love God, and love my neighbour as myself (see the continuation of Matthew chapter 22, which will be covered in next week's reading). To paraphrase the Isaiah reading: can a clay pot ever fully recompense the potter for creating it?

Hymn StF 243 There is a new heaven, there is a new earth

- 1 A rich young man came seeking — God's kingdom was his aim.
The law had been his guidebook. His life was free from blame.
But Jesus asked the courage to give his wealth away.
The young man turned in sorrow, that price he could not pay.
- 2 The rich men's gifts were lavish and made for public show.
The widow's gift was humble and only God would know,
in giving to the Temple, although her coins were small,
her gift had so much meaning because she gave her all.
- 3 One boy brought loaves and fishes, no other food was there,
but Jesus fed the thousands and still had bread to spare.
The miracle of plenty soon spread beyond that place.
That simple gift was offered, then multiplied by grace.
- 4 Lord, keep our care for money from turning into greed.
Help us to use it wisely to meet each other's need.
For whether poor or wealthy, we have so much to share
and open-hearted giving will show your loving care.

Marjorie Dobson (born 1940)

Prayers of Intercession

God of majesty, your glory and power fill the earth and the heavens.
You are the giver of every good thing, worthy of all worship and praise.

We pray that we may offer you our worship through the things that we do.
Turning aside from the idols of power, wealth and success
may we worship you by pursuing freedom, justice and opportunities for all.
*At this time of pandemic, we pray for the leaders of the nations
That in their decision making they might be guided by your wisdom and
concern for all your children.*

Glorious God: **we will worship you alone.**

We pray that we may worship you in the things that we say.
turning aside from the idols of popularity, conformity and cynicism
may we worship you by speaking of goodness, forgiveness and love.
*At this time of worry and anxiety about the coming days
May we, by our words, offer comfort to the sick, fearful or lonely.*
Glorious God: **we will worship you alone.**

We pray that we may worship you by being the people that you call us to be:
turning aside from the idols of appearance, cleverness and self
may we worship you by leading lives radiant with humble, self-giving love.
Glorious God: **we will worship you alone.**

We pray that we may worship you in every part of our lives,
for everything belongs to you, creating, sustaining, life-giving God.
Glorious God: **we will worship you alone.**

In the name of Jesus, who by his life, death and rising again,
revealed the true glory of God. **Amen.**

Offering Prayer

We offer our money to God in gratitude for all we have received.
Lord, take these coins of the realm, marked with the head of the Queen,
and use them to spread the realm of your holy kingdom. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn StF 566 Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee

- 1 Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee;
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.
- 2 Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.
- 3 Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from thee.
- 4 Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.
- 5 Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart—it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.
- 6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Frances R Havergal (1836–1879)

Blessing

We brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out.
You, Lord, have made us stewards of all we possess.
May we prove trustworthy in handling our material wealth
so that we may be blessed with the riches of heaven.
May the blessings of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be ours today and always. Amen