



Worship at Home

Order of Service for Sunday 7th February 2020

Call to Worship

The Lord heals the broken-hearted,
and binds up their wounds.
The Lord determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
Great is our Lord, and abundant in power.
(Psalm 147 vv3-5)

Hymn: Be Still: STF 18

Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.

In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.

Anonymous
Based on Psalm 46: 10-11

Let us pray together

Creator God, we marvel at all that you have made, from vast galaxies to tiny flowers, from mountains and forests to the delicacy of a spider's web. We marvel too that in your generosity you have given us the gift of creativity, we weave new materials out of old bottles and tyres, we find new ways to tell your age-old story of redemption and we learn new ways to heal and prevent disease.

Father forgive us that we have been arrogant and misused this gift of creativity, we have exploited the earth and each other, and cared only for ourselves. Teach us how to care for one another and the world as you care for us, that your will may be done and your kingdom come.

Assurance of forgiveness:

Here is good news: Jesus came into the world to save sinners to accept us as we are, set us free from evil's power and enable us to live new lives in him. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament: Isaiah 40: 21-31

Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 1 vv 29-39

Hymn: STF 89

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord.
Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord.

You are the everlasting God,
the everlasting God.
You do not faint, you won't grow weary.
You're the defender of the weak,
you comfort those in need;
you lift us up on wings like eagles.

Our God, you reign forever.
Our hope, our strong deliverer.

Brenton Brown and Ken Riley

Reflection

**A Reflection by the President of the Conference:
the Revd Richard Teal based on Joshua 1:9**

A short text this morning from the Old Testament and Joshua 1:9 “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid, do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go”. The book of Joshua takes the story of Israel's history forward from the death of Moses through to the conquest of Canaan, through eventually to the death of Joshua. Joshua himself was born in Egypt, he became Moses' right-hand man during the exodus and desert wanderings, is a fine military commander. In the law giving at Sinai he was Moses companion and Joshua is one of the twelve spies sent on ahead by Moses to look at the Promised Land. When Moses dies, Joshua was an obvious choice to succeed him in leading the nation into the Promised Land ,and the account of Joshua's accession is one of the great chapters in the Bible.

As we heard, what a huge responsibility of leadership is placed upon him, the task is enormous. He possibly would feel overwhelmed and who could blame him but the word of the Lord comes to him: “Be strong and courageous do not be afraid do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go,” so Joshua takes up the mantle of leadership with this assurance from God on his heart.

Now courage is very interesting word. It can mean to be confident enough to do what you believe in, have the courage of your convictions, the ability to control your fear in a difficult situation and so on. Indeed God's word to Joshua to be courageous comes to him three times in the bible reading we had, so how does this word about courage relate not just to Joshua but to us in our daily walk with the Lord indeed in our discipleship? Briefly three things:

First, courage rests upon walking by faith. The issue before Joshua was a call to be courageous in view of him taking up the mantle of leadership. God was calling him to a very special and difficult role. Joshua is being called to be courageous. Moses has died and now Joshua is to take over that important leadership role and lead the people after their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness into the Promised Land. Joshua knew what was required of him. How does that make you feel? Do you know what God requires of you?

Some people will ,others won't be as sure. We walk by Faith and not by sight. To entrust yourself to God and to live faithfully while not knowing how it will turn out are marks of a very deep kind of trust and faith rather than having everything mapped out. To be courageous in faith is to believe that God has his plan for each of us and that is enough, and to be courageous is to live as if that is enough.

Secondly, courage rests upon the assurance of God's presence. Joshua had been called to a mighty task. No way could he do it at his own strength and he knew it. God does not leave Joshua high and dry. If God calls then be assured of his presence. The Presidential Theme, as you may know, for this year is the words of John Wesley: “**The best of all is God is with us**”.

There lay Wesley in his bedroom in City Road London surrounded by family and friends. He'd slept much, he was frail, he has very little strength left. Then, all of a sudden, he sat up in bed and said so very clearly and strongly “**The best of all is God is with us**”. In his is dying moments what an assurance he had! What an affect that must have had upon those gathered in his room!

You see, God is not remote, aloof, somewhere else beyond, but actually *with us*. The incarnation reminds us more than anything else that God is not abstract, outside of us, unknown, remote, that came alongside us in the only way possible. The tiny newborn life of a baby, and what a dramatic affect a new baby has. In the vast majority of cases it is a source of great joy. The infant Christ coming declares the great love God has for us all, every soul on this wonderful fragile, dangerous planet. We are not alone Emmanuel, God is with us, *is with us* and whatever we have to face, and indeed Joshua had much, we can be assured of God's presence. As God speaks to Joshua "do not be terrified do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go". The truth of those words to Joshua are just as real to us and for us today in our journey of faith.

And finally, courage is anchored by the word of God. In verse eight of our reading these words are to be found: "Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night so that you will be careful to do everything written it". A Lutheran pastor and Norwegian was arrested by the Gestapo in the Second World War. He was brought to the interrogation room and the Gestapo officer placed his revolver on the table between them and said "This is just to let you know that we are serious". The pastor instinctively pulled out his Bible and laid it alongside the revolver. "Why did you do that?" demanded the officer. The pastor replied "You laid out your weapon - so did I".

When Johnathon Sax was the chief rabbi he said "The Bible isn't a book to be read and put down. It's God's invitation to join the conversation between Earth and Heaven, that began at Mount Sinai and has never ever ceased" The bottom line is that God changes lives through the Bible. Untold numbers of people have been picked up, turned around and set off in a new and hopeful path for encountering God's word to them. They have been given the courage which inspired them to radical service all over the world. They've been given courage to change the face of society over slavery education, factory acts, because of what they have found in those pages. They have claimed words of courage that there has been nothing else to hang onto. They have been given courage to keep on moving when the Easter experience has seemed so far away.

The Bible is a book of encounter and shared experience it should never be put on a pedestal, it has no need for one. Rather it is to be befriended as a companion to faith where we find sustaining courage and challenging courage for that journey of faith. We started with Joshua and his call to an enormous responsibility. The Lord often encouraged for that task. As disciples of Jesus Christ that same courage is offered to us in our living and to live by Faith is to accept it. Amen.

A time of prayer

Loving God, we pray for the community and country of which we are a part. For those who are exhausted with caring for others and long for a break. For those who have had enough of restrictions, of not being able to meet with friends and family, and feel they cannot stand it any longer, and for those who are angry and frightened, who feel their only hope is just to try and hang on until things get better.

Loving God, we pray for the leaders of the world, as they try and bring the pandemic under control.

Give them the wisdom and courage to respect every human life and seek freedom, justice and peace for all people.

Loving God we pray for the church, unite us by your Spirit, and enable us to witness to the hope we have in you.

Loving God, come to us now, as you have come to your people in every age. We thank you for all who have reflected the light of Christ. Help us to follow their example and bring us with them to live for ever in your kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: We Cannot Measure How You Heal STF 655

We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.

The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends

the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.

So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind, and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain
and make your broken people whole.

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)

A prayer of blessing

May God, the giver of hope, fill us with all joy and peace because we trust in him, and the blessing of God Father, Son and Holy spirit be with us all. Amen

Original Materials by Jean Ware