

Worship at home 21 March 2021

Welcome and introduction Welcome to worship at home. None of us are able to gather in church for worship and each one of us has found a way to be part of the body of Christ, while physically apart. There are so many ways that we are connected even though we are not together. Between 100 and 200 people watch each of these recorded services, some of them will be watching as you are watching, taking part as you are taking part. I thought recently that we are all connected by the nature we see around us. Every thing that we see was created by the God we worship, blessed by God as good in God's sight and each one of us is also a part of Creation, blessed by God as good. So as all creation is connected, we are connected with each other and with the world we see around us. Today we are thinking about being a part of the worldwide church, connected across the world and throughout history, brothers and sisters in Christ, part of God's family, here and now, no matter how far away our own friends and families are right now.

Hymn **Morning has broken**

Morning has broken, like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word.

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day.

Prayer of Adoration Loving Lord beyond all time, we praise and worship you. You are the one who came, who comes and who is to come. You came to us in Jesus, revealing your love and compassion, your power, your truth and your nature, which wholly and ceaselessly gives of yourself. You come to us in the presence of the Holy Spirit, leading us to Jesus, empowering us for service, granting us precious gifts, producing the fruits of your Spirit in each one of us, keeping us in your peace and being ever faithful to us. You will come to us at the end of the ages, at the full realisation of your kingdom, when your work in us will be complete and when love will reign eternally. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship you. Amen
(Geoff Floyd, supernumerary Minister, N Wiltshire Circuit.)

Time of reconciliation

Psalm 119, v10 – 18

Prayer of confession Lord God, when we have thought about ourselves above all else, forgive us. When we have failed to listen to your voice or to heed your word, forgive us. When we have lacked courage to stand up for our beliefs, when there is nothing to fear, forgive us. When we have been too easily distracted and have wandered far from you, forgive us. We come to you today, knowing that we have not been the people you want us to be, the people we can be with your help, we have not served you as we should have, we have not used the power

you put at our disposal. We lay before you all that is amiss in our lives, we say sorry, we confess our need of washing clean. We ask for salvation, our merciful, just and loving God.

God wants us to know that we are forgiven, washed clean and set free from all that binds us. We are a new creation, thanks be to God. Amen

Introduction to theme Forward together in faith Karen

We are thinking about the power of doing things with others. In our gospel reading we are in Jerusalem for the last time with Jesus and the disciples, at the approach of the Passover festival, so the betrayal and death of Jesus is close as well.

Philip, the disciple from Bethsaida, who from his name, may have been a Greek Jew, is approached by some Greeks who want to meet Jesus. Philip seems to be one of those people who is good at drawing other people in. Early in John's gospel he tells Nathaniel about Jesus, who Philip thinks is the Messiah, Nathaniel, famously replies, can anything good come out of Nazareth, but goes with Philip to meet Jesus.

In this story Philip goes to talk to Andrew about what to do, presumably because the Greeks are Gentiles, and they go to Jesus together. The reply of Jesus seems to have little to do with what Philip and Andrew had told him, he begins to talk about his death, how his soul is troubled, but this is the reason for his being on Earth. Then God speaks from heaven, reassuring Jesus and Jesus talks about drawing all people to God, through his death and resurrection. He has seen and heard the uncertainty of Philip and Andrew and is telling them that it is not for them to choose who will be chosen by God, this path will be open to all. Jesus is saying the same to us today.

Reading John, ch 12, 20 - 33

Reflection Friday was Red nose day and during the week I read a newspaper article about some research into jokes that amuse and confuse in equal measure. The research was commissioned by the digital TV channel Gold, to mark the showing of their Vicar of Dibley Special and if any of you remember Dawn French as Rev Geraldine Grainger telling Alice a joke at the end of the programme and Alice's complete inability to understand any of the jokes or even that it was a joke, you will see why the research was about jokes that amuse and confuse. In second place was 'Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like a banana.' You see it takes a moment for the light to dawn. In third place was 'A jar of Omega3 vitamins fell on my head when I opened the cupboard, I received super fish oil injuries'. In ninth, 'What does a dyslexic, agnostic insomniac do at night? He stays up wondering if there really is a dog.'

So what does all this have to do with our service today? Well let me tell you the joke that came first, 'How do you drown a Hipster? In the mainstream.' Anyone else feeling as confused and bemused as Alice? Or just me, I'm thinking it's probably because I am over 40.

I can't help thinking that Philip and Andrew were probably feeling a bit the same way when Jesus began his answer to them. They said to Jesus, 'There are some Greeks over there who would like to meet you,' and they probably thought there were two possibilities, Jesus would say yes to meeting them, because he doesn't worry like the scribes and Pharisees about meeting Gentiles and staying ritually clean at Festival time, or he will say no because passover is coming and he wants to be clean to spend some time in the Temple, but Jesus starts talking about grains of wheat and hating life, then a voice comes from heaven, speaking about glorifying God and then Jesus says the voice is for their sake, because the world is to be judged and he, Jesus, will be lifted up from the Earth. I just wonder what Andrew and Philip told the Greeks.

They must have been at least partly prepared, because Jesus was always disconcerting the disciples about things they thought they had got clear. They weren't academics, theologians who had spent years wrestling with texts from the Scriptures, they were working men, many of them probably

accepting, with very few questions, most of what they had been taught as children and young men. Jesus had spent three years basically saying to them, there's a different way to look at that, not undermining what they had been taught, but asking them to look at things differently, what would love say to that, what would be the loving interpretation of that.

They, and we, cannot start to think we have got God taped, we've got the answers sorted, we know what the answer will be. God sees differently to us, God sees the whole tapestry, not just the few blades of grass we are adding at the bottom corner. God is so much bigger and more awesome than we can possibly imagine, there is no way we can begin to understand God's plans. And most importantly in this story, Jesus is saying to the disciples and to us, do not think you know who God will call to walk alongside you, do not think they will necessarily be like you. God has a plan for the world, not for the church, not for those of faith, not even for humanity, but for the whole of God's glorious creation, a new heaven and a new earth, which is so far beyond our imagination, we would have trouble imagining it. Like Mary, God asks only one thing of us, that we say, Yes Lord, here I am, your servant and then we trust that God has plans for our good, whatever may happen. One last joke, 'How many surrealists does it take to change a light bulb? A fish.'

Hymn All my hope on God is founded.

1. All my hope on God is founded:

He doth still my trust renew,
Me through change and chance he guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown, God alone
Calls my heart to be his own.

2. Human pride and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray our trust
What with toil and care we fashion,
Tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.

3. God's great goodness aye endureth,
Deep his wisdom, passing thought;
Splendour, light and life attend him
Beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore from his store
New-born worlds rise and adore.

4 Still from man to God eternal,
Sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
For the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call one and all;
Ye who follow shall not fall.

Intercessions

God loved us enough to send Jesus

so that everyone might have the chance to live in the light.

God who journeys with us and with everyone, we pray for those whose journey is lonely or dark or full of sadness. God loved us enough to send Jesus

so that everyone might have the chance to live in the light.

We pray for those living in places where war is tearing apart the fragile structures of life and safety, for places where the climate emergency is not a distant possibility but a day to day reality of hunger, thirst, loss of loved ones, livelihood, home. God loved us enough to send Jesus

so that everyone might have the chance to live in the light.

We pray for all those who have lost loved ones, their physical health, their mental health, their employment, their happiness to Corona virus. We pray for those who are feeling dragged down by lockdown and restrictions, lost without the company of family and friends. We pray for those whom we love and hold in our hearts. God loved us enough to send Jesus

so that everyone might have the chance to live in the light.

We pray for those who are in a place of darkness and depression, who are struggling with low self image and self worth. We pray for all those who have struggled to manage work and home schooling and for young people as they settle back in to school and university.

God loved us enough to send Jesus

so that everyone might have the chance to live in the light.

Loving God, pour your light and love through us, that we might shine in the darkness of the world.
Amen

Lord's prayer.

Hymn Love divine, all loves excelling

1. Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all the faithful mercies crown.
Jesus thou art all compassion,
pure unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart

2. Come almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

3. Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.

Final prayer We go from this worship in peace, we go from this worship blessed by the love of God, we go in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to bless others as we have been blessed. Amen

May God bless you and keep you in the week to come.