



This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Call to worship

Life is a journey on many different roads
but God is always with us.

Sometimes we lift our faces to the sun
and God is with us.

But then there is the hard journey
through pathways of pain
and fears in dark places.

But God is with us.

**Nothing can separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus.**

Hymn

We lift our voices to the Lord most high,
with joyful singing we will glorify
the great creator, the author of all life.
We are his people and he is our God,
he always guides us in his ways with love:
let joyful praises come fill this place, in song.

For the Lord is good!

*We shout for joy because
the Lord is good!*

*He rules the earth with everlasting love:
how good is our God!*

Enter His presence with a thankful heart,
enter his courts and let the praises start,
give God the glory, for he deserves it all.
All of creation lives to worship God,
we were created as an act of love:
let adoration flow from this place, in song.
Faithful God, never ending goodness,
ever flowing kindness.
You are faithful, God, you are good.

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Prayers

For our opening prayers, I invite you to simply sit with gratitude, to give thanks to God for all of the goodness you have experienced in your life, for the beauty of creation, for the kindness of strangers, for the times the love of Christ has

been shown to you and for when you have felt truly blessed. Praise and thank God for all of this and allow God's presence to come close.

Mark 6:1-13

He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. ²On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him. ⁴Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' ⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Reflection

Satish Kumar is a former Jain monk of the Buddhist tradition and he became deeply influenced by the civil disobedience movement

and those committed to actions governed by non-violence. In the 1960's he decided to go for a walk – a walk which would take him to the 4 powerhouses of the world – to Washington DC, London, Paris and Moscow. He was walking in peaceful protest to what he saw was an increasingly destructive and violent world.

What I like about Satish Kumar's story and what reminds me of the mission Jesus gives to his disciples is that Kumar decided he would travel light. So light, in fact, he took not a single penny with him. No money. He was completely reliant upon the hospitality of strangers. He stepped out with a total trust in the fundamental goodness of humanity. He walked 8000 miles with a message of peace to the world – an act that many at the time viewed as utterly pointless, but one which still has the likes of me talking about it over 50 years later.

He now lives in North Devon and has set up the Schumacher College, an international centre for ecological studies, and Satish remains committed to inter-faith work. He has a wonderful way of seeing God in all aspects of life, seeing God in all people.

I don't travel light. Whenever we go away I throw far too much into the bags with the thought, "Just in case." It drives my husband bonkers. I think I get this from my mother, who on a summer holiday to one of the Greek islands decided she would take a waterproof, just in case. I've yet to convert to a kindle, so there are always far too many books in my luggage.

Jesus told his disciples to travel light. To bin the non-essentials. And he gave them a list. And he wasn't talking about books or cosmetics or gadgets as being non-essentials. He was saying that a one change of clothes, food and money were nonessentials. Really? They seem pretty important to me!

I think there are a couple of things going on here – firstly, there is a message about how we view both possessions and stuff that weighs us down in life, and secondly how we need to learn about inter-dependence, that we need each other.

When Jesus sends out the 12 disciples, Biblical scholars tell us that the intention was initially to spread the gospel message to the Jewish nation. Christians don't exist yet – the plan was to tell those of Jewish faith and to go no further. In Luke's gospel he puts in a story of Jesus sending out 70 people and this is very definitely far and wide, beyond the boundaries of Israel and into

the Gentile kingdom – Luke being the gospel writer most concerned with non-Jews. It's useful to remember that the disciples were Jewish – sounds obvious, but part of their heritage, their history, was a nomadic one. They would have grown up listening to scriptural tales of Moses and the Exodus from slavery in Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness for 40 years. Journeying was part of their very definition. So whilst we might find the notion of going into the unknown a scary thing to do, despite our ability for global and even space travel, for the Jews, travelling was an integral element of who they were – stepping out into the unknown, little time to pack; go and go now. And when you are wandering with no sense of direction in the wilderness for 40 years, you don't carry things you don't need.

So, how do we travel light? We need to ask ourselves, what do I have in my life which possess me and not the other way round? We live in a society consumed by consumerism. 'Because I'm worth it', people declare. Taking and having and owning is viewed as the goal. The pursuit of happiness is very often put into terms defined by houses, cars, prestigious jobs and bank balances. We know none of those bring happiness. Even our value as humans is frequently put in economic terms. Is acquiring 'stuff' such a bad thing to want to do? As Christians we need to be careful about how much importance we place on this. I'm not suggesting you do without clothes – standing naked in public is something which fortunately only happens in my nightmares; but travelling light in life is also about not judging ourselves as well as other people by the things we have or do not have.

I am inspired by my Muslim friends and their commitment to fasting. Fasting used to be an important part of our Christian tradition which we have somehow lost and I wonder if we are poorer because of this. We can learn from our Muslim neighbours about the importance of focusing on God by denying ourselves even to the point of saying food is less important than our relationship with God. By sending out the disciples with no supplies, inevitably there would be times when they wouldn't eat. Their rumbling of their tummies being a reminder of their reliance upon both God and the necessity of the generosity of other people.

Food, clothes, stuff – it reminds me of that passage in Matthew considering the lilies of the field; we hear Jesus tell us, "Don't worry asking,

‘What shall we eat? Or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ God will provide what you need.” We can be horribly preoccupied with getting that we forget about giving. We forget that we all that we have comes from God. All of us get bogged down at times – we get things out of perspective – put greater significance on the things we want and neglect the things we need.

What weighs you down? What ‘thing’ can’t you do without? What are you a bit too obsessive about? Every one of us will have different answers to these questions. I have my own worries that weigh me down, things I claim I need, whereas in reality they are frivolous and hardly life-essentials, pressures on my time and energy and points where I do get life out of perspective. I need to take a step back from time to time, take a breath and consider what’s really important. Having possessions in themselves isn’t the problem – it’s when we value things more than people, more than God that we get out of kilter. The day our 11 year old son was flown by air ambulance to Birmingham’s Children’s Hospital was the day we re-evaluated priorities. Suddenly the mountain of work emails, the worry whether they car would pass its MOT, what I could send my friend for her birthday, when I could have my hair cut and coloured, quite whether I could get my Christmas card list done in time that year, the never-decreasing pile of ironing...all of this melted away. And when the stresses of life start to mount, I try and think back to that day, to our total reliance on the enormous kindness of strangers – of those paramedics, teachers and medical staff whose actions all meant he made the recovery he did.

I heard a psychiatrist talking on the radio about his work – he was saying that in his clinical opinion, NOT having friends is more detrimental to your health than smoking. And in response to this he has set up a walking group for some of his patients – a group which has become supportive to each member, where discussions are held in a non-threatening environment, where the rhythm of walking is restorative. Years on, and some of his patients have been able to come off their medication and the psychiatrist puts this down both to the physical journey they have been on and also the fact that they now feel a sense of belonging. The can trust the group members and they are needed.

Jesus sent out his disciples and by telling them not to take belongings, he was telling them they had to trust people. To trust them, even if

occasionally they would be let down. To trust people to provide what they need and not to have a back-up plan. *Belonging* is more important than *belongings*.

Satish Kumar, on his peace-walk tells that the hospitality people provided was a gift not only to him, but to those who were doing the giving. It is in our human nature to want to help, to reach out to those in need and provide sustenance and comfort. And we are made whole, we are fulfilled, the more we give up, the more we give out.

The relationship the disciples would have on their journeys would be of mutual dependence. The people they met would have their lives enriched by the gospel message and would also be enriched by the act of providing hospitality. And in turn the disciples would learn that they need to give up those notions of self-reliance. The belief of independence.

We need one another. The psychiatrist tells us we need friends to remain healthy. Jesus tells us we need to have faith in each other, trust in the stranger, the ability to see God in whoever we meet. That’s a difficult lesson for us to learn because we are ingrained with ideas of caution and self-preservation. If we don’t trust, we don’t expose ourselves to getting hurt.

The disciples were taking a journey, stepping out in faith into an unknown world, taking the message of Jesus with them. Our life journey might not be as dramatic as either the disciples or Satish Kumar’s, but we can become less reliant on ‘things’ and more reliant on people. When we take communion we are reaffirming our relationship with God, but we do this in community – this is an act of solidarity, we do it together because it not only binds us to God, but it binds us to each other. We are not made to live in isolation but we are social beings.

We can take that leap of faith, travelling light, allowing people to help us, to trust and not to be cynical. To see God wherever we go and whoever we meet.

Amen

Intercessions

Holy God,

Some of us feel weak;
give us strength for today.
Some of us feel proud;
stop us from being complacent.
Help us to admit and accept our weaknesses
because when we do, that is when you make us
strong.

Help us to travel lightly,
as we walk into each new day.
Do we need all our things, the comforts and
gadgets and clutter?

[silence]

Lead us to put aside anything that holds us back,
that distracts us from living out your love;
and because that feels a bit scary, give us your
peace.

Help us as your family of believers to travel
lightly.
Sometimes we are so bound up with old routines
and unspoken rules
that we forget we are supposed to meet the real
needs of the world at our doors.

[silence]

Give us the courage to leave old habits and
responses behind,
to throw open the doors and break down the
walls of church
and to make ourselves freely available as your
living presence in our communities.

Help those who lead us all to travel lightly as they
face new issues every day
because yesterday's answers won't help with
today's questions.
We see the world changing at a dizzying rate and
problems seem ever more complex.

[silence]

The climate is dangerously unpredictable;
economies are close to collapse;
desperate families are risking their lives to flee
turmoil and terror
and our society seems ever more confused and
confusing.
Give our leaders the courage to listen, to take
risks and to respond with real action now
and give us also the grace to support those of any
political colour
who act out of love for this broken world and its
broken people. We love our comforting routines

and the safe, familiar things around us
and sometimes we need to treasure what we
have got.
But help us always to put your love first, last and
in between.
Allow us to go out lightly into the new day
seeing everything as if anew
and responding with the cleansed hearts you
have given us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus who sends us all.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Singing the Faith 239

Sent by the Lord am I;
My hands are ready now
To make the earth a place
In which the kingdom comes.
(Repeat)

The angels cannot change
A world of hurt and pain
Into a world of love,
Of justice and of peace.

The task is mine to do,
To set it really free.
O help me to obey;
Help me to do your will.

José Aguiar

Closing responses

We will walk this way together,
with Jesus Christ in our midst.
Our hands are open to receive,
our hearts are open to give,
our minds long to learn
and our souls reach out to each other.
The time is eternal time for us

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