



Sunday 3rd October 2021

The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

How many days is it until Christmas? Has anyone asked you that yet? The answer is....well I will tell you later... But why do I ask that question? That's because the reading that we will hear today from the letter to the Hebrews, is often read on Christmas Day... so I was just getting you in the mood!

Prayer of Approach

**We come to worship as we are,
known by God and called by name.
We come with our joys and our fears
to a Lord who knows joy and fear too.
We come, excited yet weary,
to the Spirit who breathes new life into us
and who wants to send us on our way rejoicing.
Amen.**

HYMN STF 39 Angels Voices ever singing

Angel voices ever singing
round thy throne of light,
angel-harps for ever ringing,
rest not day nor night;
thousands only live to bless thee
and confess thee
Lord of might.

Thou who art beyond the farthest
mortal eye can scan,
can it be that thou regardest
songs of sinful man?
can we know that thou art near us,
and wilt hear us?
yea, we can.

Yea, we know that thou rejoicest
o'er each work of thine;
thou didst ears and hands and voices
for thy praise design;
craftsman's art and music's measure
for thy pleasure
all combine.

In thy house, great God, we offer
of thine own to thee;
and for thine acceptance proffer
all unworthily
hearts and minds and hands and voices
in our choicest
psalmody.

Honour, glory, might, and merit
thine shall ever be,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
blessed Trinity.
Of the best that thou hast given
earth and heaven
render thee.

In July 1969 Apollo 11 carried to the moon a Goodwill Disc that had messages etched into its surface from leaders and prominent people from seventy-three countries. It was left on the Sea of Tranquillity by astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

The Vatican submitted a message that included a text from the Bible. If you could have chosen a part of the Bible to send up to the moon, what would have been your choice? Old Testament story, teaching from Jesus, words from Paul? The Vatican chose Psalm 8, making it the first Biblical text to reach the moon. Why this one...? Let's hear it first...

Psalm 8 *Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens.*

² *Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.*

³ *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is humankind that you are mindful*

of them, human beings that you care for them?

⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels

and crowned them with glory and honour.

⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:

⁷ all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, ⁸ the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

⁹ LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

What a beautiful Psalm. Some suggest that this Psalm of celebration pours out of David as he recalls his victory over Goliath and which has been brought about by the God he worships who is so powerful.

In contrast David considers the rather weak and inadequate nature of humanity.

What is humankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

You can almost hear the mixture of shock and astonishment in his voice as he wrestles with many emotions.

David is awestruck by the beauty he sees around him, the awesome majesty of it all - are you and I still awestruck? Or are we too busy to notice, too concerned for our own immediate needs?

Our answer to that can be shown in many ways... by the amount of time we stop and watch... (just like I am at the 3 blue tits that are doing acrobatics on the tree outside my window right now !) and the worship I give to God for that... and by our treatment of creation... COP 26 soon upon us, which you will have heard about in the news, is another occasion surely for world leaders to reflect on Psalm 8!

All of this leads David ask the question, "In comparison What are humans?": "In comparison to your splendour and majesty, O Lord, what is

puny, weak, frail humanity?" Well, we obviously mean everything to God for he never forgets us, and is constantly paying attention to us. How amazing!

If the daily stress of life leaves us feeling overlooked, this Psalm says that the God who created all the magnificent surroundings of the universe actually remembers and pays attention to puny individuals like you and me. Yippee!

Let us pray....

**By the word of our Lord the heavens were made
By the spirit of our Lord was life begun
By the wisdom of our Lord his laws were laid
By the love of our Lord was born his Son
By the grace of our Lord mankind was saved
By the power of our Lord the victory was won**

**Creator God,
forgive our moments of ingratitude,
the spiritual blindness that prevents us
from appreciating the wonder that is this world.
Forgive us for taking without giving,
reaping without sowing.
Open our eyes to see, our lips to praise,
our hands to share.
May our feet tread lightly on the path we tread,
and our footsteps be worthy of following,
for they lead to you. Amen**

HYMN STF 338 There is a Redeemer

**1 There is a Redeemer--Jesus, God's own Son;
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.**

Chorus

**Thank You, O my Father, for giving us Your Son,
And leaving Your Spirit till the work on earth is
done.**

**2 Jesus, my Redeemer, name above all names;
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Hope for sinners
slain.**

**3 When I stand in Glory, I will see His face;
There I'll serve my King forever in that holy place**

When you think of God, what/who do you picture? For many it will be the man with a beard sitting on a cloud with a lightning bolt in hand ready to strike as they think of God as the one who will punish them for their mistakes, sins and failures, thinking it is just a

matter of time before it all catches up with them. Is that really God?

Surely there is a much better way to know what God looks like - to look at Jesus! Jesus himself said on a number of occasions, he who has seen me has seen the Father.

Most of us will have heard the phrase, *he's the image of his father, peas in a pod!* Well, here is the most divine example of that! We read about it in Hebrews where Jesus is described as the exact imprint of God, just as Paul also wrote in Colossians, 'He is the image of the invisible God' Colossians 1.15

Let's ponder on these 3 verses from Hebrews 1:1-3 (NIV)

God's Final Word: His Son

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation (exact imprint) of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Exact representation - imprint - the same, yet distinct.

When Christ stills the storm you see God, when he heals the sick you see God, when he tells stories that challenge, when he stands up for the poor and the oppressed and weeps tears of frustration at the injustice meted out by those who should know better, you see God. When he washes feet, when he prays in the Garden, when he is wrongly accused. When he gives of his life... you see God.

He who has seen me has seen the Father

Praise God that we see him in resurrection too!

Prayers of Intercession

Loving Father, we pray for the world asking to see it with your eyes, especially where it is hard to believe that the hungry will be fed, that there will be justice and

freedom, and that wars will cease. **Open our eyes, may we remember that when we see Jesus we see you.**

We pray for humankind, asking to see them with your eyes on days especially when it is hard to believe that love is stronger than hatred, that those who are sick will be made well, and that death has been destroyed. **Open our eyes, may we remember that when we see Jesus we see you.**

We pray for the church, asking to see it with your eyes, especially when we are concerned for the future. **Open our eyes, may we remember that when we see Jesus we see you.**

Lord's Prayer 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.

So how many days until Christmas? 82!!!

Hymn – STF 331 King of Kings

King of kings, Majesty
God of Heaven living in me
Gentle Saviour, closest friend
Strong Deliverer, beginning and end
All within me falls at Your throne

*Your Majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty*

Earth and Heaven worship You
Love eternal, Faithful and True
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls
Brought this sinner near to Your throne
All within me cries out in praise.
*Your majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty*

A prayer of blessing

May God our Father, strengthen us,
May Christ Jesus show us the way to serve,
May the Holy Spirit make us fruitful in all we do. And
May the peace and love of our God
be always with us. Amen
CCLI 176885