

3rd November 2024 – Morning Service

Rev Chris Watson

Call to Worship

Lord, we know that in coming towards you, you came towards us first.

You called us by name, bringing us deeper into you, into community, into love.

We thank you for the gift of this, and hold our hands humbly, offering you what we have, knowing that you receive what we give – even when it is very little. **Amen.**

StF 1 – All people that on earth do dwell

- 1) All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:
Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell;
Come ye before him and rejoice.
- 2) The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
Without our aid he did us make:
We are his folk, he doth us feed;
And for his sheep he doth us take.
- 3) O enter then his gates with praise;
Approach with joy his courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless his name always,
For it is seemly so to do.
- 4) For why, the Lord Our God is good;
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.
- 5) To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
The God whom heaven and earth adore,
From earth and from the angel host
Be praise and glory evermore.

William Kethe

Prayers of Approach and Confession

We gather before you, Lord, just as we are; and we know that you will accept us. Help us to accept one another in the same spirit of generosity and love; for all are equal in your sight.

With what shall we come before the Lord and bow before God on high?

What does the Lord require of us?

To do justice, to love mercy, and walk humbly with him, our God. Amen.

Lord, we confess that we are biased; we are biased against those who are different from us.

Maybe we are wealthy, and look down on the poor;

maybe we are clever, and look down on those who are not.

Perhaps we have a big car, and despise those who do not;

perhaps we dress well, and despise those who do not.

Forgive us, Lord, for such meanness of spirit; it is not the spirit in which you welcome us.

Thank you for your generosity to us, warts and all, and help us to show the same acceptance to others.

Amen.

StF 477 – Teach me to dance

- Ch) Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart,
Teach me to move in the pow'r of Your Spirit.
Teach me to walk in the light of Your presence,
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.
Teach me to love with Your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of Your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of Your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.
- 1) You wrote the rhythm of life,
Created heaven and earth;
In You is joy without measure.
So like a child in Your sight,
I dance to see Your delight
For I was made for Your pleasure,
Pleasure.
- 2) Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say 'Yes',
A will that leaps to obey You.
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in Your face
Let my whole being praise You,
Praise You.

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Reading: Psalm 139

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.

If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.

Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

StF 345 – And can it be

- 1) And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
- 2) 'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds enquire no more.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds enquire no more.
- 3) He left his Father's throne above
So free, so infinite his grace
Emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!
- 4) Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray -
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
- 5) No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Charles Wesley

Talk

I would like to depart from the norm this week so I hope you will bear with me! I would like to share a book I have been reading, or at least a little part of it. I don't agree with all of it, it is actually a work of fiction but with some real truths are woven through its pages. The title of the book is 'The Unannounced Christmas Visitor' and is written by Patrick Higgins.

The starting point of the book is Hebrews 13:2 - *“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it”*. A homeless, ill-kempt, man shows up in a church and is shunned by most of the congregation apart from one lady and her family who befriend him. The twist in the tale is that this homeless man is an angel sent to answer the lady's prayers.

The part I want to share is a conversation between the woman's husband and the angel. They are discussing their views of God, and the angel is asked “What kind of view do you have of God?” His answer goes like this:

“The God I serve has no origin, no beginning or end. He is limitless yet He never changes. He possesses perfect knowledge and therefore has no need to learn anything. Being the source and author of all things, He didn't create the universe and everything in it to meet some unfulfilled need. His knowledge doesn't arise from things because they are or will be, but because He has ordained them to be. Not only does the God I serve know Himself perfectly in all ways, He knows everything that can be known about anything, with a fullness of perfection that includes everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe, at any time in the past. His knowledge of the future is just as complete as His knowledge of the past and present.....

Not only is He mindful of all things, He is mindful of all things at the same time, including every human being that has lived. Every thought, breath, heartbeat, teardrop, every hair on every head He knows.”

The angel goes on to say that God knows how many fish there are, how many flies and mosquitoes, how many leaves on every tree, blades of grass in every mountain and valley. He knows every atom, particle and molecule and is aware of all of it all the time. And this point is made....He is able to give total attention to billions of people all at the same time, as if only one individual were seeking his attention. This in turn means that no one is overlooked by Him or unknown by Him. Nothing about us or our actions can surprise God or turn Him away from us but we have to accept His love and knowledge of us.

As I said I don't agree with all of the authors' views but some of what he says struck home. Sometimes we forget just who the God we worship is and think of Him as some cuddly teddy bear or a genie in a bottle, who will grant all our requests if we use the right formulae. We have to remember that we serve an Almighty God of justice as well as of mercy and love. It is only when we realise and acknowledge how great He is that we can truly give Him his worth in worship.

Another comment in the book is this: “The first step downward for any church is when she loses her high opinion of God.”

Is this true in our churches? As Christians, followers of Jesus and God we too must have a high opinion of God. So my question to you this week is this: Do you worship a big God or a little one?

I hope you will take the time to reflect on the book review and how you regard God.

Let me remind you of some words from a well known hymn:

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee, though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see, only thou art holy; there is none beside thee, perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea; holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty, God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

StF 11 – Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty

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| 1) Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty.
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity. | 3) Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness
hide thee,
Though the sinful human eye thy glory
may not see,
Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee.
Perfect in power, in love, and purity. |
| 2) Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around
the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be. | 4) Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth
and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity |

Reginald Heber

Prayers of Intercession

We are your people, God. In this time and place, you have called us to pray for those in need. We pray for the people whose names the world knows, whose stories are told daily in the news.....[*Silence*]

God in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We pray for people in places of suffering, whose names only you and their friends and families know. And whose lives you cherish.....[*Silence*]

God in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We pray for the people whose names and lives we know, those who today are in pain or distress or trouble, those who are happy, those who are sad.....[Silence]

God in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We pray for ourselves, God. You know each one of us by name. Make us into the people you want us to be, and when that hurts, reassure us how much you love us. God, we bring you ourselves and our prayers in Jesus' name, **Amen**

The 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.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 470 – Lord for the years

- 1) Lord, for the years
Your love has kept and guided,
Urged and inspired us,
Cheered us on our way,
Sought us and saved us,
Pardoned and provided,
Lord of the years,
We bring our thanks today.
- 2) Lord, for that Word,
The Word of life which fires us,
Speaks to our hearts
And sets our souls ablaze.
Teaches and trains,
Rebukes us and inspires us,
Lord of the Word,
Receive Your people's praise.
- 3) Lord, for our land,
In this our generation,
Spirits oppressed by
Pleasure, wealth and care;
For young and old,
For commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land,
Be pleased to hear our prayer.
- 4) Lord, for our world,
When we disown and doubt Him,
Loveless in strength
And comfortless in pain;
Hungry and helpless,
Lost indeed without Him,
Lord of the world,
We pray that Christ may reign.
- 5) Lord, for ourselves;
In living power remake us,
Self on the cross
And Christ upon the throne.
Past put behind us,
For the future take us,
Lord of our lives,
To live for Christ alone.

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Blessing

Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you. We go in your name to love you and those we meet, and to be your light in the world. **Amen.**