

Trinity United Reformed Church Wimbledon



Sunday 21 June 2020 (Fathers' Day) Order of Service for Worship At Home

Gathering in God's presence *(If you have one, light a candle.)*

Call to Worship

Let us come to God in worship;
and with the writer of Psalm 86, let us say to God:
Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

Hymn

Creation sings the Father's song:
he calls the sun to wake the dawn
and run the course of day,
till evening comes in crimson rays.
His fingerprints in flakes of snow,
his breath upon this spinning globe;
he charts the eagle's flight,
commands the newborn baby's cry.

Hallelujah!

Let all creation stand and sing, "Hallelujah!"

*Fill the earth with songs of worship,
tell the wonders of creation's King!*

Creation gazed upon his face,
the ageless One in time's embrace
unveiled the Father's plan
of reconciling God and man.
A second Adam walked the earth,
whose blameless life would break the curse;
whose death would set us free
to live with him eternally.

Hallelujah!...

Creation longs for his return,
when Christ shall reign upon the earth;
the bitter wars that rage
are birth pains of a coming age.
When he renews the land and sky
all heaven will sing and earth reply,
with one resplendent theme,
the glory of our God and King!

Hallelujah!...

Prayer of Approach

Take time to identify three things you want to thank God for, then join in the prayer:

God, who is both a Father and a Mother to us,
you have known us and loved us
since before we were born;
your guidance and protection have surrounded us as we have grown;
your wisdom and strength have taken root in us
when we have sought to care for others.

So we bring to you our praise;
hear us now as we each name before you
the blessings for which we give thanks...

This Fathers' Day is a time for bringing to mind
the fathers we have known, and all who have raised us:
to thank you for all that they have done for us,
all that they have been to us;
to thank you for the good times we have shared together
and to thank you
for bringing us through hard times together.

But there are some
for whom the memory of a father is painful,
or for whom there are no memories at all.
Heavenly Father, may we find in you a loving embrace
that more than makes up for any inadequacies
of our earthly parents.
Gracious Lord, no human relationship is perfect
and we today confess our failings.
We pray that you will help us
to love one another as you love us,
giving generously with wisdom
and forgiving freely with justice.

Give to us also
the assurance of your mercy and your welcome;
for we pray, loving Father,
in the power of your Spirit,
through Jesus Christ your Son,
our crucified, risen and ascended Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Use either of these forms, or a different version/language if you prefer:

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

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 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 forever. Amen.

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.

Listening for God's Word

Bible Reading: Matthew 10.24-33

[In the video of the service, a Theme Introduction will precede and follow this reading]

24 `A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

26 `So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

32 `Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

[In the video of the service, Junior Church activities will be introduced here]

Hymn

Jesus loves me! this I know,
for the Bible tells me so;
little ones to him belong;
I am weak, but he is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me!... The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! he who died
heaven's gate to open wide;
sin and shame he's washed away,
bids me follow him today.

Yes, Jesus loves me!...

Jesus loves me! yes, it's true;
and he offers love to you,
wanting as a friend to give
peace and joy to all who live.

Yes, Jesus loves me!...

after Anna Bartlett Warner (public domain text)

Reflection

To me, and to you, and to all people, this is the proclamation of the Church: Jesus loves. And in loving, Jesus heralds to us the watchful, ever-present love of our Father in heaven.

That's the focus of our Bible reading this morning: that nothing and no-one is too small or insignificant to be loved by God. God who watches the humble sparrow, God who has counted even the hairs on your head; God who declares you to be precious.

On the basis of that assurance, Jesus encourages his disciples to be fearless and faithful. And we are his disciples today.

*Now it seems to me that there are two possible ways to instil that kind of bold obedience in people. One is to emphasise that it's really going to be straightforward and trouble-free – to tell people, *It'll be fine, you're not going to face any opposition, because God is on your side nothing can harm you.**

But that's not what Jesus says here. On the contrary, it seems he's being quite blunt about the troubles and trials that are going to be faced by his followers. He's explaining to his hearers that the goal and outcome of their discipleship – their 'being like Jesus' - isn't just about their behaviour to others: it'll also be seen in the treatment they receive FROM others. As people have done to Jesus, so they will do to his disciples. And if Jesus, the master, has been maligned and mistreated, so certainly his servants, his followers, can expect the same.

Perhaps that's a message that makes sense when we think of the original readers and hearers of Matthew's Gospel: people living in the first couple of generations after the first Easter – and for whom to put their faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord might mean being ostracised or rejected by their community, or even by members of their own family. Or we might think beyond them, to the Christians of the second and third centuries AD, for whom under the Roman Empire persecution was their expectation and all too often their fate.

Perhaps indeed we might even think of fellow-Christians today for whom lockdown is not entirely new – for those living in parts of the world where faith in Jesus cannot be openly expressed, and Christian worship cannot be openly offered.

In that sense, the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 10 hold for us a kind of historical and international resonance, they remind us of the difficulty and danger that have sometimes been faced by Christians; but do they really offer us much more than that?

Well you won't be surprised to hear that yes, I think there's a good deal for us to latch on to here. I mentioned earlier that there are 2 ways to encourage people to fearlessness and faithfulness; and if we're not being given a claim of blue skies and

sunlit uplands here, then we must be looking at the second way. And it's this second way, which gives us a template for our discipleship.

Firstly, he levels with them. He gives them a reality check. Look, he says, they've even denounced me as Beelzebul – as an evil influence, as one whose claim to spiritual authority is false and deceptive and dangerous. So as for you – don't be surprised if you get the same treatment. The resolve to which you're called, can't be based on false optimism.

Secondly, he sets the ground rule: openness, honesty. There's a message to be communicated here; and even if it's been a bit muted up to now, the time has come for proclamation. What's been whispered in the shadows, now needs to be shouted from the rooftops. The full story, not just the edited highlights. So as for you – don't imagine that you can keep your faith as a private personal choice. The resolve to which you're called, can't be based on fake news.

And then thirdly, he sets the right perspective. Farsightedness. Don't be consumed by thoughts of what harm might come in the here and now, he tells them. Because be that as it may, there's a broader view at hand. For even when a bird falls from the sky, even when a hair falls from your head – it is seen by God, it resonates in heaven. And by God's grace, we'll be looking to spend more time there than here. So as for you – don't let your actions and intentions be merely earth-bound; instead, be heaven-centred. The resolve to which you're called, can't be based on a finite frame of reference.

How does Jesus draw forth courage and loyalty in his followers, his friends? By impressing upon them – upon us - these three principles: be real, be open, be farsighted.

And crucially, he doesn't just talk about these principles – he embodies them, he lives them. In his readiness to take the path of rejection and suffering, he's real about what it can cost to walk God's way. In his announcement of blessing to the meek and warning to the powerful, he's open about the judgement and mercy of God. And in his prayer for the forgiveness of his executioners, in his promise of paradise to the thief crucified alongside him, he's farsighted to see and affirm the nearness of God's eternal Kingdom.

In Jesus, we see what it is to be fearless and faithful. And he calls and empowers us to do likewise: for as he has said, "it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher."

Responding to God's grace

Praying for Needs & Concerns (led by Trinity children/young people)

Loving Father, we bring before you our prayers for the needs and concerns of all Your people in our world dealing with this global pandemic.

We pray for those lives lost and all those affected due to coronavirus and hope they can find their feet after all the hardship faced. We pray for those financially affected by the virus and hope they can rebuild their situation for the better.

As Refugee week comes to an end, we think of refugees in all parts of our

world and remember the sacrifices they have made to find a better life and pray for their future that they can find safety and peace.

We pray for the people leading our country, may they have wisdom and courage as we continue through this pandemic.

We pray for the key workers, such as doctors, nurses, delivery people, supermarket staff, care home workers, teachers, helping us to get through this hard time.

We pray for and support the Black Lives Matter campaign as it continues to open our eyes to racism and injustice and know that it is making a difference.

We remember those in our country who arrived on the Empire Windrush on the 22nd June 1948 and the struggles they overcame. We recognise the amazing contribution they, and their families have made to our nation. We must think about how God would not judge someone due to their ethnicity or colour of skin.

At the start of World Well-Being week, we pray for all those whose mental health may have been affected because of the isolation of lockdown. For everyone missing their family and friends, surround them with Your love.

We pray for all in education affected by the pandemic; whether it be that they miss their last months at school, they miss exams or have to struggle to get through exams coming up and wish them all luck for the future.

Finally, we pray for Trinity and today on Father's Day, we pray particularly today for all the fathers, grandfathers, even great grandfathers in our congregation; those still with us and those no longer but still much missed and much loved. We pray for each one of us who make up this community; all people of all ages here and hope we get to see each other all very soon. And in a moment of silence, we think about those close to us, who need our prayers.

We offer these prayers loving Father, in the name of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Offertory

This is an opportunity to set aside your regular financial contribution to Trinity's ongoing work and witness. You might like to put it in a jar for now, ready to be brought in person when circumstances allow. Then say the prayer below (if you already participate in Trinity's Planned Giving scheme via direct bank transfer, then simply recite the prayer – no need for a jar!).

Generous God, your gift to me
is life, and sustenance, and hope.
I bring to you my gift, and myself.
Receive, Lord, and bless:
so that both gift and giver
may bring blessing to others,
and glory to your name. Amen.

Hymn

Gracious God of all creation,
faithful to us in the past:
you are constant in the present,
we affirm your love will last.
So we celebrate this moment,
giving thanks for thought and care
that you offer through each other,
giving us your love to share.

You were there at our beginning
watching every human birth;
walking with us through our childhood,
with us still upon this earth.
You have shared our joy and sorrow,
holding us in hope or pain,
seeing growth in age and wisdom,
understanding loss and gain.

People see us, sometimes wonder,
do not always gauge our worth,
but you value all our living,
God of human life and birth.
So we offer our thanksgiving,
sing your praise for all that's past;
you through grace and faith have held us,
and will take us home at last.

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Closing Prayer and Blessing

Let us go now, fearless and faithful,
in the assurance that we are known and seen and loved.
So let our words and our deeds acknowledge
God's presence, God's purpose, and God's power.

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be upon us, and among all who are dear to us,
whether near or far,
today and always. Amen.