

2022 – 3RD JULY – WORSHIP AT HOME – PREPARED TO BE VULNERABLE

Dear friends,

As we go on into the summer [where is this year going so fast!] I hope that you enjoy good weather and good times. Indeed, life does have some very dark patches but we know that throughout God is with us and holding us to himself. What comfort that is, bringing us a sure and certain hope of the life to come. Every blessing to you all, *Margaret*.

Call to worship:

The greatness and power of God are such a contrast to our weakness – yet our God loves us.
The holiness and goodness of God are such a contrast to our sinful natures – yet God loves us.
Come, offer your praise and thanksgiving – and give honour and glory to our God. **Amen.**

Lord God, King of the universe, we thank you for sending your Son our Saviour, as a helpless and vulnerable baby, dependent on the love and care of flawed human beings.

As we come to you to worship, may we make ourselves vulnerable – open to receive more of your power, mercy, and love – so that we can share that with others, when we are sent to serve you. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father, heavenly King, we come to you today just as we are. We want to listen and learn. Here we lay everything down before you as we stand in your awesome presence. **Amen.**

The words to ‘Lord of all hopefulness’ written by Jan Struther [Joyce Placzek] [1901-1953] StF 526

1 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

2 Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lather,
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

3 Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

4 Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Prayers:

Loving God, all-sufficient one, we acknowledge your presence, and we worship you.

We worship you, Jesus Christ, holy and anointed one, - you laid down your life so that we might live.

We welcome your authority and influence in our lives, Holy Spirit – you intercede for us when we have no strength. You are with us and guide us in our weakness.

You – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are worthy of our praise.

We adore you, Lord of all. **Amen**

O God, all sufficient one, we give you thanks and praise that you are all we need. You are enough. Thank you for loving us so much and for providing everything we need for the journey of life. You did not promise that following you would be easy, but we thank you for caring about us as you do the birds in the sky and the lilies in the field. You know our every need. Thank you that your thoughts are higher than our thoughts – your ways higher than our ways. We thank you that when we come to you empty, your arms reach out to embrace us. **Amen.**

We bow before you, O God, and we confess that we have let you down. We have turned away from you and gone our own way. We have allowed material things to dominate our lives and to occupy our mind. We are sorry, and we lay everything at your feet. We are sorry that we overcomplicate everything. Help us to learn how to be still and know that you are God. Help us to seek simplicity, to slow down and not to hurry – to require nothing more than what you give, and to fear being vulnerable so that we can be complete in your presence. **Amen.**

Jesus Christ, you died and rose again, that we might be released from all worldly things that weigh us down. Thank you that we are forgiven – that our chains are gone – and we have been set free to serve you once again. **Amen.**

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.**

Mark 6: 1-13:

Jesus left there and returned to his hometown. His disciples came along. On the Sabbath, he gave a lecture in the meeting place. He made a real hit, impressing everyone. “We had no idea he was this good!” they said. “How did he get so wise all of a sudden, get such ability?”

But in the next breath they were cutting him down; “He’s just a carpenter – Mary’s boy. We’ve known him since he was a kid. We know his brothers, James, Justus [Joseph], Jude, and Simon, and his sisters. Who does he think he is?” They tripped over what little they knew about him and fell, sprawling. And they never got any further.

Jesus told them: “A prophet has little honour in his hometown, among his relatives, on the streets he played in as a child.” Jesus was not able to do much if anything there – he laid hands on a few sick people and healed them, that’s all. He couldn’t get over their stubbornness. He left and made a circuit of the other villages, teaching.

Jesus called the Twelve to him and sent them out in pairs. He gave them authority and power to deal with the evil opposition. He sent them off with these instructions:

‘Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this. You are the equipment. No special appeals for funds. Keep it simple. And no luxury inns. Get a modest place and be content there till you leave. If you are not welcomed, not listened to quietly withdraw. Don’t make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and be on your way.’

Then they were on the road. They preached with joyful urgency that life can be radically different; right and left they sent the demons packing – they brought wellness to the sick, anointing their bodies, healing their spirits.

Comment: This passage from Mark shows two examples of how misleading status can be, and how it can deafen us to God's voice. At home in Nazareth, everyone is astounded by the wisdom that comes out of Jesus' mouth and the confirming deeds of power that he performs. A rush of light comes into all their lives – but some greet it not with joy but with suspicion: 'Where did this man get all this?'

Rather than judging by the fruits of what he says and does, they judge by social rank and privilege: 'Surely, this is the carpenter!' You can almost hear them muttering: 'They let any old riffraff preach these days!'

This grudging prejudice prevents them from receiving God's grace. Jesus carries on his mission regardless, but he is amazed at their unbelief – at their stubborn resistance to an experience which could have been life-changing.

There is the same singularity of purpose when Jesus sends the disciples out two by two, telling them to focus on their mission, not wasting time where they are not welcome, but moving on to the next place. The way in which they are to carry out this mission is almost as material beggars: no bread, no bag, no money, no second tunic, no boots only sandals – in other words, none of the resources that would make them independent of the people they are going to visit. These are the things which a prudent traveller would carry in order to be able to eat and to keep themselves warm at night. But these disciples are not to carry even the necessities of life, let alone arrive and impress people by their glossy wealth and generosity in the way that many present-day missions try to do.

This is an open-handed mission, and the first open hand belongs to the disciples as they ask for hospitality. Ironically, it is this vulnerability that means that the disciples are invited into the heart of a village – staying with local people, hearing their stories and concerns, speaking to them in a way that is direct and personal about the good news of the Kingdom of God, rather than delivering a pre-packed message.

This is only one model of mission of the range found in Scripture, so it will not always be applicable to where we are – but it stands in striking contrast to a power-dressed message designed to impress.

Meditation of a sister of Jesus:

I can't tell you how proud we were! To see Jesus, standing there in our synagogue, teaching with such authority – it was a sight to behold.

But not everyone agreed. They *would* have done, I'm sure of it, had they listened, but their minds were closed to anything he might say.

Why? Because they thought they knew him – because it was Jesus, the lad they'd watched grow up among them – who'd played in their streets and helped in his dad's workshop – who they had walked, talked, laughed, and cried with across the years. And yes, though none spelt it out, because this was the boy who, all those years ago, had been born under a cloud, causing heads to nod and tongues to wag. We know all about you, they were thinking – so they took offence and turned their backs.

Would *we* have been different, I wonder, with the roles reversed, had Jesus been *their* brother instead of ours? I like to think so – but I'm not so sure, for sadly, familiarity in us all, breeds contempt.

That's what happened in his hometown – and because they wouldn't listen, they couldn't hear.

Don't let that be true of you. Don't think you know it all.

Remember that if you're not open, you can't receive. It is as stark and simple as that.

Prayer:

Loving God, it shouldn't happen, but it does. What once moved us to outpourings of wonder now leaving us cold. We pass by with barely a second thought things which previously brought joy to our heart and praise to our lips – the view that filled us with awe – the rainbow – the music – the sights – the sounds – each becomes so familiar that we grow blasé about it.....and our lives are left the poorer.

It is the same story in relation to you, perhaps there most of all – the good news of Christ becoming so well known to us that we take it for granted – no longer as thrilled as we once were – no longer inspired to gratitude and worship.

Forgive us and help us to hear it again as though for the first time – to experience afresh the miracle of your grace as if we have never tasted it before.

However long we have known you, grant that the old, old story will, for us, be ever new. **Amen.**

The words to ‘O God our help in ages past’ written by Isaac Watts [1674-1748] Singing the Faith 132

1 O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.

2 Under the shadow of thy throne thy saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is thine arm alone, and our defence is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God, to endless years the same.

4 A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.

5 The busy tribes of flesh and blood, with all their cares and fears,
are carried downward by the flood, and lost in following years.

6 Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.

7 O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
be thou our guard while life shall last, and our eternal home.

Closing Prayer and Blessing:

Lord, you sent your disciples into the world to share your word with those in need –
may we approach this coming week with a similar desire.

You sent them carrying little, but trusting much –
may we live this week with a similar attitude.

May our lives be less about us and our needs,
and more about you, and your love and care for all people in all places and circumstances.

May we love as you love.

We ask it in your name. **Amen.**

And may the love of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – be with you and those you love and for whom you pray, this day and onward throughout all eternity. **Amen.**