

WORSHIP AT HOME – 3RD OCTOBER 2021 -WAITING ON GOD

Dear Friends,

The message of this week's readings runs counter to the consumer culture that puts 'me' and 'my needs' centre stage. Jesus' disciples seem preoccupied with what they lack so Jesus uses surprising images to amuse and shock them. He directs his disciples away from themselves and towards God.

I hope that this week finds you well and looking forward and I wish you all every blessing as always.

Margaret.

Call to worship:

Do you trust in the Lord? **We do.**

Do you delight in the Lord? **We do.**

Will you commit your way to the Lord? **We will.**

Will you wait quietly for the Lord? **We will.**

Will you welcome the Lord when he comes? **We will. Alleluia!**

God of the universe, through your Son you have brought us to salvation and called us to a dedicated life; not because we are deserving but because you are gracious and loving, and your heart goes out to all you have made.

Receive our praise and bless our worship as we join together as your people and lift our hearts to your glory. **Amen**

The words to 'All I once held dear' written by Graham Kendrick [b.1950] Singing the Faith 489

1 All I once held dear, built my life upon,
all the worlds reveres and wars to own,
all I once thought gain I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now compared to this.

*Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,
there is no greater thing.*

*You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness – and I love you, Lord.*

2 Now my heart's desire is to know you more,
to be found in you and known as yours.

To possess by faith what I could not own,
all-surpassing gift of righteousness.

Knowing you, Jesus.....

3 Oh to know the power of your risen life,
and to know you in your sufferings.

To become like you in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live and never die.

Knowing you, Jesus.....

Prayers:

We praise you, Lord, for watching over us and for patiently waiting till we are ready to trust you. Thank you for accepting the raindrops of our faith and for making them into an ocean.

Accept all we bring in our hearts, and bless us with the confidence to know that – together and alone – we are your children, your family and your disciples in the world today.

We are sorry that we don't always live as we should.

Forgive us, Lord, when we watch others do the work we could help with – when we let others wait on us when we could serve them; if ever we look down on those we consider the little people of the world and dismiss the small things of life – forgive us, and renew us with your spirit of joy and gratitude, of generosity and grace. We pray in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

A personal Prayer:

Lord, help me to balance my trust in you and my need for reassurance,
that I may remain confident when praised and when criticised,
that I may find joy in jobs that are noticed and those that are not,
and that I may remain prayerful when answers come, and when there is silence.
Lord, help me to celebrate my smallness and my greatness, through the ups and downs – through thick and thin.
I ask you this in Jesus' precious name. **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.

2 Timothy 1: 1-14:

From Paul, Christ's missionary, sent out by God to tell men and women everywhere about the eternal life he has promised them through faith in Jesus Christ.

To: Timothy, my dear son. May God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord shower you with kindness, mercy and peace.

How I thank God for you, Timothy. I pray for you every day, and many times during the long nights I beg my God to bless you richly. He is my fathers' God and mine, and my only purpose in life is to please him. How I long to see you again. How happy I would be for I remember your tears as we left each other. I know how much you trust the Lord, just as your mother Eunice and your grandmother Lois do; and I feel sure you are still trusting him as much as ever.

This being so, I want to remind you to stir into flame the strength and boldness that is in you, that entered into you when I laid my hands upon your head and blessed you. For the Holy Spirit, God's gift, does not want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong, and to love them and enjoy being with them. If you will stir up this inner power, you will never be afraid to tell others about our Lord, or to let them know that I am your friend even though I am here in jail for Jesus' sake. You will be ready to suffer with me for the Lord, for he will give you strength in suffering.

It is he who saved us and chose us for his holy work, not because we deserved it but because that was his plan long before the world began – to show his love and kindness to us through Christ. And now he has made all this plain to us by the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who broke the power of death and showed us the way of everlasting life through trusting him. And God has chosen me to be his missionary, to preach to the Gentiles and teach them.

That is why I am suffering here in jail and I am certainly not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust and I am sure that he is able to safely guard all that I have given him until the day of his return. Hold tightly to the pattern of truth I taught you, especially concerning the faith and love Christ Jesus offers you. Guard well the splendid God-given ability you received as a gift from the Holy Spirit who lives within you.

Luke 17: 5-10:

One day the apostles said to the Lord: 'We need more faith. Tell us how to get it.'

‘If your faith were only the size of a mustard seed,’ Jesus answered, ‘it would be large enough to uproot that mulberry tree over there and send it hurtling into the sea! Your command would bring instant results! When a servant comes in from ploughing or taking care of sheep, he doesn’t just sit down and eat, but first prepares his master’s meal and serves him his supper before he eats his own. And he is not even thanked, for he is merely doing what he is supposed to do. Just so, if you merely obey me, you should not consider yourselves worthy of praise. For you have simply done your duty!’

Comment:

The disciples had decided that their faith was weak and asked Jesus to increase their faith. Jesus realised that it wasn’t great faith that they needed, but rather a faith in a great God.

We too need to distinguish between faith and belief. When it comes to belief, we are told that even the devil believes with fear and trembling. Belief is to do with how our minds work and how we see the world. Many people believe in God – but are weak in their faith.

Faith is about a loving relationship with God – closeness to a great and powerful God.

Faith is not just to know with our mind but also to experience it in our lives and in our heart.

Faith is allowing God to work in us and through us; it is to experience his love for us.

In Lamentations 3: 22 & 23, we read: ‘The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness’

This can be seen expressed in the hymns: ‘Great is Thy faithfulness’ and ‘New every morning is the love’ as they express the shining presence and love of God towards us.

David Adams writes in his book of Sermon Illustrations: ‘It is interesting to note that a baby lamb or any small creature thrives better by looked after by its mother than by humans. The relationship is as important as the food it needs. Many modern psychologists would say that a thriving relationship – love – is the power that enables people to thrive and to live to the full. A baby can go through hell if it feels it has been left on its own. Teenagers often get into trouble when they have been given everything they wanted but not love. When relationships break down it affects our whole way of living. This is as true about our relationship with God as our relationship with each other. Jesus suggests that faith, that relationship with God, is the most powerful thing in the world.’

We often hear the phrase: ‘Faith can move mountains’. Something which seems impossible to achieve becomes possible if we have faith. Things which are impossible to manage on our own become possible by our relationship with God, for he gives us the power – power which we have not got without him.

It is God who made the world and us – we owe everything to him. Our creation, salvation and preservation are all gifts from God, so when we say we do something for God it is our duty and our joy.

‘Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine,

demands my soul, my life, my all. [from: ‘When I survey the wondrous cross’ by Isaac Watts. StF 287]

It may be possible to obey the law without love – but if we love then we can achieve far more than the law asks of us. We serve God – this is not to appease him or to repay a debt [though we are indeed greatly indebted to him]. It is to give our love to God who loves us.

We are loved by God and we love him – and to live in that relationship is to live by faith.

The words to ‘Father, I place into your hands’ written by Jenny Hewer [b. 1945] Singing the Faith 519

1 Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do.

Father, I place into your hands the times that I’ve been through.

Father, I place into your hands the way that I should go,
for I know I always can trust you.

2 Father, I place into your hands my friends and family.

Father, I place into your hands the things that trouble me.
Father, I place into your hands the person I would be,
for I know I always can trust you.

3 Father, we love to see your face, we love to hear your voice.
Father, we love to sing your praise and in your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with you and in your presence rest,
for we know we always can trust you.

4 Father, I want to be with you and do the things you do.
Father, I want to speak the words that you are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones that you will draw to you,
for I know that I am one with you.

Prayers:

Living God, we pray for those wrestling with difficult and demanding questions – those facing complex matters of conscience – those struggling with confusing moral decisions – those wrestling with controversial social issues and those grappling with challenging theological concerns.

Grant to all in such situations your wisdom, and help them to find the right way forward.

We pray for those who are faced with important yet important choices – between good and evil; right and wrong; truth and falsehood; love and hate; between the way of the world and the way of Christ; the way of self and the way of service.

Give to all faced with such choices the courage to take your way.

We pray for your Church – save it from naïve fundamentalism – from judgmental attitudes – from being too dogmatic in their belief, thinking that they have the answers to every situation.

Grant to your people everywhere the humility to recognise that asking questions is a part of faith.

Living God, we pray for ourselves as day by day we are confronted with the need to choose. Sometimes the choice is easy, sometimes confusing – sometimes easy, sometimes hard – sometimes mattering little, sometimes much.

But help us, whatever the case, to gladly accept the responsibility of choosing, recognising that it is a privilege of being human.

Help us to decide wisely, seeking your will and responding to your guidance.

Help us to admit our error when we choose wrongly and be ready to change our decisions when necessary.

And help us to remember when we go astray that you are always there to help us start again.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer in the name of Christ. Amen.**

Meditation of the Apostle James [by Nick Fawcett]:

We lacked faith, no doubt about it. Despite everything we'd heard Jesus say and seen him do, we still struggled to believe he could work through people as ordinary as us – so we asked him, straight out, for more. And I tell you what, slowly but surely we've received it, trust and conviction growing imperceptibly each day.

But if that's given us heart, the answer that day gave us yet more, for he reminded us that, through him, even the smallest, most feeble faith can do great things.

I'm no gardener, it's true, but even I marvel at the way a tiny seed can produce such awesome results – bushes, shrubs, even mighty trees, growing from what was once tossed on the breeze.

And that's what he was saying to us – that our flawed belief in him, frail and vulnerable though it was, could yield the most surprising results, bearing fruit out of all proportion to what we put in.

We needed to hear that more than you might imagine, especially after he was taken from us, for who were we to continue his ministry, eleven ordinary men in a hostile world?

It seemed hopeless – utterly beyond us; and so it would have been without Jesus – but in his strength, through his Spirit, it's been a different story, his love growing in people's hearts – insignificant things leading to surprising results!

Remember that when you feel up against it – when the challenge seems big and your resources small. Though you may not believe it possible, he can work through people like you, little by little bringing his purpose to fulfilment – and he'll go on doing so until his kingdom has come and his will is done.

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When we're up against a challenge, Lord, life asking more of us than we feel up to facing, increase our faith, not in ourselves but in you. Remind us that *we* can't do – *you* can. **Amen.**

Illustration. [David Adam]

George Matheson looked forward to a good life. He was studying for the ministry. He was preparing to marry the one he loved.

Then he began to go blind. His world began to go into darkness. He lost many of his friends, and his loved one decided she could not cope with a blind man and left him.

His world was shaken – but not his relationship with God. George Matheson wrote the hymn: 'O Love that will not let me go'. The second verse begins: 'O Light that followest all my way' and the third, 'O joy that sleekest me through pain.'

George had faith in a great God. The final verse: 'O Cross that liftest up my head,' affirms not only his steadfast relationship but God's relationship with him.

Now that is faith.

The words to 'O Love that wilt not let me go' written by George Matheson [1842-1906]. StF 636

1 O love, that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee:

I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller, be.

2 O light that followest all my way, I yield my flickering torch to thee;
my heart restores its borrowed ray, that in thy sunshine's blaze it's day
may brighter, fairer be.

3 O joy that sleekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee:
I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain,
that morn shall tearless be.

4 O cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be.

Closing Prayer:

May you find joy in your duties, hope in your heart and faith the size of a mustard seed, to guide and empower you, moment by moment, day by day in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

And may the blessing of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – be with us all this day and forever, his love shining through us to all whom we love and all for whom we pray. **Amen**