



Order of Worship - Sunday 20th September 2020

Centring Words:

Praise to our God, who brings us into a future of hope and life.

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Hymn StF 88 Praise to the Lord the Almighty, the King of creation!

Opening Prayers:

O God, I know you are everywhere and with us at all times.

I may not be able to go to those places which are special to me, but I can still praise and worship you.

I may not be able to meet with all those who encourage and support me, but I can still praise and worship you.

I may have only glimpses of your wonderful creation in my small garden, but I can still praise and worship you.

I may have to rely on our technological devices, Television, Computers, and Telephones to see what is going on in the world and to talk to other people, but I can still praise and worship you.

For whatever situation I find myself in, you are with me.

I adore and praise you for your generosity to me, for your care for me and for all you give me in this world you made and entrusted to us to care for and enjoy.

I know that I have not always managed to follow your ways,

I do not always care for the world properly;

I do not always care for others as I should;

.....

O God I am sorry that I do not always listen to your voice. Forgive me and shout at me that I may hear you above the clamour of my own noise.

.....

I thank you that you forgive us.

I praise and worship you.

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Hymn StF 76 Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising

Reading: Psalm 150

Reflection

The Book of Psalms is an astonishingly comprehensive mirror of life as most people experience it. The Psalms bring before God in prayer

and praise the whole gamut of human emotions and experience: joy and sorrow, faith and doubt, anger and fear, health and sickness, failure and success, confidence and despair. There is shouting and whispering, feasting and starving, laughter and crying, dancing and mourning, merriment and misery. All the moods and memories, expectations and experiences that get woven into life are all mirrored in the Psalms.

In the Psalms we can find expressions of faith and confidence in adversity and perplexity which can strengthen us in our own adversity and trouble. Some express penitence which rescue us from despair and confirms our faith that our God hears and forgives. Others, like today's Psalm 150 are full of exultant praise of God and thanksgiving for what he has and is doing. Psalm 150 completes the psalter with a fanfare, it recalls us to the highest object of our worship, the praise of our mighty and holy God.

The psalm begins with a call to "Praise God in His sanctuary". We use the word sanctuary to describe special places where we worship God. The Israelites' first sanctuary was a tent, later it became the temple in Jerusalem. The Israelites' places of sanctuary were where God appeared to His people; the sanctuary symbolised His presence. But the Psalmist calls us to "Praise God in His mighty firmament", the great vault of Heaven the traditional abode of God. It is a call to recognise that God is not a prisoner of the place of sanctuary, he is not confined to the Temple, our church building. Nor is our praise to be restricted to a special day of the week in a special building. We should praise God and seek His presence everywhere and at anytime.

"Praise God for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His exceeding greatness." Israel's Psalmody often celebrates Gods mighty deeds, His acts of creation, His deliverance from slavery and his preservation of them as His chosen people. It is very easy as 21st Century people surrounded by astounding discoveries and developments in science and technology to forget that all these things were created by God and waiting for us to find them. Despite our increasing ability to send information anywhere in the world in seconds, we tend to talk less with each other, than at each other. Despite our ability to cure so many diseases, we ration their availability by people's ability to pay. Despite being able to make more with less and less human work we have not learnt to share our wealth out equally. So some starve whilst others get obese, some are homeless whilst others live in great mansions with many empty rooms. We have devised ever more effective ways to kill each other, but not how to work together for the good of all. We abuse the

power that our Creator has given us, and praise ourselves for our “cleverness”.

As Christians we believe that God’s saving acts reach their climax in the saving work of Christ. The Infinite became an infant; the Cross the secret of his power for the salvation of humanity; his resurrection the proof of the power of the Lord God to save. A grateful Christian will never forget God’s mighty deeds and will always praise Him for them.

The Psalmist calls on all the instruments known to him to help in the praise of God. From the loud and blaring trumpet, clanging cymbal, melodic lute and harp, all have their place in God’s praise. Worship of God is not to be a gloomy, miserable experience, but joy and happiness.

All these different instruments will at times create a discord. In life there are similar times when we have an inward struggle between what we want to do and what we know God is calling us to do. There are times when we know what we should do, but the majority of our companions favour the opposite – perhaps towards refugees, people of colour, the homeless. Do we stand up for what we believe in, or do we keep quiet for fear of alienation. Out of such situations God can bring forth harmony. Where there is a clash of experiences, God can transform them.

“Let everything that breathes praise the Lord” The psalmist sweeps aside any distinction between priest and layperson as to who can praise God. Every voice in heaven and earth, every musical instrument devised by human ingenuity is called upon to praise the Living God. The human voice is the most wonderful of instruments. The Hallelujah Chorus in Handel’s oratorio *Messiah* would not be as stirring without the human voices and the instruments working together. In the orchestra of praise every member has an equally important part to play. Too often we hear of people, who in the words of Frank Sinatra’s song, “I did it my way”, have never really worked in harmony with others. They have forgotten John Donne’s poem “No man is an Island entire of itself” ending with “seek not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee”. We are made to live in community and in co-operation and harmony with each other and with God, made possible through the death of Jesus Christ. It is to this elevation of God and harmony with our neighbours that Psalm 150 calls us.

The psalm ends with “Praise the Lord”. It is not a mere shout of empty and superficial praise. It sounds forth praise from the heart of a world that has discovered the cost to God of the world’s redemption. A world that has glimpsed that in the heart of the Living God there is a Cross. It calls us in our turn to praise God, not only with our lips, but also with our lives.

These are to be poured out in sacrificial service through the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. In this way we join in praise with all God's creation, everywhere, now and in eternity.

If our lives were lived in a spirit of praise what effect would it have on the world? Live that praise centred life and discover personal growth and satisfaction never dreamed possible. The Old Testament challenge comes ringing down the centuries – Let the Amen sound from His New Testament people. Praise the Lord, Alleluia! Amen.

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Hymn StF 94: To God be the glory, great things he has done!

Prayer of Intercession;

O God, I bring before you the things that bother me.

I pray for all those who have been infected with Covid 19, bring them healing and strength to go forward.

I pray for all those affected by the lockdown,

facing loss of jobs;

facing loss of homes;

coping with financial insecurity having used up their savings;

having to make the hard decision which employees to make redundant and which to keep on to try to make the business survive;

Give them strength and confidence that there is a good future ahead.

I pray for all those re-starting in education and starting a new phase in their education, worrying about the risk of catching Covid 19, worrying about how they will cope with the new learning environment, and how they can make new friends in the covid world.

Give them strength and confidence that there is a good future ahead.

I pray for those in government and administration, struggling to balance the demands of health and finance and social wellbeing.

Give them the wisdom to make the right decisions for all in society.

I pray for myself, my family and my friends that we may meet up again, to see and touch each other in safety and peace after the Covid Pandemic.

I ask all this through Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour.

The Lord's Prayer.

Hymn StF 526 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy

Closing Prayer The Lord gives strength to his people

The Lord blesses his people with peace. Amen

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