



Personal Service for 4th October 2020

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Psalm 19

When I turn my computer on in the morning, I am greeted by an image chosen by Microsoft. I am sure I can change the settings, but I like to see what mystery is awaiting. Sometimes it is a natural landscape, sometimes a city at night, sometimes a scene of animal or insect life; whatever it is, it is often something amazing and remarkable. Let me invite you to:

Stop, wait, wonder –

Close your eyes. Recall a place you have been or something that you have seen that was beautiful.

Was it on the TV? Your computer? In real life?

Was it in the city, a valley, gazing from a hilltop, somewhere else?

Just remember its beauty for a while, and why it was beautiful to you.

What were the sounds, sights, smells that were part of that beauty?

Just stay there for a while, for as long as you want or need to.

When you are ready, remember this:

**GOD MADE THIS POSSIBLE!
THIS BEAUTY SPOKE OF GOD!
AMEN!**

How are you feeling?

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Psalm 19

Hymn: For the beauty of the earth (HP 333, StF 102,MP152)

Let us pray:

Gracious and Holy God,
in joy we declare the goodness of your nature,
the perfection of your love,

the magnificence of your works.
Creator God, Lover of Creation,
giver of food and drink, clothing and warmth,
love and hope, life in all its goodness;
With heart and mind and voice
We praise and adore you.

Jesus our Lord, Wisdom and Word,
lover of outcasts, friend of the poor,
one of us, yet one with God,
crucified and risen, life in the midst of death:
With heart and mind and voice
We praise and adore you.

Holy Spirit, storm and breath,
building bridges, breaking chains.
opening doors, waking the oppressed,
unseen and unexpected, untameable energy of life:
With heart and mind and voice
We praise and adore you.

Holy Trinity, source of all sharing,
in whom we love, and meet, and know our neighbour,
Oneness-by-Communion, unbonded dance of love,
life in all its fullness, making all things new:
With heart and mind and voice
We praise and adore you.

Silence

In the light of the goodness of God, let us humbly confess our sins:

Living and Loving God,
Generous and Gracious Lord,
We humble ourselves before you,
conscious of the ingratitude of our lives,
and doubting you in our hearts.

You gave life and creation,
and we have selfishly sought to possess it for ourselves;
Lord, hear us.
Lord, forgive us.

you fulfilled your promises, but we fail to trust you amid our current struggles.
Lord, hear us.
Lord, forgive us.

We cry out in complaint, but we are not always justified to do so.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, forgive us.

We have not been angered by injustice and have been complacent in its sight.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, forgive us.

Transform our hearts through the perfect working of your grace.

We ask in the name of Christ.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Reading 2: Philippians 3.4b-14

Hymn: Take my life (HP 705, StF 566, MP 624)

Reading 1: Matthew 21.33-46

Reflection:

A Holy Teacher had reached the outskirts of the village and settled down under a tree for the night when a villager came running up to him and said,

"The stone! The stone! Give me the stone!"

"What stone?" asked the holy teacher.

"Last night the spirit of God appeared to me in a dream", said the villager, "and told me that if I went to the outskirts of the village at dusk I should find a holy teacher who would give me a precious stone that would make me rich forever."

The teacher rummaged in his bag and pulled out a stone.

"He probably meant this one", he said, as he handed the stone to the villager. "I found it on a forest path some days ago. You can certainly have it."

The man gazed at the stone in wonder. It was a diamond, probably the largest diamond in the whole world, for it was as large as a person's head.

He took the diamond and walked away. All night he tossed about in bed, unable to sleep. Next day at the crack of dawn he woke the teacher and said, "Give me the wealth that makes it possible for to give this diamond away so easily."

I wonder – what do you value and cherish? What wealth do you long for: the wealth of the diamond or the wealth to give it away?

In my experience we are often taught explicitly and implicitly to long for the diamond and not the wealth to give it away. Jesus, I think highlights that in the parable of the vineyard we read. Also, Paul is wrestling with that misplaced wealth in realising he no longer relies on how good a religious man he was, but on what Jesus has said to him, and done for him.

So, I wonder again – what do you value and cherish? What wealth do you long for?

You may wish at this point to undertake one of these exercises:

1. Just sit quietly with God and listen for a voice that tells you how you are loved. Enjoy the pleasure that gives.
2. You could take out your bank statement at this point and just look at what it says about what you value – what is essential and what is choice? What is for you and what is for others?
3. If you know you have resources you can share, then take time to listen to God and ask who, or what, God would like you to be generous to?
4. Re-read the passage from Matthew and ask yourself, in whom do you see yourself?
5. Re-read the passage from Philippians and then write your own version of it, using your own story and words.
6. “Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus”. What do they mean to you?

A Time for Others – Please take time to pray about anything or anyone that came to mind as you journeyed to this place.

Offering:

I invite you to look carefully at the well know hymn “And can it be.” I want you to read it allowed being careful to recognise the QUESTIONS in the first verse.

Hymn: And can it be? (HP 216, StF 345, MP 33)

Blessing

**Let the beauty of God be known to us;
Let the wealth of love overflow in us;
Let the presence of God never be unknown to us.
Amen.**

The Blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon us. Amen.