



## Personal Service for Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022

### Call to Worship.

Isaiah chapter 55, verse 1: The Lord says, “Come, everyone who is thirsty – here is water. Come, you that have no money – buy corn and eat! Come! Buy wine and milk – it will cost you nothing!

**H & P. 460 (S t F. 401): Come, sinners to the gospel feast.**

### Prayers of praise, thanksgiving and repentance.

Come, come, come – You bid us welcome, Oh Father God. We praise you because none, who seek you, are excluded. We praise you because you do not judge by our standards. We praise you because we are welcome. I praise you because I am welcome, poor, hungry and sinful as I am.

This is your day and my home is your sanctuary for is the place where I can be in your presence. Thank you, Father of all humankind.

On this day of celebration it is right to give thanks for your bounteous provision. Provision for our bodies, our minds and souls. Thank you for not leaving us seeking; without being able to find our joy in you. Thank you for not turning your face away from us; as we might turn our faces away from others. Thank you for showing us that the perishable is of man, and, that, the eternal is of you. There awaits a glorious welcome, for all, in your glorious kingdom.

Come! We hear your voice beckoning us. So we join with the worldwide family Christ in giving you our thanks and praise.

Silence – for personal prayers of thanks.

As we come in hunger, thirst and need we acknowledge that we have not always been as welcoming of others. We remember the times when we could have given welcome to someone but didn't. We remember the times when we have silently condemned others, without any knowledge of them, because they didn't meet our standards. We remember the times when we turned our faces away, because the pain, of what we were seeing and

hearing, was just too much to bear. We are sorry, Father God, for not always wanting to join in with your welcoming word – come!

Silence.

Jesus, our Lord, came to seek the lost; to redeem the fallen, and to free all mankind from the bondage of their own sins. When He died and rose again, we were included in the sacrificial reward. We are free to come in to God's presence because we believe in his son. We praise you Father, Son and Spirit. Amen.

### **The readings for today.**

Psalm 63, verses 1 - 8.

Luke chapter 13, verses 1 – 9.

**H & P. 697 (S t F. 556, MP 396): Just as I am, without one plea.**

### **The Address.**

Psalm 63, verse 8; "I cling to you and your hand keeps me safe."

What hope! What joy! What promise!" To a world shattered by war, distrust, pandemic, crime, mistruths and held in the bonds of fear. "I cling to you and your hand keeps me safe." Such confidence from King David, not always as heroic or just as some might believe. Battle scarred and sin scarred. Not the perfect example of a Godly man but one whom God chose to use. An example of hope for all who were, are and will be bound by sin. An example to me.

I wonder if those who were so ready to tell Jesus about the fate of the Galileans. Those who relished the thought that someone could be so sinful that God allowed Pilate to intervene, seemingly on His behalf, and put them to death. I wonder if the reporters remembered how King David had deliberately ordered that Uriah be put, defencelessly, in the front line of battle; just so David could have his wife. And, did they remember Nathan's condemnation of his King? It's all too easy to condemn. Maybe, it's not as easy to repent of our own sin and stand in the presence of God and ask for forgiveness. It is easier to see what we want to see, to listen to what we want to hear and to condemn that which doesn't fit in with our perception of

how we think the world order should be. So when those around Him, condemn Jesus gives another example of fate. He speaks of the death of those in Siloam. The thinking is that both groups were taking part in religious practices, and not ones that were contrary to Jewish tradition. So, Jesus, reasoned they were both as innocent as each other – and as innocent as those who were acting as the media of that time.

Jesus then takes them out of the earthly in to the heavenly perspective. He spoke in parable; the only way it seems, for a people who looked but didn't see; who heard but didn't listen; who just didn't understand. The parable of the poor, unresponsive, fig tree. He spoke of the owner's desire to chop it down ..... and of the gardener's plea for just one more year. A year in which it might grow again; might redeem itself. But, of course, it would not be redeemed in its own strength. It would not be spared by its own roots and leaves – they had already failed it. It would be redeemed by the gardener's work, by his hands, by his sacrifice. A sacrifice of time, patience, love and care. Do you see God as the owner? And Jesus as the gardener? If so is there hope for the whole world, even in such as time as this? There surely is. God has the time. His time is not ours. Time, as we know it, is manufactured. It can be as false as lies. It can be as destructive as the plastic filling our oceans. It can be as fearsome as war. This is not hyperbole. Many have succumbed to the pressures of time and made themselves ill, or even died. The world works at the pace of men and we are not doing very well. Humankind wants power and wealth now, not in a year's time like the gardener asked for the fig tree. We live in a world that needs to turn back to Gods time, where a thousand years is as one day. We live in world that needs Jesus's loving care and patience. We live in a world that needs to hear God's voice and the beckoning word, "Come!"

The Lord teaches not to be fearful but to trust in His loving care. In these, seemingly dark, times may we put our trust in Him and in his power to nurture and save. Amen.

**H & P.402 (S t F. 696): For the healing of the nations.**

### **Prayers of Intercession.**

Silence.

Father God, you bid us "Come!" So we come to you with our concerns for this, your broken and needy world.

We pray for your church. Today, especially, we pray for churches that are in the midst of war. We thank you for those acting as places of refuge for all fleeing conflict. Lord, renew your Church's commitment and fervour to the care of the stateless, frightened and dismissed. May we echo your bidding, "Come!"

Silence.

We pray for all who have authority especially the leaders of warring nations. We pray for the governments of Ukraine, Russia, Afghanistan, Israel, Syria and Venezuela where war seems to be the answer to an unvoiced question. We pray that all in power will see it as a privilege and a means of service. We pray for our world, in conflict and despair, Lord. We hold on to your bidding, "Come!"

Silence.

We pray for all who no longer feel secure due to the rages of war, climate change, illness and the nearness of death. May they hear your bidding, "Come!"

Silence

We thank, Father, for all who heard your bidding, throughout all ages and, by whose example, we knew that we could come in to your comforting presence.

In the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ we offer these our prayers. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**H & P. 238 (S t F. 350, MP 266): I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship.**

We join, separately but together as the body of Christ, in the words of **The Grace.**