

Service for 17th October 2021 written by Erica Hartley



Call to Worship

Come and worship God
Bring to him your joys and your sorrows
And leave them in his care.
Use this time
to reflect on his word
and seek his way.

Hymn 443 Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Lord God, we come to worship and adore you.
You are mighty in power and abundant in love
you are timeless and unchanging
but still know each of us by name.
Your amazing grace is freely offered to us
And you are ready to meet us where we are
You call us to be your people in the world today
But you don't leave us on our own.
You stepped down and took human form in Jesus
In him you showed us how to serve others.
Lord, we trust that you go ahead of us preparing the way
So that we don't need to fear what is ahead
But be able to follow you wherever you lead.

But Lord, we sometimes go the wrong way:

Lord forgive us when we become proud and only think of ourselves.
Lord forgive us when we are not honest with ourselves, you or others.
Lord forgive us when we avoid doing your work.
Lord forgive us when we ignore your call to service.
Lord we are often ashamed when we remember things we have done or not
done and we don't deserve your grace. But you love us anyway and sent
Jesus, so that our sins can be forgiven through his suffering and death on the
cross.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Readings

Our Old Testament reading is taken from Isaiah and was written in the later part of Judah's exile in Babylon. It is one of the passages of poetry that talk of someone who was going to save the people by being a servant and suffering as a punishment for the sins of many.

Isaiah 53:4 – 12

In last week's gospel reading Jesus described how hard it was for some people to get into the Kingdom of God, you had to leave everything and follow him. There is then a section which is not included in the lectionary which has Jesus walking ahead towards Jerusalem, with those following being amazed and frightened. He took the disciples aside again and predicted for a 3rd time his suffering, death and resurrection. We then get to hear the disciple's reaction:

Mark 13:35 – 45

Hymn 272 From heaven you came

Sermon

There are some times in our lives when it seems like everything has been turned upside down. In times of illness, unemployment or bereavement or when a baby comes into a family and sometimes that journey is turned upside down again when it doesn't turn out as expected. We have all been turned upside down in one way or another by Covid 19 and although some things are starting to get back to what was before, others will have changed permanently.

There are many stories in various cultures about a rich young girl, who we usually call Cinderella, whose mother died and so her father married again, only for him to die too and her life was turned upside down as she was made to do the housework and became a servant. In our Gospel reading Jesus teaches the disciples that they have to turn their lives upside down from the norms of the day, not because they have lost everything or they are pushed into that position by others, but they choose to be a servant.

James and John were some of the first to be called by Jesus and along with Peter were the closest to him, they witnessed some very personal events in Jesus's life. They were also brothers, if you had siblings do you remember trying to get each other to ask your parents for something, 'you ask, no you ask, ok we will do it together.' So backing each other up, and thinking that they should have some recognition for their devotion, they went to ask Jesus a question.

When someone says to you, 'will you do me a really big favour?' What is your usual response? Is the first thing you do ask what that favour is? Jesus is the same, he wants to know what they want. James and John's perhaps over confident question was if they could sit either side of him in glory. On this occasion he can't give them an easy answer, he has a question for them in return, can they drink the cup that he will drink, a cup which to him spoke of suffering and shame. Can they share in his baptism, his calling to the cross?

There was still confusing among the disciples about what being the Messiah meant, it wouldn't be until Jesus's death and resurrection that the disciples would start to understand that Jesus was the Messiah that we read about in Isaiah 53. James and John were thinking that Jesus would be in glory as a king on his throne not as a criminal on the cross. They did indeed in the end share in Jesus's cup and baptism. James died at the hands of Herod Agipppo in 44 AD, there is uncertainty about what happened to John but they were both faithful to their mission after the resurrection whatever the cost.

If we are really honest we are a bit like James and John and the other disciples. We want to be the best, to be the most important, the first one, it's our human nature to want to get ahead. Who wouldn't want to sit next to someone important and be able to put your voice into the conversation to influence decisions, but the disciples motivation at that time was selfish ambition and power, not the love that motivated Jesus.

If we really want to be followers of Jesus he says we have to turn our lives upside down, to stop thinking in the way that others think and become humble and serve others, not just be a servant, but the original Greek word 'doulos' means slave, the lowest of the low. I think maybe we have forgotten what it means to be a servant, we don't live in a country where many people are servants anymore. We have certainly outlawed slavery, although we know that it still goes on in many forms, but they might not touch us as closely as they would have done in the past. In 1800's many young girls and some boys went out and were servants before they married and depending on your income you might have been able to hire a servant to help with the day to day running of a house and family. We've seen it on various TV programs, servants stay in the background and do all the dirty, hard jobs of the house that no one else wants to do. They are humble and modest, they often do their work unnoticed.

Have we forgotten how to be humble in the me, me, me culture of today, being humble doesn't mean we fade so far into the background that we don't do anything and get lazy and timid. There are times when it is right that we push ourselves forward speak out about oppression and abuse. There is a need to fight for justice and it is one of the ways we can serve others and we can do that at home on our own or in a larger congregation.

Let's use Jesus as our example as the way to eternal life, let's turn our lives upside down, be honest about our motivations and how we should change them. Then be humble and obedient until the end, whatever that end might be for us. Then we will be with Jesus in Glory when the Kingdom of God is fully revealed to all.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your wonderful creation, which is especially glorious in the autumn sunshine, we remember that you entrusted it to our care. As we live each day, show us how to be better stewards of the world around us and use it's resources wisely so that all may be able to share in the riches of your world instead of many suffering because of our greed.

Heavenly Father, We thank you for the Christian community of which we are a part and for the world wide Christian Church that shares your love in places we can't reach. We remember those who have served you by nurturing us on our journey of faith. We pray for those who leave their homes and serve you in this country or abroad or stay right here in this place and serve on their doorstep.

Heavenly Father, We thank you that we live in a country, where all can have a voice and opportunities to influence local and national leaders. We remember those who step up to serve in many different ways. Lord we pray that those who lead and serve us are given wisdom and compassion to right injustices and care for those who are sick or vulnerable and support those who are weak.

Heavenly Father, We thank you that you have given us hands to do your work, feet to walk beside people, ears and eyes to notice people's needs. We remember that you have asked us to do your work in this world. Lord we pray for all those who need your loving care today, for those who are ill or lonely, for those who feel anxious or hopeless. Help us to respond to each and every need that you put before us, with love.

Lord help us to remember that sometimes it is our actions that are part of your plan for answering prayers. Help us to be generous with our time, talents and wealth so that your Kingdom can advance. Accept these and all the prayers in our hearts in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Hymn 415 The Church of Christ

Blessing

As we leave this time of worship
Strive to be honest in your actions
Serve those in need with humility
And be obedient to the work God has called you to.