



Personal service for 7th February 2021

Call to Worship (from Psalm 147)

Praise the LORD.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power ... his understanding has no limit.

Praise the LORD.

Hymn: StF 115; HP 338: Praise ye the Lord! Tis good to raise our hearts
or **MP564** Praise to the Lord.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Lord we come to you in praise of all that you have done.

We praise you for the wonderful creation,
each star is known by you,

you care for all living things from the tiny primrose
to the towering trees in the amazon.

Your power sends the rain which makes the grass and food grow
so that all living creatures can be fed.

You spread snow over the land in winter bringing beauty
and a time of rest for the earth.

Even when you throw down hail and send the icy winter winds
we know you are there with us.

Lord God, you don't just concern yourself with nature
but you hold all your people close to you.

You build each of us up and heal the broken hearted.

You delight in all who turn to you
and put their hope in your unfailing love.

Lord share with us your peace as you reveal to us your word in this time of
worship.

We come to Him now, confessing that

- we have not shown His love and compassion in our caring for others especially at this time of Covid problems;
- we have been blind to, or pushed aside, the needs of the world. There is still hunger and homelessness, and also greed in our daily lives,
- we have denied your grace and power and missed opportunities to serve you.

We praise you, Lord, for your sacrifice on the cross which assures us of your forgiveness freely given to those who ask for it, so we come asking you Lord, to forgive all our shortcomings, and to renew us to work afresh for your kingdom. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Isaiah 40: 21-31

The author of this passage is generally known as Second Isaiah.

The words could have been part of a collection of prophecies of a disciple of the first Isaiah, the prophet from Jerusalem. But we are now in a later century and a different setting. Jerusalem is in ruins and Judah has ceased to exist. The words are intended for those who are in exile in Babylon, for Babylon is the new super power and replaced Assyria but now Babylon is under threat because of the might of Persia.

The prophet sees King Cyrus of Persia as being used by God to liberate the Jews from exile. God's people do not need to worry because God has got it planned out. He does not get tired or weary.

He intends to use Cyrus to take over Babylon and eventually the Jews will be allowed to return home. Our passage is encouraging us to trust in the Lord in the difficult times because he knows our needs and can give us the strength to face them and overcome them.

This is well expressed in two choruses in Singing the Faith

StF 89; Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord
and **StF 628**, Faithful One, so unchanging.

It is worth reflecting on their words, perhaps using them in prayer so here they are:

89

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord.

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord.

Our God, you reign forever.
Our hope, our strong deliverer.

*You are the everlasting God,
the everlasting God.*

You do not faint, you won't grow weary.

*You're the defender of the weak,
you comfort those in need;
you lift us up on wings like eagles.*

Brenton Brown and Ken Riley

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628

Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is the
anchor,
my hope is in you alone.

Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

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Many people are going through hard times at present with deaths from Covid touching many people, and fears for the future haunting others. The words

from this passage should offer hope. Perhaps they leave us with the challenge of how to convey their message to those we meet.

Prayers of intercession

Loving God, may the vision of your love, help us to be better at meeting the needs of those around us.

As we remember your love in sending Jesus, and the love that he showed for the outcasts in society: the beggar and the swindler, the prostitute, we pray for all people especially those working in deprived areas, those working in foodbanks, in hospitals, giving covid treatment.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for our world, for new governments for new European outcomes
We pray for the victims of current conflicts, remembering before you, loving God, children trained to hate and to fight, families turned into homeless refugees, and lands laid waste and made barren. We remember Nigerian families and those those driven insane by nightmare experiences and we pray for Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the work of our churches, we remember that you have called us to strive together for the coming of your kingdom of love and peace. We pray that you will equip us for the task, with the faith that knows that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

We pray for the people we know who need to know your love around them this day, those who are ill in body, mind or spirit, those who's employment or purpose in life seems to have disappeared and all those who struggle with depression or grief.

In the name of Jesus, Prince of Peace.

Amen.

Reading: Mark 1: 29 - 39

Mark's gospel is generally recognised as the earliest of the gospels. The author has been identified with John Mark, the young man who was there with the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, and who was the son of the Mary in whose home to the disciples used to meet in Jerusalem. (Acts 12: 12). Of course he also accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys and helped Peter a lot when he was in Rome so Mark must have had lots of contact with them both and plenty of opportunities to talk with them about the life of Christ and their experiences of Him.

It was after the deaths of both Peter and Paul that the gospel was thought to have been written, about 65 AD. One can imagine Mark eager to get all he had learnt from them written down while it was fresh in his mind.

This opening chapter is remarkable in that it moves quickly and smoothly from one significant event to another, painting a picture of Jesus being in control of each. His authority shines through. The Rabbis and leaders of the Pharisees when preaching in the synagogue would need to justify their teaching by referring to the laws of Moses, but the teaching of Jesus had its own quiet compelling authority.

His healings too, whether of physical or mental diseases were dealt with showing the same very effective though gentle authority. No wonder he soon attracted enormous crowds bringing their sick folk for healing. His compassion was not just for the Peter's mother-in-law, we see his need for prayer too. His authority over evil eventually led to the cross, which ultimately offers all true healing.

Hymn: StF 653; HP 395: O Christ the healer, we have come

Reading: 1 Corinthians 9: 16-23

We read here of Paul's passion for preaching the gospel. We may not have the same experiences as Paul but we all have some faith and good news to share offering people hope in hard times. The challenge for us and for our churches is how to best serve the needs in our communities, to show the love of Christ and to spread his liberating words.

Hymn: StF 415; HP 804, The church of Christ , in every age *or* **159MP**
forth in Thy name, O Lord, I go.

The Blessing

Loving Lord, may we know your blessing with us as we leave.

May we be prayerful in our preparations for tomorrow,
and strong in all we do in the coming week.

And may all our experiences be enriched by the knowledge that we are loved
by God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,**
and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all now and evermore. Amen.