



Sunday 21st June 2020

Compiled by Vicki Brown: Circuit Lay Assistant

This act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. Why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Draw close to God with these words of affirmation:

The Lord is here	<i>His Spirit is with us</i>
We need not fear	<i>His Spirit is with us</i>
We abide in peace	<i>His Spirit is with us</i>
We are immersed in love	<i>His Spirit is with us</i>
We continue in hope	<i>His Spirit is with us</i>
We rejoice in faith	<i>His Spirit is with us</i>

Hymn: Sweet is the work (StF 90, H&P 514, MP 645)

1] Sweet is the work, my God, my King,
To praise your name, give thanks and sing;
To show your love by morning light,
And talk of all your truth at night.

2] Sweet is the day of sacred rest,
No mortal cares disturb my breast;
O may my heart in tune be found
Like David's harp of solemn sound!

3] My heart shall triumph in my Lord,
And bless his works, and bless his word:
Your works of grace, how bright they shine!
How deep your counsels, how divine!

4] Then shall I bear a glorious part,
When grace has well refined my heart,
And fresh supplies of joy are shed,
Like holy oil to cheer my head.

5] Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below;
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal word of joy.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Let us pray together:

Loving God,

As I worship you, beginning to comprehend something of your might and majesty, may I sense your gracious presence with me. I come to you in humility, without pretence. You know the depths of my heart, my faults, failings and fears. Cleanse my heart and my thoughts from all that is not borne of your love. May this time now be a renewing and revitalising point in my journey of faith, as I travel in the footsteps of Jesus. Be my strength and my guide as I seek to serve you and glorify you through all I say and do. Amen

Reading: Jeremiah 20: 7-13 (NIV) - Jeremiah's complaint

You deceived me, LORD, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed.

I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me.

Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction.

So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long.

But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,"

his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones.

I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side!"

Denounce him! Let's denounce him!"

All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying, "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him."

But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonour will never be forgotten. LORD Almighty, you who examine the righteous and probe the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance on them, for to you I have committed my cause.

Sing to the LORD!

Give praise to the LORD!

He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked.

Reading: Matthew 10: 24-31 (NIV)

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to belike his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

"So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Reflection

Jeremiah is a great prophet to study. His ministry begins with him protesting to God his inadequacy to the task of being a prophet to the nations.

"I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you." (Jeremiah 1: 6-8)

Jeremiah has the task of warning of the impending defeat of Jerusalem and exile into Babylon, a message which unsurprisingly didn't go down too well. Today's reading from Jeremiah comes from the time he was arrested, flogged and put in stocks overnight at the orders of Pashhur. Pashhur was the chief of the Temple police. His son crops up in Chapter 38 as one of four who attempted to kill Jeremiah by throwing him down a dry well which was full of mud.

Much of Jeremiah's ministry brought him into conflict with those in power. He did not have an easy time at all. His complaint that God "deceived" him is better translated as "persuaded" or "coerced". It reflects that initial reassurance of God telling him not to be afraid and that he would be rescued. Battered and bruised, chained up in the stocks through the night, it's only natural that Jeremiah cries out to God, "You didn't tell me it would be this tough!" Or words to that effect...

And yet, along with the complaint comes the resolve to keep proclaiming the word of God. He can't shut up. When Pashhur releases him, Jeremiah says he will be called Magor-Missabib which means "Terror Everywhere". The man who abuses his power to stifle the word of God will get his comeuppance.

Time and again Jeremiah speaks up and is threatened and attacked. The rescue from the muddy well in Chapter 38 comes from an unlikely source. Who does God use to save Jeremiah? Ebedmelech, a Sudanese eunuch who was working at the palace. A man who was an outsider, unable to participate in worship at the Temple. This was a man who believed in God and who recognised Jeremiah as a true prophet. Ebedmelech rescues Jeremiah and God rescues Ebedmelech from the devastation of the overthrow of Jerusalem. Another example of God's grace reaching those who society deem less worthy.

The book of Jeremiah contains many beautiful and oft quoted passages. The thread of hope unbroken through the trials and tribulations of war and exile. Jeremiah obeyed God at great personal cost, but such was the fire in his heart, he kept going.

Jesus tells the disciples not to be afraid. Like Jeremiah, they will be proclaiming a message which will upset the status quo. Like Jeremiah they will be speaking truth to power. And like Jeremiah, they will see the grace of God in unexpected places.

Today we are still challenged to speak out. Where there is injustice and where power is abused. Who is God calling to stand up for the marginalised of human society? Who is God calling to proclaim that each person is valued and worth more than a sparrow or two? Our confidence in speaking is directly related to our belief in the message. Do we truly believe that God loves us all, uniquely, individually and equally?

The CEO of Christian Aid, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi has written a powerful article responding to the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent protests. If you are able to access it, it is well worth reading.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/black-lives-matter-everywhere>

She concludes by saying, "But I continue to have hope, because of all the people who believe that there is only one side: the side of dignity, respect and humanity.

As one human family, we are all connected. It is those people who make me believe that a time is coming when we each need to take a stand."

One of my favourite quotes from a film is in the Best Exotic Marigold Hotel where the hotel manager says "Everything will be alright in the end so if it is not alright it is not yet the end."

As Charles Wesley says: "Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee
Lost in wonder, love and praise!"

Please spend a moment reflecting on these words from the song 'Jeremiah' (Zero Church) sung by Suzzy and Maggie Roche

Call me Jeremiah

Jeremiah said the Lord

call me and I'll show you

great and mighty things you have not seen

words from Jeremiah 33

Humanifesto by Gerard Kelly

a) I want to be a grace guerrilla,
No longer a chameleon of karma;
The time has come to stand out
From the crowd.
I want to give forgiveness a fighting chance
Of freeing me,
To live in love
And live it our loud.

b) I want to drink deep
Of the foolishness of wisdom
Instead of swallowing the wisdom of fools
To find a source
In the deeper mines of meaning.
I want to search out the unsearchable,
To invoke the invisible,
To choose the truths
The TV hypnotists aren't screening.

c) No camouflage,
No entourage,
No smoothly fitting in.
I want a faith that goes further than face value
And a beauty that goes deeper than my skin.

d) I want to be untouched by my possessions
Instead of being possessed
By what I touch,
To test the taste
Of having nothing to call mine,
To hold consumption's cravings back,
To be content with luck or lack,
To live as well on water as on wine.

e) I want to spend myself
On those I think might need me,
Not spend
All I think I need on myself.
I want my heart
To be willing to make house calls.
Let those whose rope is at an end
Find in me a faithful friend.
Let me be known as one who rebuilds broken walls.

f) No camouflage,
No entourage,
No smoothly fitting in.
I want a faith that goes further than face value
And a beauty that goes deeper than my skin.

Let us pray together

Loving Lord,
You call us and empower us to serve you.
Guide and protect those who are risking their own safety for the safety and wellbeing of others.
In health and social care, the emergency services and other occupations that have a high level of risk.

Lord in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

Healing God,
We remember those who are suffering through ill health today. For their families and carers too. We remember those who are struggling with unseen conditions of depression and anxiety. Enfold them in your arms of love and grant each one true wholeness in you.

Lord in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

Liberating God,
Scripture tells of your tender love for a people enslaved and oppressed. In Jesus you declare freedom, justice and peace. Challenge us when our attitudes reflect more of the oppressor than the plight of the oppressed. Set us free from those attitudes that we may proclaim freedom to all who are enslaved in whatever way today.

Lord in your mercy *Hear our prayer*

Joyful God,
Your Kingdom values live in us by your Holy Spirit. May we follow Jesus rejoicing in your abundant grace and may we honour you by doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly each step of the way.

Lord in your mercy *Hear our prayer Amen*

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Love Divine (StF 503, H&P 267, MP 449)

1] Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven to earth come down, Fix in us thy humble dwelling, All thy faithful mercies crown. Jesu, thou art all compassion, Pure, unbounded love thou art; Visit us with thy salvation, Enter every trembling heart.	2] Come almighty to deliver Let us all thy life receive; Suddenly return, and never, Never more thy temples leave, Thee we would be always blessing, Serve thee as thy hosts above, Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing, Glory in thy perfect love.	3] Finish then thy new creation, Pure and spotless let us be; Let us see thy great salvation, Perfectly restored in thee: Changed from glory into glory, Till in heaven we take our place, Till we cast our crowns before thee, Lost in wonder, love and praise!
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Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Blessing

May Christ be your light;

Christ be your strength;

Christ be your peace;

Christ be your joy

This day and evermore. Amen

Original material by Vicki Brown

Songs published under CCLI No 558764

"Jeremiah" from the album "Zero Church" <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=OVWoiusiLK4&feature=share>

* The link to access this week's 'At Home' service on YouTube is: <https://youtu.be/fj-WnoMeDbQ>