



Sheffield URCS - Christian Aid Service
10th May 2020

Call to Worship - Psalm 24:1

God of all the Earth, be present with us now, in each of our homes,
As we connect together.
Build all homes, across your world, into a spiritual house,
A holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices
Acceptable to you through Jesus Christ, our risen redeemer and healer

HYMN

Make me a channel of your peace. Where there is hatred let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord; and where there's doubt, true faith in you:

*Oh, Master, grant that I may never seek, so much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand; To be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace. Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light; and where there's sadness, ever joy:

Make me a channel of your peace. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving of ourselves that we receive, and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Prayer of worship, thanks and confession

God of generosity and justice,
We praise you for a Parent's love that could not stand aloof and watch us suffer from afar
We praise you for a child's love that brought Christ to our world to share and to show
We praise you for the Holy Spirit's love that is now poured into the hearts of your people

The opposite of Love is not hate but indifference. Forgive us that we pride ourselves on our
lack of hatred, yet our hearts remain unmoved...

May God, who raised Christ from the dead, resurrect our hearts in the compelling Love
which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit - so that the fruits of this earth may be shared with all
your children. May your love give hope to all and unite us all - Amen



Find the Reading for the week in your Bible...

James 2, verses 1 to 8 and 15 to 18

The Apostle James challenges us to

- treat the poor with honour (vv 1-8) and
- demonstrate our faith with acts of generous kindness (vv 15-18)

Reflection (this week, our reflection comes from Hedley Siddall from Gleadless URC)

Martin Luther wasn't a fan of the epistle of James. I believe he even questioned why it was included in the Biblical Canon, but I feel this letter has a lot to say about caring for the poor and is particularly relevant in the current crisis.

James was a simple homespun preacher, perturbed at people who were not living as they should. His letter appears to have been addressed to the poor who were members of the early Church. These poor members lived among rich people who exploited them in many ways, and some of these rich people were members of the church and as a consequence this resulted in problems.

The Reformation in Europe, wrestled with the question 'what saves us? Faith or deeds? James tells us that some people have faith, but give no concrete evidence of it. He is not talking about faith versus works, but about the kind of faith Jesus preached which leads to salvation and verses 15 and 16 give an example of this in meeting people's physical needs - 'If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, Go in peace, keep warm and eat your fill, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs what good is that?'

The point of these verses is very clear and applies directly to us today. What does faith look like? Does it consist primarily or exclusively of participating in worshipping and partaking of communion? All these things are good, but true faith will also always result in works of faith, in practical ways, by giving grace to others in need.

Today there are a growing number of Christians in the southern hemisphere who belong to the 'church of the poor', and they see many of their concerns mirrored in this letter. The work of Christian Aid speaks of the concern of Jesus for the poor and his promised Kingdom in which there will be justice for all.

One of the pluses of COVID-19 is that so many people are caring for others in their need, irrespective of creed or culture, and so many risk so much. Surely this must bring to mind the words of Jesus concerning the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25.

Nick Fawcett points out 'it is not only Christians serve Jesus'. As is pointed out in Matthew 25 'Many serve him unawares', like many of the Christian Aid partners who profess a different faith.

'As Christians we can claim no monopoly of love or goodness, but we should be among those who constantly strive to express Christ's love in action'. James is asking us to place our response to others not on the edge but at the very centre of our church life.

A chance to demonstrate your faith in deeds!

Unfortunately prior to COVID 19 Christian Aid decided to close the regional offices by June 2020 which has unfortunately resulted in some redundancies and a reduction in activity worldwide. Local door to door collections for Christian Aid Week, The May Trek and Night Hike have all been cancelled, which means a big drop in income. It very important that we contribute what we can at this difficult time.

You can donate on line at [www.christianaid.org.uk/give money/make- donation](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/give-money/make-donation).

Cheques can be sent to: Christian Aid, 35-41 Lower Marsh, London SE1 7RL - **Thank You**

Song

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair; Lord, in the suffering, this is our prayer
Bread for the children; justice, joy, peace - sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills - work for the craftsman, trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak - voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak...

God of the poor, friend of the weak - give us compassion we pray.

Melt our cold hearts! Let tears fall like rain - Come, change our love from a spark to a flame

Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear - cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields: scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness - His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams, plundered and poisoned,
Our future, our dreams - Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed
Make us content with the things that we need.

Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame until your justice burns brightly again
Until the nations learn of your ways - seek your salvation and bring you their praise

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession - Lord, we give thanks and we pray:

For the health workers tending the seriously ill
for the scientists working on a vaccination
for the researchers analysing data and identifying trends
for the media outlets working to communicate reality
for the supermarket workers, hygiene and sanitation providers
for the good news stories of recoveries and effective planning
for the singing from balconies by locked-down communities
for the recognition that isolation doesn't mean loneliness
for the notes through letterboxes offering help and support
for the internet and telephones and technology that connects
for the awakened appreciation of what is truly important
Thanks be to God.

For those who are unwell and concerned for loved ones
for those who were already very anxious
for those immune suppressed or compromised
for those vulnerable because of underlying conditions
for those in the 'most at risk to coronavirus' categories
for those watching their entire income stream dry up
for those who have no choice but to go out to work
for those who are afraid to be at home
for those who are more lonely than they've ever been
for those who are bereaved and grieving.
Supplication be to God

Lord, be their healer, comfort and protection, their strength, shield and provision,
their security, safety and close companion.
And raise up your Church to be your healing hands and faithful feet
to be present to the pain and to respond with love in action.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

HYMN

Brother, sister, let me serve you; let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow, till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.

Repeat first verse

Blessing

The Love of the Father...help us bear all things,
The Love of the Son...help us trust for all things,
The Love of the Holy Spirit...help us hope for all things,
The love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which never ends...help us endure all things.