

Sheffield United Reformed Churches
Team Ministry worship for individuals or a family
Sunday 4th July 2021 at 10:30 am.

Call to worship (from Psalm 148)

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise the Lord, all the earth!

Let everything praise the name of the LORD,

For his name alone is exalted

A Prayer of Worship and Thanks

Lord of all Creation,

We praise and thank you, that in your unfathomable and immeasurable love,

you have created all things, in your wisdom, you have redeemed all things, by your Son and you

will restore all things through your Holy Spirit.

Christ, our Lord,

We worship you, because you stepped from eternity and entered space and time.

Born among us and living alongside each one of us, you journeyed in obedience to Jerusalem and submitted to death on the cross.

There, in your great love for all human-kind, and all creation, you laid down your life for our sins.

Trusting in the Father's loving purpose, you were laid in the grave. Waiting in hope, God raised you from death so that, by your amazing grace, we may receive the gift and hope of eternal life.

Holy Spirit,

You fill our lives with the love of the Father and the presence and goodness of Christ. You draw, from each of us, the worship that is your due.

And so, with all your Church, in every age, past, present and to come, and with all your creation, we worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit saying: "Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"

Lord our creator, our redeemer and our restorer,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship you.

And now we join our voices in praise, in our need for sustenance and guidance, as we say...

The Lord's Prayer...

Hymn - In Christ Alone my Hope is Found

In Christ alone my hope is found; He is my light, my strength, my song;

This cornerstone, this solid ground, Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!

My comforter, my all in all— Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, who took on flesh, Fullness of God in helpless babe!

This gift of love and righteousness, Scorned by the ones He came to save.

Till on that cross as Jesus died, The wrath of God was satisfied;

For every sin on Him was laid— Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay, Light of the world by darkness slain;

Then bursting forth in glorious day, Up from the grave He rose again!

And as He stands in victory, Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;

For I am His and He is mine— Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—This is the power of Christ in me;

From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.

No power of hell, no scheme of man, Can ever pluck me from His hand;

Till He returns or calls me home— Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Readings



2 Samuel 5, 1-5, 9-10 - David will lead Israel like a shepherd...

Psalm 148 - All creation praises the Lord...

2 Corinthians 12, 2-10 - Paul "boasts" in his suffering: "grace is sufficient"...

Mark 6: 1-13 - Jesus is rejected at Nazareth then sends out his Apostles to continue his work...

Reflection

Jesus is rejected at Nazareth; how could this be? How did these people not recognize what God had sent to them, surely those who knew and had heard about Jesus knew enough not to reject him? Yet today how many people have the facts about Jesus before them? They are readily available for us all to access in the Gospels, and yet many have turned away, rejected him, and headed off for the pigsty.

Last time I shared with you how disappointed I was that Jesus had not returned. I still am as I believe he will keep his promise and come soon; yet I am also relieved; for I know so many, including parts of my own family who seem quite content to live in the pigsty (Luke 15, *the Prodigal Son*), and now at least, I have a little more time to tell them about Jesus before it is too late.

There is a sense of urgency, for Jesus has promised he will come again and take those who believe to himself. 'I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.' John 14, vv 3 and 8)

The Bible tells us that the first pivotal event in history was the creation of the universe by the direct act of God 'In the beginning' (Genesis 1, v1), We are all aware, if we read scriptures that the perfection God had created was taken away when Satan tempted Eve and Adam and they ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 2, vv 16-17 and 3, v6). Thus, sin had come into the world and, instead of walking with God in the evening, humankind was now separated from their creator and forced to leave the garden. Things went from bad to worse until eventually God could only find one faithful family and Noah built an ark as God cleansed the earth with a great flood. Did things change? No, they did not, and people kept turning away from God, even his chosen race, and the Old Testament is a constant tale of God punishing his people until eventually the nation is taken into captivity in Babylon. Even when God frees them and returns them to the land he has promised them, still they go their own way.

So, God sent Jesus the Messiah - the event that made possible our salvation from sin. Jesus lived a perfect life and died as a sacrifice for our sin. He died for the sins of the world, for all those who would call upon him. We do need to note the teaching of Jesus however: for not all will call upon him for salvation, there will be sheep and goats (Matthew 25, v32), weeds amongst the wheat (Matthew 13, v26). Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because so many still live in sin and punishment will come (Luke 19, v41).

Today people continue to reject Jesus and just look at the consequences. Look at what is happening in the world around us. How many teenagers and young adults do we hear of involved in murders? Women are afraid to walk the streets. County-line drug gangs take advantage of vulnerable children and adults. Pornography is rampant. Social media is full of abuse. Nations send rockets to Mars while their people starve and lack basic needs. We are destroying the planet through greed, both of nations and multi-national companies. This is not the world God created; this is a world full of sin. So, God sent a Saviour and we still reject him.

Meanwhile the Church says 'live a good life, do your best, give to charity, love your neighbour'. Yet the Bible says, 'You were born in sin and separated from God', but the Bible also says that 'God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance'. So often it is pride that prevents us from admitting we sin, and pride makes us believe we can make things right with God through our own good deeds. Ephesians 2, vv 8-9 says 'it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not a result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it.' The only payment for our sins was the death of Jesus on the cross. Because besides being fully man he is fully God, and his one death had the power to cleanse all of us from sin.

The problem is people do not believe they are sinners. They do not recognise that sin has consequences, that through sin we are separated from God. Those who believe they are without sin have no need of a saviour and so reject Jesus. This means they are separated from God in this life, and worse unless they see sin for what it is they will remain separated from God for eternity. God's punishment is clear, sheep and goats, weeds and wheat, they will be separated. I do not know what it will be like in eternity only that clearly it will be spent with God, through Jesus' saving love on the cross. To reject this gift means that eternity will be spent away from God.

We must not forget that judgement is to come, that is what Jesus says. If there is no judgement and everyone's going to be all right in the end, why bother to tell people about Jesus? Instead of calling the prodigal home, we might just as well make him comfortable in the pigsty. But Jesus taught that future judgement is a reality and so we must take it seriously and have an urgency in our message. Jesus died that those who trust in him will live with him forever.

This is God's gift to you right now. It's a bit like *The Repair Shop* on television, people bring their broken and worn-out things, and they are fully restored. We bring our sinful selves to Jesus and through his Grace we leave restored and fit for purpose once more.

So, grace is amazing a gift given at great cost to God as his Son Jesus goes to the cross but given freely to those who come acknowledging their need and with hearts ready to receive. So come, share bread, and wine and receive again God's gift for you, amazing Grace.

Song for Reflection - R&S 92

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found; was blind, but now I see.

'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear and Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear the hour I first believed?

Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come;
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far and Grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised Good to me; His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we've first begun!

Communion

Jesus, our Lord, by your gracious invitation, we gather around your table.

By your call to communion, we share the news of the family of God.

By your command to love, we pray for the needs of those we know, in family, community and Church, and friends, as yet unknown, in the wider world.

We take bread and wine, in obedience to your command to remember you. Calling to mind your sacrifice upon the cross, we receive your life, praising and worshipping you with thankful hearts.

We eat bread, the body of Christ.... We drink wine, the blood of Christ....

Prayers for our world

And so, having received your grace anew, through your body and blood, we pray now that the Holy Spirit may make these earthly gifts of bread and wine, like the heavenly gift of your life - your bread working through our offer of bodily service, your wine flowing through our hearts poured out in adoration.

So we pray for your body, the Church, across the world. May we live in the power of your Spirit to declare your holiness and grace without fear and compromise. Help us take up the weapons of warfare to bind the powers of evil that are devastating nations, communities, homes and lives.

Strengthen your people wherever they witness faithfully to your loving grace, making the transforming power of the cross and resurrection of Christ central to all we proclaim in both word and deed.

Father, we pray for our communities, ravaged by separation and division by race, creed and wealth. We pray for our friends and family who live oblivious to the amazing grace and healing that is in touching distance, if they would turn and seek you.

We pray for our nation, and other nations in our western world, who, through their wholesale rejection of your truth have fallen from great heights of achievement, peace, vision and compassion into degradation, violence, injustice and corruption - seemingly unaware that we have fallen even from the standards we have set ourselves, according to the pale wisdom of this age.

Lord forgive us for we are lost without your wisdom and favour. Forgive your Church; that we have forsaken the great power that is ours through the preaching of the cross and the great hope we offer through the proclamation of your resurrection. Restore your people that your love may win this world.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy. Thank you Lord that it is always your nature to forgive, redeem and restore and so we offer our lives again to you. By your gracious call you have honoured us in calling us your co-workers. So now, joined to your life through the Holy Spirit, use us again to bring compassion, truth and justice to your creation. So may your purposes of redemption be fulfilled before our eyes as, in our time, you revive your Church.

In your great compassion, meet the needs for comfort, healing, strength and guidance, to those we now bring to you by name (*name those on your mind and heart here*)

For we ask all these things, in Christ's name and for the sake of Christ's Kingdom - Amen

Closing Hymn - R&S 366

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?

'Tis mystery all! The immortal dies! Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries to sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore! Let angel minds inquire no more. [Refrain]

He left His Father's throne above, so free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love, and bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free; for, O my God, it found out me. [

No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne, and claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Blessing

Grace from the Father; grace through the Son; abundant grace by the Holy Spirit.
And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all - Amen