



**A Service written by Rev Dr David
Monkton
September 12th 2021**

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Hymn - StF.69 Ye holy angels bright.

Ye holy angels bright,
Who wait at God's right hand,
Or through the realms of light
Fly at your Lord's command,
Assist our song,
For else the theme
Too high doth seem
For mortal tongue.

Ye blessed souls at rest,
Who ran this earthly race
And now, from sin released,
Behold your Saviour's face,
His praises sound,
As in his sight
With sweet delight
Ye do abound.

Ye saints, who toil below,
Adore your heavenly King,
And onward as ye go
Some joyful anthem sing;
Take what he gives
And praise him still,
Through good or ill,
Whoever lives!

My soul, bear thou thy part,
Triumph in God above:
And with a well-tuned heart
Sing thou the songs of love!
Let all thy days
Till life shall end,
Whate'er he send,
Be filled with praise!

Songwriters: Richard Marlow / John Darwall /
Richard Baxter

Prayers

Heavenly Father guide us. in our worship today - as individuals, as a congregation, and through all means of communication by which we can keep in touch with you.

When we see the world around us, many things fill us with a sense of wonder but we realise especially that you are the God who has shown your love to us and your creation by granting to us the gift of your Son Jesus Christ. He gave his life for us on the Cross so that we might know the depths of your forgiving love.

Forgive us for the wrong things that we have done. For the way in which we have sinned against others and misused the many gifts that you have given us. May we be ready to make a new beginning in the service of your Kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's prayer

Psalm 19 StF. 803

The heavens are telling the glory of God
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

One day pours out its song to another
And one night unfolds knowledge to another

They have neither speech nor language
And their voices are not heard.

Yet their sound has gone out into all lands
And their words to the ends of the world.

In them he has set a tabernacle for the sun,
That comes forth as a bridegroom out of his
chamber and rejoices as a champion to run
his course

It goes forth from the end of the heavens and runs to the very end again,
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.
The law of the land is perfect, reviving the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.

The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes

The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever;
The judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold,
Sweeter also than honey, dripping from the honeycomb.

By them also is your servant taught and in keeping them there is great reward.
Who can tell how often they offend?
O cleanse me from my secret faults!

Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins lest they get dominion over me;
So shall I be undefiled, and innocent of great offence.

Reading - Mark 8 v 27-38 (NIV)

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" ²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

The Way of the Cross

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life^[b] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Sermon

Our New Testament reading from the Gospels for today is from St Mark chapter 8 v 27 to 38, and I have based my message on verses 34 and 35. Taking this reading from the Revised English Bible Jesus says: 'Anyone who wants to be a follower of mine must renounce self. He must take up his cross and follow me. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.'

These words are found in the very middle of St Mark's gospel. This I believe is a reminder

to us that the message of the Cross is to be at the very centre of the life of the Christian.

The Gospels- of Matthew, Luke and John all have details of what they see as important background details to the birth of Jesus. The stories of his birth, His ancestry, his origins in the history of creation and the whole human race.

St Marks gospel however does not go into any special introductory details into the life of Jesus, but simply begins by saying quite bluntly 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.'

After his own baptism by John the Baptist and his forty days in the wilderness there is the calling of the disciples.

Jesus says to them 'follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' But this is more than a recruiting ground for people to be followers of Jesus. Yes, Jesus is sharing good news of healing, good news that the kingdom of God is not far away, Jesus is saying 'come unto me or you who are weary and heavily laden and I will give you rest . In other places, Jesus saying 'my peace be with you.'

But here in the heart of Marks gospel is a stark challenge. There is a challenge that those who follow Jesus must accept. If the listeners are to follow the way that has been chosen by God to bring about his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, It is the way of the Cross. Anyone who wants to be a follower of mine says Jesus, must renounce self and follow me.

When I was about fifteen I was very involved in midweek meetings in my church. I had recently made a commitment to follow Jesus and I took the promise seriously. A task that I took on was to play a harmonium for the two mid-week fellowship services. One hymns

that we sang. The hymn that caused me some anxiety however, had these words in it. 'May this poor self-grow less and less.'

It is about the renunciation of oneself. Giving oneself up completely to work 'in the name of Jesus the Christ, the chosen one, in working for the kingdom of heaven, but does it mean getting rid of the idea of self altogether? Are we really to become nonentities? The answer is no! To follow Jesus is to vibrate with a new sense of vitality and vigour because Jesus came into the world to bring new life into people's lives. I think the Good News Bible sums it up well when it says. 'If anyone wants to come with me he must forget self. Carry his cross and follow me. Perhaps the prayer attributed to St. Francis sums it up well when it says:

'Teach us good Lord to serve you as you deserve to give a not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wound, to labour and not to ask for any reward save knowing that we do your will.'

God made us all in a particular way. He made everyone able to be far more than we are able to become on our own. For the Christian life is more than just getting on well. It is more than wanting a comfortable life-style-especially at the expense of others. It is necessary for example to love our neighbours as ourselves. To want the best for them as well as good things for ourselves, and to want the best for all people in the world. This is a very positive thing, but it can be costly.

There are sometimes when we have to deny ourselves by equipping ourselves for other forms of service. We do need leisure of course and changes of activity and the support of friends to refresh us, but just to live for self indulgence alone for the main part makes us 'lesser' human beings.

Last year I received from the Methodist Conference a message of congratulation on completing 60 years of presbyteral ministry. It has not always been easy, far from it and I have at times made mistakes in my actions, but it has certainly been a fulfilling time with many changing scenes of work for the kingdom.

But what Jesus goes on to say is true. 'Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.' If we seek the way of humility and recognise that we are not 'the centre of the world' this is what really matters.

Jesus wants us to have, something far more wonderful than we can imagine. Lord. Help us along this way of challenge, that shows us the way to eternal life.

Almighty God Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you our humble and heartfelt thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and all people. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but above all, for your inestimable love in the redeeming of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. And we ask that you will give us such an awareness of all your mercies, that our hearts may be genuinely thankful, and that we tell of your praise not only with our lips, but in our lives by giving ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in wholesome days and right living all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen (*General Thanksgiving adapted.*)

Let us say together the Hymn

Beauty for brokenness (StF 693.)

As we say it let us pray for the people that we think of especially in these extremely anxious times.

Beauty for brokenness.

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in your 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

*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*

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

*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*

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

*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*

Songwriters: Graham Kendrick

Closing prayer

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the
love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy
Spirit be with us and all who are in great
need.**

Amen