

# Home Worship: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2022 – A Living Hope

## Call to worship: Psalm 134:1-2

Come, praise the Lord, all His servants  
all who serve in His Temple at night.  
Raise your hands in prayer and praise the  
Lord.

## Hymn:

### Songs of Fellowship: 1419: Light of the world

Light of the world, you stepped down into  
darkness,  
Opened my eyes, let me see  
Beauty that made this heart adore you,  
Hope of a life spent with you.

*Chorus: So here I am to worship,  
here I am to bow down,  
Here I am to say that you're my God;  
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy,  
Altogether wonderful to me.*

King of all days, Oh so highly exalted,  
Glorious in heaven above;  
Humbly you came to the earth you  
created,  
All for love's sake became poor.

## Chorus

And I'll never know how much it cost  
To see my sin upon that cross (repeat)

## Chorus

## Prayers of Adoration and Praise:

Loving Lord, you draw light out of dark-  
ness and coax beauty from chaos.  
You spread a rainbow promise across  
time and space: **AMEN**

You make music and song in the  
sounds of creation.  
You paint pictures of glory in the stars  
and clouds: **AMEN**

You scatter sparks of creative energy.

You penetrate madness with wisdom and  
truth: **AMEN**

You weave patterns of hope in the trau-  
mas of history.

You lavish your love gifts in boundless  
excess: **AMEN**

You grace us with peace and warm hos-  
pitality

You welcome each person regardless of  
race: **AMEN**

You invite us to dine at the table of plenty.  
You fill us with hope, with faith and with  
joy: **AMEN**

You come to us, embrace us, believe in  
us and stay with us.

**For you are our God, Redeemer and  
Friend.**

## Prayer of Confession:

Lord of the morning, someone let me  
down today.

I was upset and said harsh things.  
It's so easy to feel superior when others  
make mistakes;  
To wag the finger, shake the head as  
though I had never made a mistake,  
Let anyone down.

And when I admit that I am less than per-  
fect,

I expect people to be understanding, kind,  
sympathetic and merciful.

**Lord of the morning,  
Forgive me, and help me to be merci-  
ful.**

Lord, when I have made a mistake,  
I hope it will soon be forgotten,  
That friends will behave as though it  
never happened.

I don't want to feel the flush of guilt that  
comes when my errors are brought into  
the open.

Yet, so often I am less than kind to those  
who have offended me.

**Lord of the morning  
Forgive me and help me to forgive  
others.**

Lord, forgive me for any desire for revenge, for wanting to get my own back.

You taught us hard lessons with your words:

“Turn the other cheek”, “Love your enemies”, “Go the extra mile”,

“Forgive us as we forgive others”

So often Lord, I have been your enemy because of my unkindness,

My selfishness, my lack of love.

**Lord of the morning,  
Forgive me and help me to forgive others.**

Yet I know that you still love me Lord.

There is no end to your mercy.

Loving, patient, suffering Lord,

Help me to give to others,

The forgiving love that I continually receive from you. **AMEN**

**The Lord's Prayer** (use whichever version you are familiar with)

### **Bible Readings:**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:35-38 and 42-50**

35 Someone will ask “How can the dead be raised to life? What kind of body will they have?” 36 You fool! When you sow a seed in the ground, it does not sprout to life unless it dies. 37 And what you sow is a bare seed, perhaps a grain of wheat, or some other grain, not the full bodied plant that will later grow up. God provides that seed with the body He wishes; He gives each seed its own proper body.

42 This is how it will be when the dead are raised to life. When the body is buried, it is mortal; when it is raised it will be immortal. 43 When it is buried, it is ugly and weak; when it is raised, it will be beautiful and strong. 44 When it is buried, it is a physical body; when it is raised, it will be a spiritual body. 45 For the scripture says “The first man, Adam was created a living being”, but the last Adam is the life-giving Spirit. 46

It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. 47

The first Adam, made of earth, came from the earth; the second Adam came from heaven. 48 Those who belong to the earth are like the one who was made of earth; those who are of heaven are like the one who came from heaven. 49 Just as we wear the likeness of the man made of earth, so we will wear the likeness of the Man from heaven.

50 What I mean brothers and sisters is what is made of flesh and blood cannot share in God's Kingdom, and what is mortal cannot possess immortality.

### **1 Peter 1:3-10**

3 Let us give thanks to the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ! Because of His great mercy He gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope, 4 and so we look forward to possessing the rich blessing that God keeps for His people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay, spoil or fade away. 5 They are for you, who through faith are kept safe by God's power for the salvation which is ready to be revealed at the end of time.

6 Be glad about this, even though it may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of the many kinds of trials you suffer. 7 Their purpose is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honour on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 You love Him, although you have not seen Him, and you believe in Him, Although you do not now see Him. So you rejoice with a great and glorious joy which words cannot express, 9 because you are receiving the salvation of your souls, which is the purpose of your faith in him

### **Story: Geronimo Grub**

'I wonder where the old Frog goes'  
Geronimo the grub pondered one day.

'He swims to the top of the pond and disappears from sight till – plop! There he is again.'

'Why don't you ask him yourself?' suggested a minnow mischievously. For the frog didn't have much patience with young grubs. But Geronimo summoned up his courage.

'Respected Frog, sir', he began politely, 'if you please sir, there is something I would like to ask you'.

'I don't please', replied the frog. 'But ask away, if you must'.

'Well sir', Geronimo said very shyly, 'can you tell me what is beyond this world?'

'Well I'll tell you' replied the Frog. 'There is dry land with green grass and meadows filled with golden buttercups and sweet white daisies; and there are blue skies and dreamy white clouds and brilliant sunshine.'

'Wow!' exclaimed Geronimo. He could not imagine beyond the dark pond waters.

'Dry land?' he repeated wonderingly. 'Can you swim in it?'

'Of course not!' chuckled the Frog. 'Dry land is not water – that is just what it is not!' And he blew some bubbles to show his amusement.

'Well what is it then?' Geronimo persisted.

'You are really are the most inquisitive creature I have ever come across. Since you are so eager to find out what is above, I'll give you a ride on my back and you can see for yourself,' the Frog offered, exasperated by all the questions.

Geronimo was delighted. He climbed on the Frog's back and up they went! But the moment they reached the surface – crash! He reeled back into the pond, gasping for breath. He clung to the stem of a water plant, trembling with shock and disappointment, until the Frog joined him.

'There is nothing beyond this pond but death,' he wept. 'Why did you tell me all those stories about beautiful colours and bright light?'

'I told you those "stories", as you call them' the Frog said sternly, 'because they are true. You know only this little pond, so you will not believe there is anything beyond it.' And he swam away.

Geronimo did not see the Frog for many days.

But, as the days got warmer, he began to feel strange. His eyes became large and brilliant, and some extraordinary force seemed to be urging him upwards. He began struggling up a bulrush stem towards the surface. His brothers gathered round anxiously, begging him not to go. 'Don't leave us!' they shouted.

'I must go' he gasped.

'Then promise you will come back and tell us what lies beyond. 'Don't forget us' they implored.

'Never!' Geronimo answered firmly. 'I will never forget you. I will return and tell you what I have seen.'

His brothers waited for days for days, but he never came back. At last they gave up hope of ever seeing him again. 'He has forgotten us,' they said bitterly.

Geronimo had not forgotten his brothers, but he could not return to them. He had become a dazzling dragonfly, and then risen with glittering wings into the sunshine. He could fly over the green meadow with its golden buttercups and sweet white daisies. He could soar into the blue skies.

No, Geronimo would not forget his brothers. One day they too would leave the pond. And one day they would fly free together.

### **Hymn:**

#### **Songs of Fellowship 10 All heaven declares**

All heaven declares, the glory of the risen Lord.

Who can compare with the beauty of the Lord?

Forever He will be The Lamb upon the throne.

I gladly bow the knee, and worship Him alone.

I will proclaim, the glory of the risen Lord,  
Who once was slain, to reconcile man to  
God.  
Forever you will be, the Lamb upon the  
throne.  
I gladly bow the knee and worship you  
alone.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-s9Kk6tfVU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-s9Kk6tfVU)

### Sermon

At a funeral some time ago, the minister preached about the fact that the person who had died is now safe with the Lord he served all his life.

After service I was talking to someone who said: 'I hope I get to heaven – but I don't think I'm good enough – I'm not as good as Les!' It's hard to believe that someone who has been over 70 years in the church and has heard thousands of sermons still thinks that we can earn our way to heaven by being good.

The New Testament is quite clear that there is nothing we can do to earn our way to God – we rely entirely on His loving grace.

But what makes me think that my faith based on reality – what makes me believe that all Jesus did and taught was all true? That all that the writers of the epistles had got it right – especially about us ending up in heaven with our Lord.

The truth is that, although no ordinary human has been able to return to tell us what life is like on the other side – one person has – Jesus Christ. And it is the truth of His resurrection upon which our faith is based.

Re-read vs 3-5 from 1Peter 1 - this is one of the pivotal verses of the New Testament, where so many ideas come together. I would like to take just one of the ideas which Peter speaks about in this little passage:

**Living Hope:** What is it? This is not the 'wishy washy' way we use the word hope nowadays as in 'I hope it doesn't rain for

the match on Saturday' which usually means that you are pretty sure it will rain!  
The word 'hope' in the NT is much stronger - means absolute certainty – something we could stake our life on. This kind of hope is something the world has always needed. Without God, this world is without hope.

Sophocles said these words “Not to be born at all – that is by far the best fortune; the second best is, as soon as one is born, with all speed to return thither whence one has come”. That sounds pretty hopeless.

Paganism had no hope to offer to the world. Modern world with its emphasis on the individual and competition has nothing to offer – and it seems among many of our young people that the hopelessness of the world can only be deadened by the excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol.

This seems to have got worse with the pandemic. We live in a world without hope – is it any wonder that drug and alcohol addiction, violence, gang culture, mental illness and suicide are on the increase?

Last week I watched programme about Egypt – a well known historian was taking us through the rituals of the dead. She ended by saying the “Egyptians believed in life carrying on but now in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we know that this is not true – when you're dead you're dead”. How hopeless is that?

The Hope we have to offer is very different – it is complete assurance – that, in the end evil, death and the grave are defeated – and not because we have worked hard to attain it – but because Jesus, by His death and resurrection overcame death, and graciously offers it to us.

But that begs the question 'Where does that hope come from?' Why should we

believe it? After all we have to have a reason to believe. It is not good enough to say 'well that's what the Bible says'.

That is unlikely to persuade a non believer who would probably answer 'so?' And it is not enough to say we believe because we want it to be true.

It is based on our firm belief in the resurrection of Jesus – who destroyed the power of death. But why should I believe in the resurrection of Jesus? All we have is the witness of His friends – why should we believe them?

Can I suggest there are two very strong reasons to believe?

There are strong intellectual indications that Jesus was alive on Easter Sunday and beyond – and don't sneer at our intellect – God gave us brains and He expects us to use them! You may notice that both the readings today are about 'resurrection'. Paul was talking about the kind of body we could expect to have. The second was a passage which Peter probably wrote many years after the event – possibly from prison. Here he speaks about Christ's resurrection and what this means for us.

If anyone was in a position to know if Jesus really did rise from the dead, it was Peter. He was there – he spoke to Jesus during the forty days and at least on one occasion he had a private conversation with Jesus.

Now someone may be prepared to face death and flogging for what he believes to be the truth – or what he knows to be the truth but he sure as heck won't face these things for what he knows to be a lie, and Peter would have known. We can conclude from this that Peter, John and even the brothers of Jesus knew that Jesus was alive. In fact the indications are that the brothers of Jesus, especially James, were only persuaded to believe in Jesus after the resurrection.

But, knowing something in your head is not enough. It has to be based on personal experience – after all, our faith is based on a relationship with Jesus Christ. Some people have very regular, personal experiences of the living Christ, are aware of His presence day to day – and in many ways I envy them but we can't live on other peoples experiences. They have to be our own.

So I will tell you about an experience I had over forty years ago: At the time I had only just come to Nottingham. My back suddenly went and eventually I had two operations on my spine and spent first 11 weeks and then 5 weeks in hospital. I had a long convalescence and eventually went to see the surgeon as I was still in considerable pain. The surgeon said that my back was quite stable but that my nerves had been damaged so I would have to put up with it and buy a walking stick! I was shocked. I expected after two operations I would recover.

That evening I sat at my kitchen table and cried. I seriously considered taking an overdose of painkillers – not because I wanted to die, but because I wanted to get rid of the pain. Instead I shouted at God "if you are there at all, show me what I am supposed to do?"

Then I felt stupid and made a cup of tea and got ready for bed. I was sitting on the edge of my bed when some words of a hymn came into my head, 'I see the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be'. I had no idea where these words came from. I knew that they weren't from a first verse so I had to read all the verses of every hymn in my old Methodist hymnbook – I got as far as 448 before I found it These are the words I read:

**O love that wilt not let me go, I  
rest my weary soul in thee. I  
give thee back the life I owe that  
in thine oceans depths its flow  
may richer, fuller be.**

And then I read the words of the  
verse I remembered:

**O joy that sleekest me through  
pain, I cannot close my heart to  
thee, I trace the rainbow through  
the rain, and feel the promise is  
not vain, that morn shall  
tearless be.**

I felt that God was calling me back to Him,  
having spent the last six years simply  
giving lip service to Him. I would like to  
say that the pain went immediately but it  
took sometime but finally it simply drifted  
away.

There have been many times since when  
I have been aware of God's guidance but  
never as personal as that. But now I can  
never doubt His living presence with me. I  
don't tell you this to persuade you of the  
truth – but to suggest that we all need to  
go to our Lord to ask Him for confirmation  
of what we have come to accept  
intellectually.

#### **Intercessions:**

God of Grace,  
Whose love embraces us; enable us to  
reach out to others so that, through us,  
your love may be known.....(pray for  
those who need to hear the gospel – and  
that the church may meet that need – and  
that we too may say the right thing to  
those in need)

Lord hear us,  
**Lord graciously hear us.**

God of Justice,  
Free us from the confines of culture, that  
we may be the voice of the voiceless, the  
oppressed the hungry.....(pray for all  
who are hungry, have lived with violence  
and are oppressed)

Lord hear us,  
**Lord graciously hear us.**

God of Hope,  
Strengthen those who search for purpose  
in life: whose life lacks quality; for those

who have lost their way.....(pray for  
those you know who are in need)

Lord hear us,  
**Lord graciously hear us.**

God of Time and Space,  
Hasten the coming of your Kingdom of  
justice peace and love in this world for all  
people.....(pray for the coming of  
God's Kingdom of justice and peace in a  
fractured world)

Lord hear us,  
**Lord graciously hear us.**

Loving Lord,  
We know you and see you in Jesus:  
So come to us in friendship, and walk  
with us along the way.  
When that pathway is rocky and uphill,  
strengthen us.  
In all circumstances, give us eyes and  
ears that are open to others,  
So that we may be for them instruments  
of your purpose,  
Sharing faith, encouragement and love.

**AMEN**

#### **Hymn:**

##### **SofF 551: Thine be the glory**

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering son;  
Endless is the victory, thou o're death  
hath won.

Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone  
away.  
Kept the folded grave clothes where thy  
body lay.

*Chorus: Thine be the glory, risen  
conquering son;  
Endless is the victory thou o're death has  
won!*

Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb!  
Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and  
gloom.

Let the church with gladness hymns of  
triumph sing,  
For her Lord now liveth, death has lost its  
sting.

*Chorus:*

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince  
of life;  
Life is naught without thee: aid us in our  
strife;  
Make us more than conquerors, through thy  
deathless love;  
Lead us in thy triumph to thy home above.

*Chorus:*

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbBOOmKM  
LmI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbBOOmKM_LmI)

**Final Prayer:**

Jesus, who touched the loneliness of the  
marginalised in society,

**Come and touch our hearts today.**

Jesus, who brought life and laughter to  
those who had lost hope,

**Come and bring hope to the hopeless  
today.**

Jesus, who met your friends in the garden  
and at table,

**Come and meet us in the ordinary ac-  
tivities of life.**

Jesus, who on the Emmaus Road walked  
unnoticed beside those who were con-  
fused and sad,

**Come and walk with us when life con-  
fuses.**

Jesus of the tomb, who destroyed death  
with life and darkness with light,

**Come and destroy the darkness in our  
lives and light a flame**

**within us.**

Jesus, who revealed yourself to those  
who loved you,

**Come into our lives this day and reveal  
your glory to us,**

**AMEN**