

Written Service Sunday September 15th 2024
A service of worship for use at home
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Charity number 1134226

Call to worship:

God, three in one and one in three,
We seek you in faith and worship you.
Creator, you made us in your image,
Christ you saved us from our sin,
Spirit, you live and move in us.
All-encompassing, eternal God,
Hear our prayer and give us your blessing.

Hymn: Come, now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship. Come just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee will bow.
Still, the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship.....

Prayers of Adoration and Praise

Blessed are you, Lord our God
Your word brought light and life from chaos
Your light still shines in the darkness of an evil
world,
And has never been extinguished.

Praise be to you, Lord God.

Blessed are you, mighty, creator God.
We glimpse some of your creative energy
In the magnificence and wonder, the colour
and beauty,
Of the created universe,
Or in the minute detail of the living cell or a
newborn child.

Praise be to you, Creator God.

Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ.
You who welcomed the little child,
Shared the pain of the suffering and
marginalised,
Who touched the leper and healed the blind.
Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ.
Whose hands stretched out in love on a cross.
Our lives are bound up for eternity
In your resurrection life.
Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed are you, Spirit of the living God.
You inflame the hearts of those who love you.
You inspire our worship
And guide us in the path that leads to life.
**Praise be to you Spirit of the Living
God.
AMEN**

Readings: Mark 8:27-33 (Good News Version)

Then Jesus and His disciples went away to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Tell me, who do people say that I am?"

"Some say that you are John the Baptist," they answered; "others say that you are Elijah while others say you are one of the prophets."

"What about you?" He asked them. "Who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the anointed one"

Then Jesus ordered them, "Do not tell anyone about me."

Then Jesus began to teach His disciples; "The Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later He will rise to life." He made this very clear to them. So Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But Jesus turned around and looked at His disciples and rebuked Peter. "Get away from me, Satan," he said. "Your thoughts don't come from God but from human nature!"

Isaiah: 53:1-10 (Good News Version)

"Who would have believed what we now report?

Who could have seen the LORD'S hand in this?

It was the will of the LORD that His servant should grow like a plant taking root in dry ground.

He had no dignity or beauty to make us notice Him.

There was nothing attractive about Him, nothing that would draw us to Him.

We despised Him and rejected Him; He endured suffering and pain.

No one would even look at Him – we ignored Him as if He were nothing.

"But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne.

All the while we had thought that His suffering was a punishment sent by God.

Because of our sins He was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did.

We are healed by the punishment He suffered, made whole by the blows He received.

All of us like sheep that were lost, each one going his own way.

But the LORD made that punishment fall on Him, the punishment all of us deserved.

"He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; but He never said a word.

Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared, He never said a word.

He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die, and no one cared about His fate.

He was put to death for the sins of our people.

He was placed in a grave with the wicked, He was buried with the rich though He never committed any crime or ever told a lie."

Sermon part one: - Introduction:

Jesus' disciples understood that Jesus that He had come to bring in the Kingdom of God; they had seen Him do many miracles; stilling the storm; multiplying the loaves and fishes, giving sight to the blind and healing miracles, He had even forgiven people their sins. So they realised that Jesus was someone special – but I wonder if they realised just how special Jesus really was.

I am sure that it was planned by the writer of this Gospel that this reading comes right in the middle of Mark's Gospel. From this point onwards Jesus is heading for Jerusalem where he knew he had to confront opposition and where he knew he was going to die. So, it was important that His disciples understood what he was going to face. That was why he asked the question "Who do people say that I am?" The answer was, "Elijah, one of the prophets or even John the Baptist come back to life." It was believed at the time that Elijah would come first to prepare the way for the Messiah.

Then we come to the crux of the matter, “Who do **you** think I am?” It is Peter who answers on the other disciples’ behalf. “You are the Messiah – the anointed one.” To be clear, they did not think of Jesus as being ‘Divine’ or even the ‘Third Person of the Trinity.’ Although, later on they came to see that Jesus was a Divine Redeemer, at that time what they really were longing for was a king who would lead them against the Romans – and anyone else who was going to conquer them!

The Jews had a very definite idea about what they meant by the phrase ‘the Messiah – the anointed one.’ The Jews for years had been under the yoke of foreign powers; first the Babylonians, then the Persians, followed by the Greeks and finally the Romans – they had been under the yoke of foreign powers for generations. They saw the coming of the Messiah as a political figure who would free them from foreign rule – who would rule over them as king like King David; who would put the Gentiles in their places and rule over them as God’s King.

Jesus had a very different idea. He saw that He was not going to rule over the Jews as King. His Kingdom would not be of this world. This is why he explained that he was coming to be scourged; he would know opposition; He would be opposed by the religious leaders and ultimately he was to die. It was a very different idea from the sort of Messiah that they envisaged. This is why Peter rebuked Jesus. It was just not the type of Messiah that he thought God was going to send.

Back to Isaiah:

If we go back to our reading in Isaiah we will get some idea of what Jesus saw as his mission. In Isaiah chapter 53 we read about the suffering servant. It was not really how the Israelites thought about the Messiah. At the time, they thought it was a description of Israel. It was only later that the Christians saw it as a picture of Jesus – it matched perfectly with how they saw Jesus as the Divine Redeemer. But certainly the Jews at the time never thought that it applied to the Messiah. This is why Peter rebuked Jesus – it was so unlike the picture that they had of the Messiah, and why Jesus was so harsh in His criticism of Peter.

As far as the disciples were concerned, it was easy to see what this new Jewish world was to be. The nationalistic element was there all the time. Palestine would be the centre of the world and the rest of the world was subject to it. All nations would be subject to it – sometimes it was a peaceful subjugation but more often than not it was a grim picture of destruction.

Finally, there would come the new age of peace and plenty which would last forever; these were the messianic ideas which were in people’s minds when Jesus suddenly appeared among them. They were nationalistic, violent, destructive and vengeful. True they ended in the perfect reign of God. Think of Jesus set against a background like that. No wonder he had to re-educate His disciples, and no wonder he was crucified in the end as a heretic!

There was no room for suffering love in a picture like that.

We will break for a moment to sing a hymn

Hymn: My heart and voice I raise.

My heart and voice I raise, to sing Messiah’s Praise;
Messiah’s praise let all repeat; the universal Lord,
By whose almighty word, creation rose in form complete.

A servant’s form He wore, and in His body bore
Our dreadful curse on Calvary: He like a victim stood,
And poured His sacred blood, to set the guilty captive free.

With mercy's mildest grace, He governs all our race
In wisdom, righteousness and love: who to Messiah fly
Shall find redemption nigh, and all His great salvation prove.

Hail, Saviour Prince of Peace! Thy Kingdom shall increase,
Till all the world thy glory see, and righteousness abound
As the great deep profound, and fill the earth with purity.

Sermon Part Two:

It is against this background – the beliefs of the disciples about Messiahship; all their hopes and dreams, which didn't include a Messiah who went willingly to suffering and death.

When Jesus connected Messiahship with suffering and death, he was making statements that as far as the disciples were concerned, were incredible. They had been raised to think of a Messiah figure in terms of irresistible conquest. And now they were being presented with a picture of a suffering Messiah. No wonder that Peter protested so violently.

And why did Jesus rebuke Peter so sternly? Perhaps Peter was putting into words the very same temptations that Satan had tempted Jesus with in the wilderness. Jesus certainly didn't want to die. He knew he had the powers to use in conquest. At that moment he was refighting the temptations that he had fought in the wilderness. This was the devil tempting him again to fall down and worship him, to take his way instead of God's way.

It is a strange and terrible thing that the tempter sometimes speaks in the voice of a well-meaning friend. We may well decide on a course of action which is the right course, but would inevitably bring trouble, loss, unpopularity and sacrifice. And some well-meaning friend, with the very best of intentions, tries to stop him.

There was a saint called Maximilian Kolbe and he had TB. He desperately wanted to join a community as a monk. He was very intelligent and worked hard at school – all because he wanted to be a monk. People who knew him tried to persuade him not to join a community but he ignored them and eventually he got his heart's desire and became a monk in a community.

He was Polish and it was before the Second World War. He was asked by his community to go to Japan where he started a Christian newspaper and learned to speak Japanese. It was then that his TB really set in and he had to leave Japan in order to go into hospital. He was in hospital when war broke out all across Europe.

He set about printing a Christian newspaper which was very dangerous. Many friends tried to persuade him to give up – but he pressed on. Eventually he was captured and was put in a concentration camp. It is said of him that he helped to spread mercy and compassion among the other prisoners.

Then someone in the camp tried to escape – there was a rule in the camp that if anyone tried to escape then ten other prisoners would be put to death. Maximilian was not chosen as one of the ten but he heard of another prisoner who was chosen. This man was beside himself with grief as he longed to see his family again. Maximilian decided to volunteer in his place and was very surprised when the camp commandant agreed to the substitution. Again people tried to persuade him not to agree – but again he ignored them. Eventually he was helped into a hole in the ground and was starved to death, but not before he had led everyone in prayers and stayed alive long enough to help everyone else to die in peace. We can thank God that he ignored all those people who tried to stop him doing what he knew he must do.

And we can thank God that Jesus did not listen to Peter who tried to persuade him to change course just as Satan had tempted him three years ago in the wilderness.

Prayers of confession:

Lord of Light,
You fill us, your children with your light,
So often your light in us is dimmed by our selfishness and greed.
There are times when we ignore those in need, those who are poor or who do not have
anywhere to stay.
We sometimes look at other people and feel we are better than them, so we turn away.
We criticise other people who are doing the best they can.
We can make others feel inferior.
We are unprepared to speak out against injustice.
We are unprepared to stand up for Christ or witness to His love.
And so, the light is dimmed. Forgive us Lord and enable your light to shine through us so
that others will see you in us and turn to you and find the answer to all their deepest needs.
We thank you Father that you have promised that when we come to you in repentance you
are always prepared to forgive – so forgive us Lord and help us to change. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercession:

Lord of peace; bring peace where there is violence. We bring to you Lord, the people of Yemen, of
Afghanistan and we bring to you the people of Ukraine. And we remember soldiers on both sides of
the conflict.

In the Darkness

Let your light shine

Lord of Justice; bring justice where people live in fear, for those places where governments and
soldiers impose their will. At this time we pray particularly for the peoples of the Holyland, both
Palestinians and Israelis, especially we pray for the people of Gaza who live in fear. May all the
communities of that land find ways to live together with justice and peace? We also pray for our
brothers and sisters living with persecution.

In the Darkness

Let your light shine

Lord of the poor and the marginalised; where there is poverty and unfairness, where people are
hungry, homeless or suffering for the want of simple medicine, move in the hearts of those who have
plenty so that there is a fair sharing of the earth's resources. We pray for all refugees living in terrible
conditions in camps – suffering from hunger, disease and a lack of hope. May they receive mercy,
compassion and practical help.

In the Darkness

Let your light shine

Lord of creation; forgive us for misusing your created world and making deserts where there had
been abundance, for polluting clean air and water. We pray for the governments of the world who
have met so often to discuss climate change. Give courage to those who work to save the
environment. We pray for those who are suffering because of climate change – the peoples of Sub-
Saharan Africa who are suffering the worst drought in living memory, those suffering because of
violent floods or wildfires or freak weather events

In the Darkness

Let your light shine

Lord of healing and wholeness; in the silence we bring to you those who are known to us personally who need your healing power.....

In the Darkness

Let your light shine

Lord of the Kingdom of God, who came into this world, not to condemn it but to save, work with your people, give us courage, wisdom and power as we bring the message of your love and forgiveness to a needy world. Send your Holy Spirit and may your Kingdom Come.

In the Darkness

Let your light shine. Amen

Hymn - Sing we the King

Sing we the King who is coming to reign; glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!

Life and salvation His Empire shall bring, joy to the nations when Jesus is King:

Come let us sing: praise to our King, Jesus our King, Jesus our King:

This is our song, who to Jesus belong: glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.

All shall be well in His kingdom of peace; freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;
Justice and truth from His sceptre shall spring; wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King

Chorus

Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin; doubt shall not darken His witness within;
Hell has no terrors and death has no sting; Love is victorious when Jesus is King.

Chorus

Kingdom of Christ for your coming we pray; hasten O Father the dawn of the day.
When this new song your creation shall sing; Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King.

Chorus

Final Prayer:

The Lord who conquered darkness with light,

Grant us peace.

The Lord who conquered death with life,

Grant us peace.

The Lord who conquered loneliness with love,

Grant us peace.

May the Lord's blessing go with us this day and always. **Amen**