

**Sunday November 6th 2022**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Deacon Helen Snowball**

If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

**Opening Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21**

I will exalt you, my God the King;  
I will praise your name for ever and ever.  
2 Every day I will praise you  
and extol your name for ever and ever.  
3 Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;  
his greatness no one can fathom.  
4 One generation commends your works to  
another;  
they tell of your mighty acts.  
5 They speak of the glorious splendour of your  
majesty—

and I will meditate on your wonderful works.  
17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways  
and faithful in all he does.  
18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.  
19 He fulfils the desires of those who fear him;  
he hears their cry and saves them.  
20 The Lord watches over all who love him,  
but all the wicked he will destroy.  
21 My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord.  
Let every creature praise his holy name  
for ever and ever.

**Hymn – StF 59 – Shine Jesus Shine**

Lord, the light of your love is shining.  
In the midst of the darkness, shining.  
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us.  
Set us free by the truth you now bring us  
Shine on me, shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine  
Fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze  
Set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow  
Flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth your word  
Lord, and let there be light

Lord, I come to your awesome presence  
From the shadows into your radiance  
By the blood I may enter your brightness  
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness  
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine ...

As we gaze on your kingly brightness  
So our faces display your likeness  
Ever changing from glory to glory  
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story  
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine ...

*Graham A. Kendrick*

**Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving**

God of love, be the love that dwells in this place.  
Prince of peace – be the peace that dwells in this place.  
Spirit of life – be the life that dwells in this place.  
Three in one – be the everything in our emptiness,  
The completeness in our imperfection,  
all we desire.

Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise.  
Saints who have gone before speak of your glory.  
Their words pour down as a living witness to your love and grace.

Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise.  
Your love speaks more than words;  
It fills our emptiness,  
Warms our spirits,  
And draws us once again into your embrace.

Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise.  
In our hearts we know that you are Lord, of this world and the next.  
In our hearts we know that you are truth: all wisdom comes from you.  
In our hearts we know that you are love, for this grace has touched our lives.

When we are swayed by words that tempt and keep us from your path,  
Forgive us Lord, we pray.  
Fill and shine in our hearts, so we reflect only light that comes from you.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.  
This is his gracious word: 'Your sins are forgiven'.  
Thanks be to God.

#### **Bible Readings: 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-5, 13-17**

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness[a] is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

#### **Luke 20: 27-38**

27 Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. 28 "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. 30 The second 31 and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. 32 Finally, the woman died too. 33 Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

34 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given

in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. 37 But in the account of the burning bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

### **Hymn StF 710**

Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord,  
Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord.  
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my  
friends,  
Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord,  
Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord.  
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my  
friends,  
Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Faith, perfect faith, is the gift of Christ our Lord,  
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my friends,  
Faith, perfect faith, is the gift of Christ our Lord.  
Faith, perfect faith, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord,  
Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord.  
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my  
friends,  
Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord,  
Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord.  
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my  
friends,  
Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

*Kevin Mayhew (b 1942)*

### **Reflection**

Whenever I come to a passage written by Paul, I always have to begin by asking myself – 'what's he on about?' He's not always very clear, maybe it's the translations and interpretations, or maybe I'm just a bit thick, but although he has written some of the most beautiful passages in the Bible, he's not always easy. And when he is clear, he often seems quite cross. In this passage however, he doesn't seem to be cross, he's trying to get the early Christians to stand firm in their beliefs. He says in verse 2 – 'don't be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed...' he knows that there are people going about claiming to be apostles of Christ teaching a different message, and there are others telling a completely different story than the truth of Jesus, resurrected and alive. I imagine if someone charismatic like Paul is standing in front of you telling you that this is the truth, it must be easier to believe him. He was a confident speaker, he could stand in front of hundreds, maybe thousands of people, and tell them his good news of Jesus, tell them his conversion story, teach them how to live and what to expect as a Christian. But then he goes away, he goes to the next town or city to preach there, and the first is left to its own devices, except for the odd letter. And so someone else comes along, with the slightly different gospel, and perhaps people begin to wonder – which is the truth? Paul knew this would happen, which is why he wrote so many letters – so that he could send encouragements, send the truth of the Gospel, and remind them of God's love and grace. Don't be shaken, he says, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that I taught you.

He tells them that he thanks God for them, because they were chosen by God to be the first fruits for salvation – these are the very first people to be hearing the Gospel of Jesus and accepting it as the truth, that Jesus died and rose again as saviour, to bring eternal life.

Which leads us nicely onto our gospel passage – about what happens when we die and resurrection. The Sadducees were a religious sect, like the Pharisees but they didn't believe in any form of resurrection. They believed that when you died, your soul died too, there was nothing else. So here they are trying to catch Jesus out.

This is a strange story I think, and the Sadducees seem to have found the most outlandish story they can find to try to trip Jesus up. How can he get himself out of this clever trap we've set for him? This poor woman has been married to a man – we don't know how long for, but he's died and she is left a widow and childless. In those days there was nothing worse than being childless. There was an archaic law that suggested a man's brother should marry his wife on his death, so that the property would be kept within the family, and it would prevent intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles. It was a compensatory social custom, but it does sound odd to our 21st century ears doesn't it? It's indicative of the society that no one seems to have worried about the poor woman. First, she's lost her husband, who let's assume she loved. She's grieving, worried about her future, she has no children – sons – who will care for her. But then she gets passed on to the next brother. Was he the next oldest? Was he already married? Doesn't seem to matter whether they liked each other or not – in order to preserve the first brother's line and the property in the family the widow is simply married off to a brother. In the story the Sadducees come to Jesus with this happens 7 times.

Who will she be married to when the resurrection happens, they ask? Jesus tells them they've got it all wrong. Heaven isn't like that. They were seeing heaven as being the same as earth, which of course it isn't. Jesus tells them significantly that the people who've died are now like angels. God is the God of the living, not the dead. Which means, not that God is no longer caring for those who have died – no, it means they are alive, in a different way. Heaven is something we can't imagine, we don't know what it's like, but we do know – because Jesus tells us – that 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all of them are alive.'

Which begs the question, what is heaven like then? I suppose we all have our own images, ones that comfort us when we think of those we've lost. But the fact is we just don't know. There is a cartoon that often appears on my Facebook feed and it's a drawing of a man at the pearly gates, St Peter is there with his big white beard and a big book in his hand. This man is kneeling on the floor, because he can't get up – and the reason he can't get up is because there is a small dog leaping all over him, licking him and wagging his tail like mad. St Peter says to the man 'ah, so you're Bobbie – he's been waiting for you for years!' Is that your image, that you'll be reunited with everyone and everything you've ever loved? I like the idea of being greeted by our pets. Is it a great garden, full of flowers and trees, a peaceful place where there is no pain or suffering, nobody worries because everything is great. Maybe you imagine it as 'up there' in the sky somehow and our loved ones are watching us. I don't know. No one does. We make our own images of something like heaven, whatever gives us comfort, the most important thing to hold onto is that there is something after this life. All we do know is that it is full of God's love, we are completely surrounded and enfolded by God's love, which through his grace he gives freely to all of us.

And when the day of resurrection comes, whatever that will look like – heaven and earth won't be the same again, they aren't mirror images. Heaven is better. And it's better because of God – because of his love and grace. Women won't be given in marriage to a man, they will be given love from God. Men won't be expected to provide – they will be provided with all the love that they could ever need from God.

Resurrection is an interesting topic, I think. I knew a Methodist minister who didn't believe in Jesus' resurrection, he called it a myth, which was a popular belief in the 50s and 60s I think. He believed that Jesus was a good man, and that he died to save people, but once he died, well that was that. The sightings by Mary Magdalene, the other disciples and those on the Road to Emmaus, the famous story of Doubting Thomas – were all some sort of group hallucinations. I respected this man's opinion, even though I disagreed wholeheartedly with it, he had thought it through for himself and come to this conclusion. But what I couldn't respect was how he could preside at Communion. How could he say the words and go through the beautiful liturgy and the symbolism of communion whilst not believing in Christ's resurrection? I can't imagine what resurrection is like, but I do know that whatever we imagine God will answer our questions. God has it all in hand, and we don't need to worry about our loved ones, or what heaven is like, or what resurrection will be like – all that matters is that we stand firm, and trust in the grace of God.

All through today's passages is God's grace. It runs through the words of Paul and the response of Jesus to the Sadducees. Paul says stand firm in the love of God, the love that we get from grace. In Luke, Jesus talks about God being God of the living, all those who have died are not dead to God, they are like angels, through God's grace.

All that a Christian does from belief to baptism to holiness to hope is held within the framework of God's powerful love and grace.

Resurrection is a miracle, but the biggest miracle – the biggest miracle - was not that God sent his son to save us – no, it was that God saw that we needed him and in his grace he responded as he always does. God saw and he cared about us so much that he responded in his grace by sending Jesus, and whatever the Sadducees believed about resurrection, we know that Jesus was resurrected, and that he lives with us now. By God's grace.

Amen.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Pray for the people of Ukraine as they live through the destruction and devastation of war. And we pray for the leaders of both Ukraine and Russia, that they can find a resolution and bring peace.

Pray for the new Government and Prime Minister, that they can work together for the good of the country, putting the most vulnerable of society first. We pray for the leaders around the world, as they think of climate change, fuel prices, and the cost of living. Also for migrants, seeking a safe place to live and travelling sometimes hundreds of miles to find a better life.

We pray for our churches, for the work of the Kingdom we undertake, and for the fellowship and communities we serve.

We pray for ourselves, for those of us struggling with loneliness, worries about health, worries about finances, worries about families, and those of us grieving the loss of a loved one.

We pray for those who need God the most, and those who think they need God the least.

Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Hymn – StF 364 O For a Thousand Tongues**

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
my great Redeemer's praise,  
the glories of my God and King,  
the triumphs of his grace!

My gracious Master and my God,  
assist me to proclaim,  
to spread through all the earth abroad  
the honours of your name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,  
that bids our sorrows cease,  
'tis music in the sinner's ears,  
'tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
he sets the prisoner free;  
his blood can make the foulest clean;  
his blood availed for me.

See all your sins on Jesus laid:  
The Lamb of God was slain;  
His soul was once an offering made,  
That all may heaven gain.

In Christ our Head you then shall know,  
Shall feel your sins forgiven.  
Anticipate your heaven below,  
and own that love is heaven.

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

### **Blessing**

From 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 17 a blessing by St Paul:

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father,  
who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope,  
comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord,  
In the name of Christ,  
Amen.