

**Written Service Sunday September 24th**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Susan Johnson**

*Charity number*  
**1134226**

**Psalm 145: 1-8**

I will extol you, my God and King and bless your name forever and ever. <sup>2</sup> Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. <sup>3</sup> Great is the LORD, and greatly to be raised, and his greatness is unsearchable. <sup>4</sup> One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. <sup>5</sup> On the glorious splendour of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. <sup>6</sup> They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. <sup>7</sup> They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. <sup>8</sup> The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

**Hymn – StF 41 Blessed be your name**

Blessed be Your name  
In the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow  
Blessed be Your name

*Every blessing You pour out I'll  
Turn back to praise  
When the darkness closes in, Lord  
Still I will say*

Blessed be Your name  
When I'm found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness  
Blessed be Your name

*Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name*

Blessed be Your name  
When the sun's shining down on me  
When the world's all as it should be  
Blessed be Your name  
*Every Blessing ...*

**Prayers of adoration and confession.**

Let us pray. Blessed be your name, gracious God. Words matter as they reveal your nature, O Lord Our God.

YAWEH, eternal, almighty, everlasting, filled with compassion and mercy. You invite to acknowledge your presence with us this morning as we come to you, holding one name that means so much to us today. In the silence we say that name quietly to ourselves and ask that it would bless you as we draw close to you.

May your Holy Spirit move in us and around us as we seek to know more about you from your word today. May Jesus be our challenger and our inspiration .

In the quietness we acknowledge your understanding of our lives and we look for your forgiveness of the things said and not said, done and not done that have not revealed to others that we are followers of your way of love to all people.

We thank you that we now receive your forgiveness, in the name of Jesus. 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,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

Our Old Testament lesson is from the book of Jonah. What do you remember about the story? For me it's a bit like the stories we have of Robin Hood, King Richard, King Arthur and the knights of the round table. A bit of a legend but based on elements in history. But there is always a meaning in the story.

The story goes that Jonah, a minor prophet, is sent by God to Nineveh in Assyria – a gentile town where there was injustice, a strong military rule that led to depraved and brutal conditions in the city. The story goes that God sent his prophet Jonah to go and challenge the people of Nineveh to repent, to turn away from their evil ways and turn back to God.

Jonah didn't want to go and he ended up in the body of a whale – God told him again to go to Nineveh where Jonah's preaching was successful v 10 from Chapter 3.

### **Jonah 3: 10-4: 11**

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

<sup>4</sup> But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. <sup>3</sup> Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." <sup>4</sup> But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

<sup>5</sup> Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant<sup>[a]</sup> and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. <sup>7</sup> But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." <sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead." <sup>10</sup> But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. <sup>11</sup> And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

So what do you think about what happened here? Jonah was obviously unhappy about God's forgiveness of the peoples' behaviour. Is it right for you to be angry? God asks Jonah. How would you have reacted?

About the bush and the people. Jonah knew God was gracious and merciful and that was why he did not want to go. Jonah showed his selfishness is wanting to see the end of Nineveh but God said that the 120,000 were worth forgiveness .

This story would have been shocking to the nation of Israel who did not see that God could show compassion to other nations.

Relect on this more as we look at the next hymn.

### Hymn – StF 416 There's a wideness in God's mercy

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
like the wideness of the sea.  
There's a kindness in God's justice,  
which is more than liberty.

2 There is welcome for the sinner,  
and more graces for the good.  
There is mercy with the Saviour,  
there is healing in his blood.

3 But we make God's love too narrow  
by false limits of our own,  
and we magnify its strictness  
with a zeal God will not own.

4 For the love of God is broader  
than the measures of the mind,  
and the heart of the Eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.

5 If our love were but more simple,  
we should rest upon God's word,  
and our lives would be illumined  
By the presence of our Lord

**Matthew 20: 1-16 20** “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay them a denarius<sup>[a]</sup> for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

<sup>3</sup> “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. <sup>4</sup> He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ <sup>5</sup> So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. <sup>6</sup> About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

<sup>7</sup> “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

<sup>8</sup> “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

<sup>9</sup> “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. <sup>12</sup> ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

<sup>13</sup> “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. <sup>15</sup> Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

<sup>16</sup> “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Another tricky passage. What would you have thought if you were one of the workers? Would you have been happy?

May be thought of as the parable of the last judgement where the last will be first and the first last, showing God’s unexpected goodness. God’s kindness to all.

The character and the nature of God is brought into sharp relief. Compassion, generosity, acceptance and love. The Grace of God was shown and it was not what was expected. But in this parable the workers had all received what they had been promised by the landowner (God). God’s character remained true –promises that were made at the start of the day and the end were kept. I believe that this parable strongly shows us that God’s love and acceptance of all people who turn to him is there right to the very end.

Amen.

### **Hymn – StF 440 Amazing grace**

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 hath 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.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

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’d first begun.

### **Prayers of intercession using “Grace “as we think more on the nature of God.**

The letter G of Grace, generosity, good news. So we give thanks for the people known to us who have revealed something of your goodness and generosity as they have lived their lives around us. May they be strengthened and supported as they seek to make lives better as they serve others.

The letter R reminds us of righteousness. We hold before God those who work to challenge injustice in society. For the Joint Public Issues Team in the Methodist Church who bring to our attention the issues that are being debated in our political system. We pray for all those who are affected at this very moment by the policies that are being made in our name at governmental level. We ask that justice and humanity may be shared and seen.

The letter A reminds us of Agape love , a love which begins in God and reaches into the lives of all who seek to follow the ways of Love. We love because you first loved us. So we offer you our worship and praise . We hold before you the fellowship that we have with other Christians, in our own churches and around the circuit,: those who have known for many years , and some who are now gone from sight but eternally present to you. May they know your love especially at this particular moment in time.

The letter C is for compassion that we have been hearing about today – your compassion for those who have lost their way, being dragged down by bad behaviours and longings. Your compassion for those who are struggling with physical and mental health. encouragement May they know your healing touch and your peace today.

The letter E made me think of your encouragement, Lord, We thank you for your encouragement of your word from scripture today inspiring us to look for the bigger picture of your character at work in the world around us. Thank you that you send people to be alongside us as we seek to be more like Jesus as we share your grace and love to all. We ask that you would continue to guard and guide us .

We ask all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Hymn – StF 563 O Jesus I have promised**

1 O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve Thee to the end;  
be Thou forever near me,  
my Master and my Friend;  
I shall not fear the battle  
if Thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if Thou wilt be my Guide.

2 O let me feel Thee near me,  
the world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear;  
my foes are ever near me,  
around me and within;  
but, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,  
and shield my soul from sin.

3 O let me hear Thee speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will;  
O speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control!  
O speak, and make me listen,  
Thou Guardian of my soul!

4 O Jesus, Thou hast promised  
to all who follow Thee  
that where Thou art in glory  
there shall Thy servant be;  
and, Jesus, I have promised  
to serve Thee to the end;  
O give me grace to follow,  
my Master and my Friend!