



**Sunday 26 April 2020**

***Preacher led style***

**'Living in Christ'**

**Friendship with God and Each Other**

*In this unprecedented period of lock-down we, the whole congregation, are now sharing worship together yet apart. The experience is very different for many of us yet it helps us to appreciate how isolated life is for some of our members and others in the community. We therefore seek to find new ways of establishing communication through technology or perhaps we revert to pen and paper - the written format. Come what may, however, we are persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So wrote Paul in Romans Ch 8 v 38-39 – Halleluiah! Jesus is alive and that we celebrate . . . as we sing*

***Singing the Faith 82 - O Lord my God***

O Lord my God,  
When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all  
The works Thy Hand hath  
made,  
I see the stars,  
I hear the mighty thunder,  
Thy pow'r throughout  
The universe displayed,

Then sings my soul,  
My Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art!  
How great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul,  
My Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art!  
How great Thou art!

When through the woods  
And forest glades I wander  
I hear the birds  
Sing sweetly in the trees,  
When I look down  
From lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook  
And feel the gentle breeze,

When Christ shall come,  
With shouts of acclamation,  
And take me home,  
What joy shall fill my heart!  
Then I shall bow  
In humble adoration  
And there proclaim,  
"My God, how great Thou art!"

Then sings my soul,  
My Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art!  
How great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul,  
My Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art!  
How great Thou art!

*(Stuart K Hine)*

**We pray:**

**The name above all names is here.**

**He invites us by name to sit with him, so that here, in this his body, as his creatures in his world, we may know we have our own special place.**

**Our name is on his lips. Let his name transform our lives.**

**Come to hear the words he speaks; words of life and love and hope.**

**Come to know his blessing and to praise him as he deserves, the Word of life, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*We recognise Jesus as the word of life and sing . . .*

**StF 351 In Christ alone my hope is found,**

He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save:  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied –  
For every sin on Him was laid;  
Here in the death of Christ I live.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
This is the power of Christ in me;  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand:  
Till He returns or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain:  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine –  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

*(Keith Getty and Stuart Townend)*

**Reading:** *Our appointed reading for today is*  
2 Corinthians 5:17-6:13 (GNB)

<sup>17</sup> Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. <sup>18</sup> All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of

making others his friends also. <sup>19</sup> Our message is that God was making all human beings his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends.

<sup>20</sup> Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! <sup>21</sup> Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God.

**6** In our work together with God, then, we beg you who have received God's grace not to let it be wasted. <sup>2</sup> Hear what God says: "When the time came for me to show you favour,

I heard you;  
when the day arrived for me to save you,  
I helped you."

Listen! This is the hour to receive God's favour; today is the day to be saved!"

<sup>3</sup> We do not want anyone to find fault with our work, so we try not to put obstacles in anyone's way. <sup>4</sup> Instead, in everything we do we show that we are God's servants by patiently enduring troubles, hardships, and difficulties. <sup>5</sup> We have been beaten, jailed, and mobbed; we have been overworked and have gone without sleep or food. <sup>6</sup> By our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness we have shown ourselves to be God's servants—by the Holy Spirit, by our true love, <sup>7</sup> by our message of truth, and by the power of God. We have righteousness as our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves. <sup>8</sup> We are honored and disgraced; we are insulted and praised. We are treated as liars, yet we speak the truth; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, yet we are known by all; as though we were dead, but, as you see, we live on. Although punished, we are not killed; <sup>10</sup> although saddened, we are always glad; we seem poor, but we make many people rich; we seem to have nothing, yet we really possess everything.

<sup>11</sup> Dear friends in Corinth! We have spoken frankly to you; we have opened our hearts wide. <sup>12</sup> It is not we who have closed our hearts to you; it is you who have closed your hearts to us. <sup>13</sup> I speak now as though you were my children: show us the same feelings that we have for you. Open your hearts wide!

*We are the people of God and continue to share with him through the prayer Jesus taught us . . .*

**The Lord's Prayer** (Matthew 6:9-13 - *Bible in Basic English New Testament 1941*)

<sup>9</sup> Let this then be your prayer: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. <sup>10</sup> Let your kingdom come. Let your pleasure be done, as in heaven, so on earth. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day bread for our needs. <sup>12</sup> And make us free of our debts, as we have made those free who are in debt to us. <sup>13</sup> And let us not be put to the test, but keep us safe from the Evil One.

*We have confidence that God will favour our prayers and thus we respond in song . . .*

### **StF 6 Father, we love You, we worship and adore You**

Father, we love You, we worship and adore You;

Glorify Your name in all the earth.

Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,

Glorify Your name in all the earth.

Jesus, we love You, we worship and adore You;  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.  
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.

Spirit, we love You, we worship and adore You;  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.  
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,  
Glorify Your name in all the earth.

### **Comment:**

In our reading Paul writes of the suffering that Christians may endure (2 Corinthians 6.4-10) in pursuing their calling as servants of God. Sometimes the cause of suffering is easily identifiable. At other times it is more complicated. Those who have lost loved ones, will be feeling a whole range of emotions including pain, disbelief, anger and confusion. Christian pain often comes when uncertainty meets faith. There can be guilt that there is not more faith. Faith is not always strong enough to carry us completely.

“Wow” is a word that is used a lot these days. There is a programme on Sky Arts called “Portrait Artist of the Year”. In this programme a number of artists both amateur and professional have 4 hours to paint the portrait of someone famous. The artists often use “Wow” when they see who they are to paint, but more often the sitter uses the word when the finished painting is shown to them.

There are opportunities for “Wow” moments every day in our journey with Jesus. He reveals to us the wonders of creation in all its fulness and that includes we human beings – you and me.

As with football or any other team games in order to fulfil our Christian calling faithfully we need to respond and work as a team. This means supporting those who are facing hardships through prayer and encouragement, and looking to the strengths each of us has and seeking to use them to further our mission. Not everyone is a goal scorer. Not everyone is a goal keeper. We need to explore ways in which we can identify and use the gifts each person brings. Midfield is often very good.

We need to remember, though that Jesus is our team captain!

*Perhaps more than ever we have time to consider: What are our gifts? How can we use and share them, particularly in these difficult times?*

The grace of God has to make a difference. It's no good being born again if we don't let salvation trickle through into every aspect of our lives. It seems the Corinthians wanted an easy life, enjoying their wealth, picking and choosing their leaders, finding individual fulfilment in the life of the church without thinking about the good of the whole community. Desperate times call for desperate responses and actions and with the power of the Holy Spirit within us we are enabled to play our part in whatever way we can. Let us look for the "Wow" moments in each day ahead and be assured that our Lord is with us.

### **Footprints in the Sand**

One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it. "Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed you the most, you would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you

Never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you."

Anon.

**Prayer:** *There is a popular slogan 'You are the only gospel people may read' which was certainly true for Paul (see 2 Corinthians 3:2), because he was writing his letters long before the Gospel writers set quill to parchment.' Paul extols the Christian community (and us) to be the gospel for those around them, by the way they lived out their faith not only as individuals but also as a community. The theme of*

*Spring Harvest this year has been 'Unleashed' and the message has been delivered in a very different way due to the Coronavirus restrictions. Nevertheless, God is reaching out in new and exciting ways as He touches His people. Let us therefore.....*

- *Spend some time praying for all charities, outreach work, etc of churches of all denominations.*

We read together:

**We believe in one God, source of human skills**

**We believe that we are born to lead fulfilling, creative and productive lives**

**We believe in God who helps us through the tension and uncertainty in our world**

**We believe in a loving God whose work sustains us in all circumstances. Amen**

*We share our closing song as together we move forward into the coming days and weeks .....*

**STF 536 He's got the whole world in His hand**

1. He's got the whole world in His hand

He's got the whole world in His hand

He's got the whole world in His hand

2. He's got you and me brother . . .

3. He's got you and me sister . . .

4. He's got the little tiny baby . . .

5. He's got everybody here . . .

6. He's got the whole world in His hand . . .

*(African-American Traditional Song)*

In whatever circumstances we find ourselves now and in the future let's be upheld by knowing that God has it all in His hands and that's good; very good indeed!

***The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.***