

Service for Sunday 13 September 2020

Call to Worship Psalm 5 v 11 & 12

But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever. Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name may be filled with joy.¹² For you bless the godly, O LORD; you surround them with your shield of love.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul

Worship His holy name
Sing like never before, O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name
The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul

Worship His holy name
Sing like never before, O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name
You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul

Worship His holy name
Sing like never before, O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

Prayer

In thankfulness and gratitude, we worship you. We feel your constant love and support in our lives. Draw us close to you as we share music, scripture and fellowship. Bless us as we worship. Be in our hearts and minds as we come before you and offer you all that we are, in humbleness, conscious of all you have done for us through our Lord, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who brings us close and is present with us now. We come to you to acknowledge your grace in our lives and to confess how we have fallen short of your love, through neglecting you, distractions, selfish attitudes and personal ambition. But if we confess our sins, God will forgive our sins, because we can trust God to do what is right. God will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done. Lord, please forgive us and allow your love to permeate our whole being. Renew us, by your love and eternal life. Amen.

Reading 1 Mark 11 v 22 25

²² Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. ²³ I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. ²⁴ I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. ²⁵ But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."

Reading 2 Luke 7 v 1 - 10

⁷ When He had completed all His words in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. ² Now a centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. ³ When he heard of Jesus, he sent the

elders of the Jews to Him, asking Him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they asked Him earnestly, saying, "You should do this for him for he is worthy, ⁵ for he loves our nation, and he has built us a synagogue." ⁶ So Jesus went with them. When He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy to have You come under my roof. ⁷ Likewise, I did not think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I myself am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard these words, He marvelled at him, and turned and said to the people who followed Him, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." ¹⁰ Then those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, speak to us through your word and by your life example. Open our hearts to all you want us to know about you from these examples of faith. Make us one with you and with one another. Amen.

Your words to me are life and health;

pour strength into my soul;
enable, guide, and teach my heart
to reach its perfect goal!

Your words to me are light and truth;
from day to day they show
their wisdom, passing earthly lore,
as in their truth I grow.

Your words to me are full of joy,
of beauty, peace, and grace;
from them I learn your blessed will,
through them I see your face.

Your words you have fulfilled on earth,
yourself, the living Word;
within my heart your image print
in clearest lines, O Lord.

Message

This healing miracle is brought about by the Centurion and the Jewish delegation taking Jesus seriously. How they knew of Jesus and his power, we are not sure, but there is excitement in the region that encourage the Centurion to take a chance to restore his servant's life. Speed is of the essence. There is a sense of urgency to the task before them. The Centurion acts decisively and dispatches people from the local synagogue to implore Jesus to come and heal the valued servant. The Centurion is confident that what he has set in motion, requesting Jesus to heal his servant, will be achieved. However, he is not confident enough to go and ask himself, but needs some people who can vouch for this compassionate Roman. They bear witness to his care for them; as human beings and people of faith, and are happy to be represent him, in return for his kindness of them as a community. This is in sharp contrast to the Centurion who is at the cross, who has a barbaric yet important role in the narrative of Jesus' crucifixion, because, seeing how Jesus behaves on the cross, he

recognises Jesus as the Son of God. This is the world that the Centurion inhabits, showing his power to affect the lives and purpose of the soldiers in his command. Centurions were not known for their compassion. They followed given orders and didn't deviate from their tasks. It is surprising, then, that the Centurion here, has built up a relationship with the local community, and even helped with the building of their synagogue. A very different Centurion, a collaborator with the locals. By rubbing on together, they share information. The news of Jesus' presence in the region must have been one of those conversations. The centurion required the help of Jesus. He broke with tradition and asked an "enemy of the state" for help. He was desperate to have his request granted and had received glowing reports about Jesus' ability to heal, from the men from the synagogue. Jesus' miracles had made an impression on witnesses and the effect of Jesus' ability to show compassion and renewal on people was astonishing. The Centurion believed that Jesus was the solution to the situation he faced. He was open and willing to accept that Jesus could make an important difference in his life and the servant who he valued very much. Jesus responds to their request, on the centurion's behalf, and follows them back to the Centurion's quarters, in order to heal his servant. On the way, another group join the travelling party and offer greetings. Their message stops Jesus in his tracks. The Centurion asks Jesus to heal his servant, from a distance. He believes that Jesus has the power and authority to, heal and he assumes that Jesus' time is as valuable, like his own. The Centurion believes Jesus operates like a military man; responding to orders and giving orders. He treats Jesus with equity, putting Jesus on the same level as himself, showing honour and respect to Jesus. The Centurion tells the travelling group that he is unworthy to receive Jesus at home, and believes that face to face healing is not necessary. Jesus' word will be sufficient to achieve the healing required. What a great respect the Roman is giving to Jesus. Jesus is amazed by the faith shown in him. Jesus heals the Centurion's servant then and there, and the Centurion's deputation leave Jesus and journey home, to find the servant well.

There is a lot of respect shown for Jesus in this passage. Jesus also has respect for the Centurion and the level of faith he exhibits. A foreigner who asks a Jewish preacher for miraculous help, knowing that Jesus works in the name and power of God. Jesus' reputation was created by drawing people from all walks of life, including this Roman citizen. Jesus responded, and was willing to answer the request and offer both healing and a glimpse of the power of God to work those miracles he performed. The miracle that Jesus performed had the biggest impact on the Centurion's servant but the impact was felt by the and the Jewish elders. He went from close to death to be filled with, life affirming, abundant life. The servant's life has been transformed by the faith of the one who sought his healing. He wasn't looking out for himself but for someone who needed what he couldn't provide. This story highlights the words from John's Gospel. ⁹ *The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.* ¹⁰ *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.* ¹¹ *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.* ¹² *Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right*

to become children of God. This was what happened here, someone outside of the Jewish family, into which God revealed the plan for salvation, other people saw what the faithful could not, and were transformed, just like the servant. The love of God is open to all, if anyone wants to receive it. Even a trained Roman Centurion. That means anyone can see God through the life of Jesus. Who would you like to be healed or transformed by God's love today? Make a prayer to draw them into Jesus' orbit and wait for the abundant life to be apparent. May God bless us all in the service of love. Amen.

Prayers

Loving God, we thank you for the reassurance of your love for us. As we know your love, we think of people who need our prayers today. We pray for people who are facing a fearful future. Give them your peace and reassurance about what is in store for them. Hold them in your love. Our hearts go out to people who are facing long term illness and health issues. Quell their fears and give them your peace and hope. Make us ready to serve you through our care for people who matter to you.

Lord's Prayer

From heaven you came helpless babe

Entered our world, your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live
This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not My will but Yours,' He said *Refrain*

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered. *Refrain*

So, let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving. *Refrain*

Prayer

Thank you for being with us as we have worshipped you today. Help us to recognise where we feel your touch and encouragement in our lives Help us to venture out, in your love and purpose. Keep us always in your care. Amen

Blessing

May the blessing of light be on you, light without and light within. May the blessed sun shine upon you and warm your heart, until it glows like a great fire and strangers warm themselves, as well as friends. May the light of God shine out of the eyes of you. Like a candle set in the window of a house, bidding the wanderer to come in out of the storm. May God bless you and bless you kindly. Amen