

# Order of Worship for Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September

## Welcome

## Call to worship

The Lord our God is great and to be highly praised.

**We come to worship.**

The Lord our God is great beyond our understanding.

**We come to worship.**

The Lord our God is loving and full of mercy.

**We come to worship.**

Amen

**Hymn**          Praise the Lord his glories show!

## Prayer

We praise you, Lord, for all that you are, for the creation that is yours,

for its beauty and wonder, its diversity and richness.

We praise you for your presence and comfort that swaddle us in your purity and enrich us with your abundance.

We praise you for your steadfastness that perseveres with us, faltering disciples and failing followers.

We praise you that, day by day, you amaze and enrich us and reveal yourself in new and unexpected ways.

We praise you that you are the same yesterday, today and for ever – and yet forever new.

O Lord our God, you are indeed, from the depth of our being, highly to be praised.

Amen.

**Readings**    Jonah 3:10 – 4:11

Matthew 20: 1-16



## Reflection

“That’s not fair!” – how many times have I heard those words in a dispute amongst the kids? “His scoop of ice cream is bigger than mine!” That’s what happens when we judged things by our own standards. We have our own view of what fairness is. But both of today’s biblical stories cause us to think again.

Jonah is angry because God has relented and not punished the Ninevites when they see the error of their ways. So he goes to sit and watch and things go from bad to worse for him and so God challenges him “ Is it right for you to be angry?”

Then we come to the workers in the vineyard. Another well known story and again the claim of “It’s not fair”. Why should those who have only worked for the last hour be paid as much as those who’d been working all day? I’m sure we can all sympathise with them. I’m sure we would feel aggrieved at being treated like that? But being treated like what? The foreman had indeed kept to his side of the bargain, they had come to a deal and those who started first knew what they were to be paid- there was no doubt in this, nothing had changed for them.

It is very easy to get annoyed when things don’t turn out the way we expect and how true is that at the moment? Things have certainly not turned out the way any of us expected in the last few months.

Many people feel that life has not turned out the way they wanted, many are living under a cloud of uncertainty. Jobs have been lost, lives have been lost. It is easy to get angry and to start blaming things and people around us. It’s easy to blame those in charge, but whatever decisions they make are going to upset someone That attitude can often be transferred to God. “How can God allow this to happen?” is a question that’s often asked.

God didn’t allow this to happen, the corona virus pandemic is not his punishment to anyone for anything. But what has happened is that he has found ways to work through this for people to be able to see glimpses of his kingdom in how they respond.

We have all become so much more aware than we were before of how much NHS staff and carers do, how they have gone above and beyond to care for those suffering.

Many communities have become closer as they work together. In my own road we have started a Thursday Coffee Evening where we meet outside on the street and get to know each other. Many of us have lived on the road for a long time but didn't really know each other beyond a brief "Good morning!" but now several of us are getting to know each other much better.

Many people will tell of how touched they have been by the thoughtfulness of others.

We know that during lockdown the positive effects on the environment were clear to see.

God has given us chances to show His love to others. He has given us opportunities to reach out to those who haven't previously known of him. Online services are reaching more people than could possibly be imagined. We have been given time to think about how we do things and what is really necessary. The survey we conducted at Weoley Hill showed that some of the things we had been doing had been a cause of stress to some and so now we ask "could we do things differently?"

Yes, its not fair and some people have suffered greatly during these times, but we have all had the opportunity to live out the gospel.

In his letter to the Philippians Paul exhorts "Whatever happens conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"

In the face of the current crisis, Scripture calls to us. Has God, through the current crisis 'provided a worm' (Jonah 4.7) to prompt a re-assessment of priorities beyond our own personal comfort? Is the hiring of labourers only for the last hour of the day an equivalent for support for those worst hit by effects of the pandemic? With Paul we need to look beyond our own problems to see the struggle others have and support them so that in the concert we can play our part, as we sang earlier and as we sing later that my whole being may proclaim thy being and thy ways.

Amen

## Prayers

Eternal, ever-living, ever-present God,  
in the struggles and joys of this day, we pray:  
for those who are overburdened, weighed down, demoralised,  
fearful or desolate because of what life has thrown at them... **God be with them**

For those engulfed in pain and anguish, facing illness and death... **God be with them**

For those troubled in mind and spirit, who find no peace or calm... **God be with them**

For those alone and lonely, without friend or comfort... **God be with them**

For those frightened and bewildered, who see no direction  
or purpose in their lives... **God be with them**

Eternal, ever-living God,  
bless them all in this and every hour,  
in this and every step of life's journey.  
**Amen.**

## Offering

Ever living and ever loving God we know that we have received so much from you and we know that we return a small part of that to you in our offerings so we pray that these gifts will indeed help us to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

We bring all our prayers together in the words he taught us  
Our Father.....

**Hymn**            Fill thou my life, oh Lord my God

## Blessing

Lord, give us a way to go, a path to follow, a purpose to fulfil and meaning to our deeds.  
**Amen.**