

Sunday 25th October 2020 10:30 am

Rev'd Jenny Pathmarajah and Deacon Sally Wheadon

Call to Worship & Candle lit

Lord, you have been our dwelling-
place throughout all generations
Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole
world, from everlasting to
everlasting you are God.
God of all that has been,
all that is and all that will be,
we have been born and one day we
will die, but today is a day when we
are here, here to worship
and praise you.
Accept, O God, All that we bring
and all that we offer,
in the name of Christ. **Amen.**



Hymn: Be Still for the Presence

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One is here;
Come bow before Him now with
reverence and fear.
In Him no sin is found,
we stand on holy ground;
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire,
with splendour He is crowned.
How awesome is the sight,
our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
He comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister His grace.
No work too hard for Him,
in faith receive from Him;
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

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Prayer:

Eternal God, you are the source of all
life, the fount of all wisdom,
the wellspring of all grace. Your days
are without end, your loving mercies
without number. We depend on you
and remember your goodness to us,
and to those who have gone before.

Your story has been told in every
generation: The Lord Jesus Christ lived
among us, full of grace and truth,
revealing your tender mercy, he
healed the sick, comforted the broken
and the lost. In humility he washed the
feet of his disciples, calling us to follow
his example as one who serves.

You are our God, ahead of us, leading us, guiding us and calling us. You are the Lord God, the all-wise, the all compassionate. And we lift our hearts in worship today and forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, forgive us when we fail to trust in your promises to us.

Forgive us when we seek to control others

and deny your promises to them.

Loving God, we are not always the people we want to be nor the people we ought to be and yet you promise us forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God, who is faithful and just, assures us of pardon and peace.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

We say together the Lord's Prayer
Our Father ...

SONG: *(Sung by Revd Jenny's sister Rebecca & nephew Will)*

Our God is so great,

so strong and so mighty,
there's nothing that he cannot do.

Our God is so great,
so strong and so mighty,
there's nothing that he cannot do.

The rivers are his,
the mountains are his,
the stars are his handiwork too.

Our God is so great,
so strong and so mighty,
there's nothing that he cannot do.

Anonymous

Deuteronomy 34:1-12 (NRSVA)

¹Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, ²all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. ⁴The Lord said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.”

⁵Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command. ⁶He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. ⁷Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. ⁸The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended. ⁹Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the

Lord had commanded Moses.

¹⁰Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. ¹¹He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, ¹²and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.



REFLECTIONS:

Have you heard of what a 'thin place' is? Christians describe them as the places on earth where it feels heaven is almost touching, the presence of God is very real as if they are mingling into one. They call them thin places because the whatever it is that separates us is very, very thin. Can you think of a place like that? A lot of people say the isle of Iona and Holy Island are thin places. Where have you really encountered the presence of God

completely unexpectedly and you felt you were in...a thin place?

I remember one of those times when I was on mission in Jordan and the year was 2004. The incredible thing about Jordan is it's full of holy sites but they don't make a big song and dance about them. "You see that white domed building over there? That's Uriah the Hititte's tomb, from the story of Bethsheba." "You see that valley over there? That's the valley where David hid from Saul when they were fighting". It goes on. My favourite unexpected holy site, which turned out to be a thin place for me was climbing up a mountain called Mount Nebo. It was a tiny detour and we arrived at the top and there was a strong tall bronze sculpture which looked like a cross and staff with a serpent tightly wound round it.



We gazed up at the sculpture and then our eyes were captivated by what we saw about us. Sumptuous land with small rolling valleys, the sea on the horizon and bountiful

fields. It was the first time I'd seen Israel and my friend said to me



“This is the Promised Land and the place where Moses died. His bones are buried within this mountain somewhere, we haven’t looked, we don’t want to disturb them. But this was the fulfilment of the promise of God – that Moses would see the Promised Land before he died. This is what he saw and the landscape hasn’t changed since he died.”

I was overwhelmed with emotion and felt the presence of God cover me in my insignificance. My friend continued. “The government decided to mark this place a few years ago and commissioned a sculpture to be made. It’s based on the story of the Israelites being naughty in the desert and they were bitten by snakes and they had to come to Moses to look at his staff to be healed. Can you see it’s a staff and a snake intertwined? But now, you don’t look to the staff to be healed, you look to Jesus.” You can understand why I have a soft spot for this passage right?

This passage from Moses challenges us because we are forced to confront some difficult issues. **1. Death/Pandemic. 2. Promises of God not yet fulfilled and 3. Leaving tasks unfinished.**

1. The Pandemic

The year 2020 will go down in history for many reasons, you don’t need me to tell you what they are! But as we creep into winter and we march towards the end of October, the Church year takes a sudden shift as well. Whilst the rest of the world gets obsessed with Halloween and the commercial entity that has become, faithful Christians will remember All Souls Day, give thanks for the saints who have gone before us and remember that we are mere mortals on the same journey that their human bodies have completed.

One of the challenges that the pandemic has brought to our modern society is our dislike of talking about death. I’ve upset a lot of people this year by proclaiming “I’m not scared of Covid 19. I have no fear in death.” Don’t get me wrong, I’m not a mask denier or behave irresponsibly to prevent infection, but I do not fear death. I am a Christian. I believe in the

power of God, I believe everything that has been promised to me. I have no fear in death.

I'm inspired by Christian martyrs who have walked without fear to their end. Not just the saints who have gone before us, but those who will lose their life today because of Jesus's name's sake.

For those who are arrested and tortured.

They have no fear in death.



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Blessed are they who are persecuted for my name's sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. What would our conversations look like if we changed the tone of our chats and proclaimed the good news that we hold as Christians "I'm not scared of Covid-19 because I do not fear death – I am a Christian."



2. Promises not yet fulfilled

You have to hand it to Moses. He followed God and did some pretty incredible things throughout his life and led a group of wandering people for a long time trusting that God would come through with his promises. And just as he is about to die, God comes through.

What are you waiting for from God? Are you doubting God's promise to you? Are you expecting God to work according to your timetable? God didn't let Moses down, a promise was made it was kept. I'm not sure what Moses was expecting or wanted, but having stood on Mt Nebo, if that was the last thing I saw for the first time before I went to glory – I couldn't think of anything better.

God will come through on the promises made to you. You might not be able to hear it and understand it, but trust me. God will honour and surprise you and fulfil those promises in ways that will blow your mind and go beyond your expectation. That is what we can learn from this passage.

3. Leaving tasks unfinished

This is a constant conversation in my marriage "Can you do this for me please?" * Goes away and does

it * “You’ve not done it right, you should have done it this way.” Does that sound familiar to anyone?!

What’s even harder is when you have a project, a situation or something and you need to let go. I don’t know what it might be. For ministers, it’s often Churches and people; for you it might be allowing someone at work to actually do their job, trust someone to do the task or even just accept that this big thing might not be your job to complete.

I’m challenged by this passage because Moses is a control freak and he has to trust and let go. He has to trust that Joshua is going to carry on the work he started. It might not be done in the same way, but he has to let go.

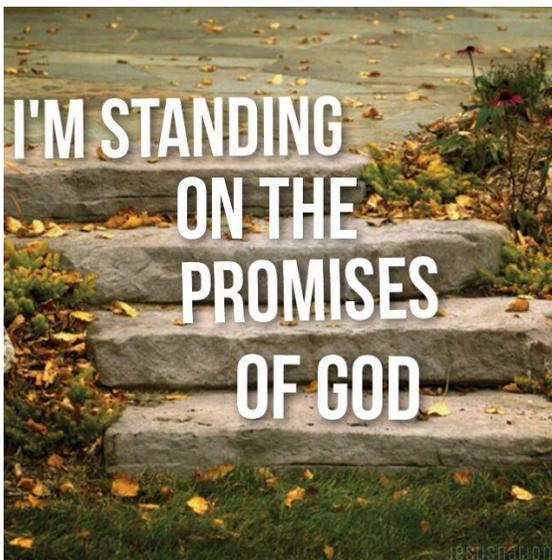
And there’s the challenge. Trusting other people to do something you started and also...letting go. What are you holding onto? What is gripping you right now? What do you need to let go of?

Moses walked the mountain to his death to be received into the arms of God. He trusted in those final footsteps that God would deliver his promise that he would see the promise land and

accepted that he could do no more and let Joshua take over.

What do you need to do to become like Joshua? Does fear of death grip you as a Christian? Do you doubt God’s promises Who do you not trust at the moment? And What do you need to let go of?

The Israelites looked to the staff of Moses to be healed. We look to the power of Jesus to find our peace and our healing. Take your worries and problems to the foot of the Cross of Christ. If you’re wrestling with something, don’t struggle alone. Talk to someone. Call your minister, your pastoral visitor, someone you trust. You are not alone. Amen.



Song: Standing on the promises

Standing on the promises
of Christ my King,
Through eternal ages
let his praises ring;
Glory in the highest,
I will shout and sing,
Standing on the promises of God.

*Standing, standing,
Standing on the promises
of God my Saviour;
Standing, standing,
I'm standing on the
promises of God.*

Standing on the promises
of Christ my Lord,
Bound to him eternally
by love's strong cord,
Overcoming daily
with the Spirit's sword,
Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises
I cannot fall,
Listening every moment
to the Spirit's call,
Resting in my Saviour
as my all in all,
Standing on the promises of God.

Russell K Carter (1849-1926)

Prayers of Intercession:

Eternal God, We thank you for all that you have promised us through Christ Jesus and for your faithfulness in all your dealings with us.

God of all hope we call on you today. We pray, not only for victims of the coronavirus, but also victims of war and violence, famine and natural disaster. We remember especially all who are refugees. We pray for governments around the world, guide them in their decision making. By the power of the Holy Spirit may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We pray, not only for people unable to attend worship currently, but for all who can never meet together in your name. We remember especially those who are persecuted and dying for their faith. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to bring an end to injustice, intolerance and discrimination.

We pray, not only for those feeling isolated at this present time, but for all whose loneliness will remain once this crisis is past. We remember especially the homeless, the voiceless, those suffering from mental health issues and those who are abused. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to bring an end to their suffering.

We pray, not only for those suffering from the coronavirus, but for all who are ill; particularly those whose treatment has had to be postponed at present causing anxiety for them and their families. We remember especially all those who work in health care and other essential services. By the power of the Holy Spirit, unite us all in seeking

to protect the vulnerable and stopping this virus from spreading further. We pray, not only for all who mourn the loss of loved ones, but also for all who grieve for broken relationships and all who are suffering loss of employment, home and identity. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to recognise the needs of others and inspire us to share of ourselves, our time and our material wealth.

>> You may wish to take time to pray for people and situations that are particularly on your heart today

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayers which are offered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Hymn: STF In Christ Alone

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.

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.

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!

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Sending Prayer:

Holy God, we remember that you have promised that nothing will separate us from your love – demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ.

Turn our eyes, hearts and minds to you and give us grace to love and serve you to the praise of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Amen.

Blessing

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and all whom you love, and to all whom you are called to love, this day and for evermore. **Amen.**