

Call to Worship

The steadfast love of the Lord is established for ever.
His faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
The Lord invites us and welcomes us.
Let us worship the Lord.

Hymn 241 Holy Spirit, we welcome you

Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Loving God, we gather in response to your invitation; we gather together, welcomed by you. May the warmth of your welcome inspire and enhance the worship we offer to you in Jesus' name. O God, your Spirit draws us into your presence, and so we come – drawn by love, upheld by grace – to encounter Jesus, our Saviour. We know him as our master. We know him as our friend. We draw close in faith to offer our praise and worship. We are sorry, Lord, for the times we judge others and find them wanting. We are sorry that we turn away from your children in their need. We are sorry that we think we are too busy. We are sorry for the times our welcome has been lukewarm. Forgive us, and help us to remember the warmth of your welcome, and to be inspired to share that warmth with all people. You, O Lord, are the glory and the strength! Happy are those who know Your love is secure and unending. Happy are those who know Your righteousness and mercy are without measure. Accept our praise and adoration, Lord, we pray.

Let us join together in the Lord's prayer Our Father.

Good Morning today imagine yourself in your own home. And it is nearly lunch time, and just before you start preparing lunch, there is a knock at your front door. And when you open the door can you just imagine your feelings when you discover that it is Jesus who has come to visit you. Well you would be absolutely amazed and so glad you would ask him in. What would you do then? I know what I would be doing, I would be rushing to sit Jesus at the best seat at the dining table and give him a refreshing drink to make him welcome. And then making sure that there was someone from the house to sit with him until I made lunch. Now Jesus being Lord of all what could I possibly make for such a distinguished guest. Give me some ideas please, what would you make? Ok, thank you for these welcome ideas. I will make the best meal for Jesus that I can.

Now a few days later at the same time a member from the church arrived knocking on the door. This person has not got a lot and is not very well dressed and a wee bit smelly. Would I be as keen to do the same for this person, would I even invite this smelly untidy person into my home? Of course I would especially if I followed in the steps of Jesus, then I would certainly treat this person in the same way as I did with Jesus when he visited my home. Jesus said something very encouraging to His disciples as He prepared to send them out with the message of God's kingdom to

the people who lived in the local towns. He told them that “anyone who welcomes you welcomes me.” That is quite an amazing statement isn’t it? Anyone who welcomes a fellow believer into their home and looks after their needs, is actually welcoming Jesus. Have you entertained Jesus in your homes recently? Amen.

MP 954 We are Marching in the light of God

Reading Psalm 89 Verses 1 to 4 then 15 to 18.

Intercession Prayer

Loving Lord, we pray in your name and in the name of peace for the worn torn countries of the world, for countries where violence is rife, for communities where tensions run high. We pray Lord for people who have been hurt or killed by other hands and for any who took it upon themselves to try and intervene and help in dangerous situations and we pray for the families left bereaved at these times. We pray in the name of justice for the marginalised people of the world, for those who are discriminated against and for those who are trafficked.

We thank you for those who stand up for the oppressed, and for those who pray for the victimised, and who speak out for the silenced. We pray in hope for economic challenges to be overcome, for opportunities to be embraced and for changes to be long lasting.

Lord hear our prayer. Lord Jesus, we pray in faith for your church throughout the world, for those entrusted with leadership, for congregations reaching out to their communities, for one another to live as we pray. Loving Lord, we pray in thankfulness for businesses and venues preparing to open again, for families preparing to meet up again, for friends preparing to socialise again and we pray for all in government as they continue to monitor and measure the levels of infections around the UK. And also for all who are still fighting this pandemic throughout the world. We further pray for John our minister as he continues his study leave be with him and the family and give him the peace and tranquillity he requires as he studies ever more of your words to him. Father we pray for the grieving and ask you enfold them in your loving arms and help us to do likewise. Lord hear our prayer, for you are our strength and our inspiration and in you we trust.

Amen.

MP 929 Sing to the Lord a Joyful song.

Reading Mathew 10 verses 40-42

Sermon

How many of you have a welcome mat at the front door of your house? A welcome mat usually has two purposes. It’s used to encourage people to wipe their feet so that they won’t trail mud into the house. And, they are placed outside your door as a sign to let people know that they are welcome to come in. In our gospel reading this morning, Jesus talks about welcoming people. Generally, Matthew draws attention to

the disciples being good hosts, but in this part of the Gospel he turns it round. The disciples are the ones being cared for by others. Just like today, we need to be gracious guests and accept help from others. Often the most caring people are the ones who are least likely to accept any help for themselves. As Christians, we need to be both care-givers and receivers. We need to allow others to use their gifts to help us. Each and every act of kindness contains Christ's love for the world. It is a love we can share anytime and anywhere whether the kindness be big or small.

The identification of the little ones in need of a cup of cold water lifts the person to an equal status of the whole of the church alike. When the disciples were first sent out by Jesus, they were completely dependent, first on God and then on the hospitality of the communities that received them. Their vulnerability and dependence were the key to the success of the mission. Just as we are when we live out our lives in the community. We are dependent on others. Our vulnerability and dependence is the key to the success of our mission. Jesus teaches that receiving His messengers is the same as receiving Him, and that receiving Him is the same as receiving His Father. The One who is sent represents the Sender. The same reward given to the prophet will also be given to the one who receives the prophet. God is glorified when we do acts in His name and also when we receive another in His name. He is honoured when we give a drink of water to a disciple because He is a disciple. When we receive a messenger, we receive Christ. God will reward us for everything we do in faith in His name. The simplest deed in discipleship in Christ will be recognized by God. God doesn't only reward "big" important works. He loves to give and reward obedience, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem to us. There are so many in need especially just now and we know we cannot possibly help them all by ourselves and we can say, "That's not my problem!" and shut the needs of others from our minds; or we can say, "I can't change everything, but if we each try our best and trust in prayers then we can help in some small way to help where we can. It is the same with those we can help. We don't have all the answers, but as we come to grips with the enormity of the problem, it's amazing how we begin to see the needs and hear the Holy Spirit say, "Help, here!" or "Do something about this!." When we do that, we can and do make a difference.

Christ lives in His people. They become His ambassadors. How they are treated is how He is treated. Welcoming His ambassadors is the same as welcoming Him. Jesus equated Himself with God. He also knew that God gave Him authority, and He claimed that authority. Hospitality is a witness to the unconditional love of Christ. That lifts us up and saves all who would be saved. It's open to everyone.

The "little ones" - both the poor and those who are new to the faith - are our guests of honour. They might be angels in disguise or even Christ Himself in disguise. Our task is to see Christ in everyone and attend to the Christ in everyone - the stranger, the enemy, the friend, the spouse, our sibling, a politician, even someone who

believes differently than we do. Christ is in everyone. When we regard everyone as Christ, then maybe they will see the Christ who is in us.

The simple act of leaving our personal comforts to care for the needs of another demonstrates the love Jesus shared with us when He left the ultimate comfort and joy of heaven to live life here on earth. Serving another person is inconvenient. It takes time, energy, personal resources, and sometimes, personal discomfort. It is so much easier to look away and assume someone else will do it. Jesus invites us to serve Him by caring for the needs of others. Today and every day the invitation. The great, ancient African theologian, Augustine, sheds further insight about the dynamics of living the Christian life, of living your purpose with joy. A little more than 1,600 years ago, Augustine was reflecting on how much God values us, so much that great rejoicing in the heavens transpires when just one is saved. Then he prayed that God would inflame us, excite us so that we would come to delight in praising God. People who delight in praising God will spontaneously, and with delight, long to serve their neighbours when Jesus comes to them in the person of these neighbours. Christian living, living out your purpose, is no burden. When you're clear about your value to God, Christian living is a wonderful opportunity to flourish and thrive.

Hospitality is crucial to the gospel message because unless we change our point of view, unless we change the state of our hearts and minds about those that society oppresses, unless we can see others as children of God, then we can't fulfill our orders to share the Good News of forgiveness and healing, of justice and mercy, of righteousness and hope. How about in our churches? Do you think that people are always welcome at our church home? Do we speak to those people who are visiting our church that we do not know? If someone comes to our church and they are dressed different from the way we are dressed, do we make sure that they are made to feel welcome? Jesus said, "He who receives you receives me." If we turn that around, we will understand that if we do not welcome others into our homes and into our churches, it is the same as if we are refusing to welcome Jesus. We wouldn't do that, would we? Well, let's put the welcome mat out - and let's be sure that we mean it!

Amen

MP 428 Lord for the Years

Benediction Go now to follow the way of Jesus. See others as he did, dare to give freely as he did and to love unconditionally as he did. And may the blessing of God rest upon us and abide with us now and forever more.

Amen.