

12th October 2020 Fareham by ZOOM

Call to worship

Bless this day, this blank page newly turned.
May its story, once written,
bring only glory to your name.

Amen

Hymn 255

The kingdom of God is justice and joy;
for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy.
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace;
the captives are freed,
the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share;
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.

Praise and adoration

Creator of all,
Sustainer of all,
Saviour of all,
Your glory and majesty
are beyond our understanding,
Your power too awesome to behold.
And yet your love enfolds us as a gentle breeze.
Saviour of all ,
Sustainer of all,
Creator of all,
We praise your holy name

Thanksgiving

Lord of Lords,
God of this world
and the next,
We give you thanks
for the promise of this day,
We give you thanks

for the challenge of this day,
We give you thanks
for the blessings of this day.
Light of light,
Lord of Lords,
God of this world
and the next,
We give you thanks

Amen

Reading Exodus Ch32 v 1-14

Meditation by Nigel Cox

If the news stories about the Corona virus are to be believed we are where we are because people have been reluctant to do as they have been told. They have ignored advice regarding social distancing thinking that they know best and that the rules don't apply to them. They have partied when they should have stayed apart. They have been impatient to carry on with life as if the pandemic did not exist. If the professional advisors are correct there will be a price to pay with increased infections, increased hospital admissions and sadly increased deaths.

As I read the Old Testament lesson for today I was struck by the similarities between our situation now and the behavior of the Israelites as they journeyed towards the promised land. That journey took the forty years and yet when Moses was away forty days they became impatient and wanted to throw away all their heritage and understanding about Jahweh. Whilst on occasions speed is of the essence, sometimes we need to take time to reflect upon God's plan for our lives. As the saying goes patience is a virtue and virtue is a grace.

In their impatience the Israelites had become forgetful. They seem to have forgotten all the kindness and nurturing that God had shown them in delivering them from slavery with the Egyptians. I know that they were not yet fully free but they had been permitted to escape from the clutches of their slave drivers and were moving towards the land of milk and honey that God had promised them. Sometimes when we are in a difficult place we find that overwhelming and forget that it was not always like this. Our God is a faithful God and will be alongside us in the good times and the bad; we need to hold onto that faith.

Aaron, who should have known better as Moses's deputy, instructs the people to give their gold so that he can construct an idol in the form of a golden calf. He then leads them into idol worship as they bow down before the golden calf. Once the worship and burnt offerings were completed the people began to party to the

point of revelry. They seem to have forsaken the values and traditions that they had maintained throughout their time of captivity.

It is unsurprising that when God saw what was happening he became angry. Well perhaps it is surprising because anger is a rare facet of God's character, infrequently displayed. We are more accustomed to see God as a forgiving and loving force evidenced by the atoning death of his son Jesus Christ for humankind. In his anger God wanted to destroy the Israelites but Moses pleaded with God on behalf of the people that he had been leading through the wilderness these many years. A good leader Moses speaks up for his people, believes the best in them. He is also a canny negotiator, what would the Egyptians think God if you destroyed your people. God relents his anger and is merciful, remembering the promises that he has made to his people in the past and keeping them. We can be assured that whatever befalls us God will be faithful towards us, caring for us and loving us in a way that none of us can truly understand.

Hymn number 44

Come on and celebrate His gift of love,
We will celebrate
The Son of God who loved us
And gave us life.

We'll shout Your praise, O King,
You give us joy nothing else can bring,
We'll give to You our offering
In celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate, celebrate
Celebrate and sing;
Celebrate and sing to the King.

Prayer of Confession

Love Has its source in you, Creator God.
Flows from you like an ocean,
into a world as unyielding
as any shoreline cliff.
And like the ocean which batters, erodes,
and wears away even the hardest stone
your love persists, finds cracks and inlets,
in hardened hearts, flows inside and works a miracle.
Who would think that water
was more powerful than granite,

love mightier than the hardest heart.
Thank you, Creator God,
for the power of your love.

Silence

Prayer of Forgiveness

Do not turn your face from Him whatever your sin.
Only He can forgive, and does, for the love of you.

Amen

Reading psalm 8 from The Message

1 God, brilliant Lord, yours is a household name.

2 Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you;
toddlers shout the songs That drown out enemy talk,
and silence atheist babble.

3-4 I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous,
your handmade sky-jewellery,
Moon and stars mounted in their settings.

Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,
Why do you bother with us?

Why take a second look our way?

5-8 Yet we've so narrowly missed being gods,
bright with Eden's dawn light.

You put us in charge of your handcrafted world,
repeated to us your Genesis-charge,

Made us lords of sheep and cattle,
even animals out in the wild,

Birds flying and fish swimming,
whales singing in the ocean deeps.

9 God, brilliant Lord,
your name echoes around the world.

Amen

Reading Matthew 22, verses 1 to 14

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ² "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. ⁴ "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

⁵ "But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ The

king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸ “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹ “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. ¹³ “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Reflection by Milly Aquilina-Grey

This parable tells a very strange story: all those who received the invitation to the king’s banquet not only refused to attend but treated the messengers very badly. The king was not to be stopped: he sent his servants to the crossroads and they gathered ‘all they could find, good and bad alike’. The hall was full. God’s invitation to partake in his great banquet is not restricted to the Jews, his kingdom is now open to all, without any distinction, even to those who seem unworthy. I stand and wonder at God’s goodness and mercy towards all. I ask to be like the Father in his mercy and generosity.

But the text also underlines the link between the kingdom and judgement: the first guests were punished for their crass behaviour, and the guest without the proper attire was expelled from the banquet and sent to where there is darkness and the gnashing of teeth. By not accepting the Kingdom I am excluding myself from it. I ask for the grace to be consistent in my choices, a person of integrity.

Amen

Prayers of intercession by Nigel Cox

The Lord’s prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not unto temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
The power and the glory
For ever and ever

Amen

Hymn number 483

We are marching in the light of God
We are marching in the light of God
We are marching in the light of God
We are marching, marching
We are marching Oh Oh
We are marching in the light of God
We are marching, marching, marching
We are marching Oh Oh
We are marching in the light of God

We are living in the love of God
We are living in the love of God
We are living in the love of God
We are living in the love of God
We are living, living
We are living Oh Oh
We are living in the love of God
We are living, living
We are living Oh Oh
We are living in the love of God

Blessing

May the love of God be the ocean that you sail upon
And the grace of God bring you calm in stormy days
May the word of God guide you to your destination
And the breath of God speed you safely on your way
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

Amen