

Fareham Methodist Church 22nd November 2020

Order of Service

Pre-service music.

Technical Brief & Stewards welcome

Gathering Hymn: Stf 88 Praise to the Lord

Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the king of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!
come all who hear; brothers and sisters draw near,
praise him in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord, above all things so mightily reigning;
keeping us safe at his side, and so gently sustaining
have you not seen, all you have needed has been
met by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who when darkness and sin are abounding,
who when the godless are rampant, all goodness confounding,
shines with his light, scatters the terror of night,
safely his people surrounding.

Praise to the Lord, who shall prosper our work and defend us;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend us.
Ponder anew what the almighty can do,
who with his love will defend us.

Praise to the Lord - O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the "Amen!" sound from his people again;
gladly with praise we adore him!

Joachim Neander (1650-1680). Translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)

Opening Prayer

Eternal Father, whose son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Lord of power and might, we praise you for your blessings, empowering us in our journey of following you and doing your work for which we are grateful. Teach us to trust in you in our hour of need and forgive us for the weakness in upholding our faith in our daily lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

Address.

Does anyone remember the 1973 Cliff Richard song called 'Power to all our friends'? For some strange reason I was singing that song whilst driving home from work a couple of weeks ago. When I read the passage from Ephesians, I noticed the apostle Paul making a reference to God's power. His power cannot be seen by the naked eye, yet, manifested in so many ways. I like to share with you an experience which I'll never forget. When my son was just a few months old, my former husband and I were woken

by continuous crying, it was not hunger, it was not a dirty nappy, somehow, the crying was unlike any other time. We took turns in soothing the baby and after a while he stopped crying. My husband was about to put my son back in his cot when the little one threw up across the landing and went blue and floppy. We called the doctor and within minutes of the GP's arrival an ambulance came to rush our baby to hospital. We were beside ourselves while waiting for a diagnosis. I could hear the baby screaming and he tugged at my heartstrings. In desperation I said aloud 'God, please don't let him die, I am so sorry if I have done wrong, please let him live'. Now, at that time I was not attending church and would not call myself a Christian. Tears flowed until I could not cry anymore. After another hour it all went quiet and we feared the worst. Then came the news from the surgeon, your son's guts turned inside out and it was touch and go and they were about to manually turn it the right way round when they found the problem righted itself, they have never seen such a miracle. I was informed later that the medical condition only happens to boys under one and the chance was one in a million. I know now, without a doubt, that this was the power of God at work.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving God, we are here to give thanks to you on this Thanksgiving Sunday. Thank you for showing us you care; you comfort us when we are sad, you pick us up when we fall down, you forgive us when we have sinned, you hold us close when we stray from you, you provide us with everything we need and more, and you are with us wherever we go. You have the power to sustain us, change the course of our lives, and keep us safe in your love. We pray this in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen.

Hymn. StF 327 Jesus is King

Jesus is King, and I will extol Him
Give Him the glory, and honour His name
He reigns on high, enthroned in the heavens
Were thou the Father, exalted for us

We have a hope, that is steadfast and certain
Gone through the curtain, and touching the throne
We have a Priest, who is there interceding
Pouring His grace, on our lives day by day

We come to Him our Priest and Apostle
Clothed in His glory and bearing His name
Laying our lives with gladness before Him
Filled with His Spirit we worship the King

Oh, Holy One our hearts do adore You
Thrilled with Your goodness we give You our praise
Angels in light with worship surround Him
Jesus our Saviour forever the same

Wendy Churchill

Reading: Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

² Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

³ Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

⁵ For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations

Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit^[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way

Hymn: stf 335 Rejoice, the Lord is King

Rejoice, the Lord is King,
Your Lord and King adore.
mortals, give thanks and sing
And triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice.
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.

Jesus, the Saviour reigns,
The God of truth and love:
When He had purged our stains
He took His seat above:
Lift up your heart....

His kingdom cannot fail.
He rules o'er earth and heaven.
The keys of death and hell
Are to our Jesus given.
Lift up your heart....

Rejoice in glorious hope
Jesus the judge shall come
And take his servants up
To their eternal home
We soon shall hear the archangels' voice
The trump of God shall sound, rejoice!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Reflection.

For the past three years my son and I watched an organised firework display from our balcony, but no such luck this year with Covid 19 and lockdown. Fireworks contain explosives, and they are dangerous but powerful at the same time. In our reading today Paul the apostle told the Ephesians that he has been praying for them-that they would know of God's wisdom and revelation, in other words, of the greatness of His power, power which he passed on to those who believe. How can we, as Christians, be sitting on a stack of dynamite and don't know it? The Greek word for power is 'dunamis', the source of the word 'dynamite'. At first glance the passage in Ephesians appear to be a prayer of thanksgiving, which naturally followed on from the blessings God bestowed on the believers earlier in the same chapter. Having prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I strongly feel I should direct our attention on the power of God and the power Christ has given us.

Is our faith not enough for us to get by then? Think back to the word dynamite. Dynamite has two elements, one stable and the other unstable. In this case, the unstable element holds the greatest power. Our faith can become stagnant and therefore it is important to know the wisdom and power that we have in Christ Jesus. You may ask what shall we do to get to know about the power of Christ. Look at what he has done for us in our lives and the lives of others. How about Moses-God gave him power to help the Israelites out of Egypt and into the promised land and that took forty years! How about Mother Theresa-she devoted her life and time to others with the power of love! How about Billy Graham-he had the power to transform lives and turning them towards God by standing in front of large crowds and sharing the message! These famous people had enough spiritual power from God to do his work, enough power to detonate our lives and change them for the better.

How do we relate to this new-found power: surely we are weak and Christ is strong, we are powerless and Christ is powerful? This year, all over the world we have seen the destructive path of the Covid pandemic, even Christians struggle with fear, doubt, confusion, and helplessness, let alone anyone else. In these times we dare not hope for much except to follow government guidelines to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe. God has the power to dissolve fear, banish doubt, ease confusion, and give us hope. We waited and hoped for a vaccine, maybe at last we have the hope of a working cure for the virus in our hands. We must have spent a lot of our time praying for a vaccine, I know I have. In the letter to the Ephesian Christians Paul prayed that they may know the Father's power. Remember, this power is readily available for us who believe; it is beyond measure, it is beyond words can describe. God raised Jesus from the dead, and power has been passed on to us.

Scholars and commentators have discussed two types of power which is from God-resurrection power and ascension power. Resurrection power is believing God can save family, friends and colleagues no matter how far from God they seem. This power gives hope, this power can heal, this power can rescue us from danger, and this power can one day raise us from the dead. If God can raise Jesus from the dead, is there anything He cannot do? Ascension power is believing that Christ rules over everything from his throne, that he is bigger than any angels or demons, that we do not have to be afraid, that God can save a whole nation, and that our future is secure because Christ is the power. We can all have access to Jesus' power if you confess your sins, put your trust in Him, and acknowledge his resurrection as your own, and if you want to know Him, then you can receive his power.

From the limited power of a single AA battery for a small alarm clock, to a giant source from a nuclear power plant, we can all tap into some form of power, likewise we can tap

into a spiritual power much greater than anything on earth. How great is God's power? I like to refer you to hymn 693 in 'Singing the faith' where I quote
*Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair
Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills
Work for all people, trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed, right for the weak
Refuge from cruel wars, haven from fear
Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams.
God of the poor, friend of the weak,
Come, change our hearts from a spark to a flame*

You can find God's power right here. Now how about if we all plug in and feel this power. Amen!

Prayer of intercession

The Lord's Prayer

StF 495: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow thee,
Rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love,
Interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of thy call
As noiseless let thy blessing fall
As fell thy manna down
As fell thy manna down

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess

The beauty of thy peace,
The beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm,
O still small voice of calm

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)

Prayer:

Psalms 100 teaches us to enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise....for the Lord is good and his love endures forever. Lord, show us your power of love.

God of power, God of love, we commit ourselves now to you, help us to lead a life worthy of your calling, a life of trust, a life of faith, a life of humility and a life striving to know you better. Amen.

Blessing.

The blessing of God, father, son and holy spirit be among you and remain in you always. Go into the world, empowered by Christ our Lord, walking in his footsteps, and rejoicing in his love. Amen.

Hymn: STF 81. Now thank we all our God

Now thank we all our God
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things hath done,
in whom his world rejoices.
who from our mothers' arms,
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
to keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
of this world in the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son and Spirit blest,
who reign in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart (1586-1649). Translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)