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“Sharing our Story”

Call to Worship

Worship Song Oh my God worship song

Oh my God, I am here before you,
Bruised and broken again.

Oh my God, I am running empty,
My world is making no sense.

How I long to know your face.
How I long to find the words to say.
So I sing to reach you, Sing to be with you.
Oh my God hear me.

Oh my God, I am here wide open,
In the stillness come see me.
Oh my God, is it you here with me;
So hard to believe what I can't see.

How I long to feel your father's hand
So I trust where I can't understand.
So I sing to reach you, Sing to be with you.
Oh my God hold me.

Oh my God, though my heart is heavy,
Your truth will be my release.
Oh my God, though I try to fight you,
Your love will bring me to my knees.

And I long to bathe in your pool of grace,
If I could only give myself away.
So I sing to reach you, Sing to be with you.
Oh my God, Oh my God,
My sweet Lord take me.

Bible Reading 1 Peter 3 v13-17

Worship Song Light is You

Rejoice

Today I woke up laughing,
Singing I'm forgiven!
My eyes are clearing,
I'm seeing new beginnings.

Let me love just like you love me
Share the peace that's now within me
Spread the light I feel within me
Open up my arms and shout rejoice, rejoice, rejoice

I see the world go by in a whole new light
That light is You
New sun on morning tide, till evening time
That light is You

So now I wake up feeling
Trust in where we're going
The weight is lifting
I'm learning that this is living!

Shine your light on all my shadows
Find my way out of the hollow
Fill me with the flame that I know
Opens up my arms. I shout rejoice, rejoice, rejoice

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Testimony Tom Rowland

Worship song One + one + one

You are love, pure love, come love, come live in me.
I am yours, all yours, only yours, come live in me.
You are the most beautiful one.
You are the most beautiful one
One and one and one is you

Breathing in breathing out bathing in your light
My every shade every colour stir them into white
I empty myself of all I have been
I empty my shell to welcome you in

Shadows come shadows pass shadows couldn't make me blind
We're walking out, moving on, every step in time
I empty myself of all I have been
I empty my shell to welcome you in

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Reflection Sharing our Story

1 Peter 3 v13-1, Matthew 28 v16-20

If I was to ask you why you are a Christian (assuming of course that you all are!!) or perhaps more broadly why you come to church or are a part of this community I wonder what you would say? Perhaps we could talk about that later? It may seem to be a daft question, or even an overly personal one (especially in times like now when it is not often seen to be polite to talk about things like religion) but it is a crucial question for us all. The Church, and what the Church does (and of course our own place within that dynamic) are all intrinsically tied together. One without the other is pretty pointless - Church for Church's sake is after all just 'religion', just tradition or even heaven forbid a habit.

Consistently Jesus insisted that we do something with what we have come to experience through our relationship with him. Faith drives mission and ministry and there is no small actions in ministry, every thing we do, if driven by our faith, guided by Jesus' actions and bolstered with prayer has the potential to change everything.

In my most comfortable area of ministry - pioneering and fresh expressions - it is constantly apparent to me that (in meeting predominantly those 'outside' of church) there is no lack of good will for the good things that we (in the church) have come to know are from God. And there is often respect and even admiration for faith.....for the sheer audacity to believe in something, and to live your life by that belief. But it is hard for many to see, through the busyness and the complications of life why faith in Jesus would make anyone's life any better, would be worth the effort - to put it bluntly.

Hence my question: If asked, what would you say is the reason you are a Christian?

In the past fear, guilt, obedience and tradition played a part - but, and I'm sure quite rightly so, these things no longer work.

Now perhaps you are waiting for me to answer my own question - and I'm not afraid to say that even I squirm a bit to answer it. Because for me, it's like trying to answer the question, "Why do you love your wife and your

children?" Not that I can't tell you why (!!!!), but rather that there are many reasons and feelings and emotions connected with those relationships. It's complicated and it's certainly not just about the things we do but rather our history, our friendship, our shared life and values as well as little things too - the way we are able to talk to one another, have fun, be silly. Etc, etc.....

So, in the end I might say that my relationship with Jesus is just as equally complicated as my relationship with my wife (!) and just as rewarding as any other loving relationship. In the end Jesus, like Jenny, inspires me to be the best version of me that I can be (even if I don't always succeed - it inspires me to try) and both encourage me to try and do/be good. And in 'goodness' I see the work of God and in God I see that therefore I have a reason and a purpose. A past, present and future. I have hope.

David Jenkins, one time Bishop of Durham, and a somewhat controversial progressive theologian once, when challenged to sum up his faith in the simplest of terms...a modern day creed if you like came up with, "God is. As he is in Jesus. So there is hope".

I like the simplicity and the openness of that. It is a relationship that invites all of us in. And for me what I have discovered about ministry - which I might define as the task of helping others make a meaningful relationship with Jesus, is that it is nothing more or less than sharing our story, in word or action. Being the best me that I can be because of the inspiration derived from my relationship with Jesus and others I love and trust, and then letting your imperfect actions, your fragile and stuttering ability to love, and well just you...be the tool that might bring others to a similar place where the Holy Spirit can break in.

The author of 1 Peter asks, "Who will harm you if you are eager to do good?" Well I'm sure you and I know that doing good is not always appreciated or welcomed. Trying to do good sometimes brings hatred.

Why?

Well not everyone will agree with you of course, some others might be jealous of your hopeful, stumbling attempts at goodness (Godliness). Some do just wish you harm, pure and simple because their inspiration comes from somewhere else entirely. Some have been so hurt or let down in the past that they struggle to trust or to hope. The writer however promises us blessings and encourages us to be brave and to continue to stick our necks out and to carry on doing good. It is the only way that makes sense in a world in which Jesus was born, lived and died on a cross for us.

A famous quote that you might have heard is that “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing” Maybe that can be our inspiration? Doing good is not necessarily about what we say, but rather what we do. There is no need to argue and fight (although sometimes protest, even angry protest is very necessary as we have seen recently in things like the #metoo movement, Black Lives Matter and the fight to save our planet’s climate). Shouting at people in a petrol station because we have had to wait half an hour to fill up the Land Rover Discovery however is not in the same league.

It is all about sticking with your actions and trusting in that relationship with Jesus. Being a Christian is not about a religion - it is about being more like Jesus...

So, here is my good news take away for us all.....we don’t need to teach Jesus - we need to show Jesus, be a bit more Jesus, and at the very most be able to explain in a simple way, by telling our stories, why Jesus inspires you to do and be exactly who you are. Because you are God’s, because you have a relationship with Jesus. Because you are working on trying to remember that the you that you are, no matter your gender, sexuality, age, race, social position, education, accent, whatever.....is just fine with God.

With our hearts set on Jesus and the hope that David Jenkins spoke about we might prosper in what we do because of our faith, or we might suffer for it, but we do it always whatever with Jesus. With Jesus we have a friend for the journey.

As he said himself at the Great Commission in Matthew’s gospel “I am with you always to the very end of the age”. Never ever forget that. Amen

INTERCESSIONS

LORD’S PRAYER

Worship Song Look at Love

For all I’ve said, for all I’ve done,
For all that I have failed to do
For empty pride, empty desire
For every time I walked from you
I fall down on my knees
As you reach out to me

I look at love, High up on a hill,
Bruised and battered in, Nailed there by my sin.
Look at love, Hung up on a tree,
Crying out to me, Dying to set me free,
How can I walk away? Yeah
How can I walk away? Yeah

For who I've hurt, for who I've been
For all that I have failed to be.
For all I've stolen, for all I've broken
With careless thoughts and words and deeds. I fall down on my knees
As you pour your grace over me

For all I've said, please forgive me (x3)
For who I've hurt, please forgive me
For who I've been, please forgive me
How can I walk away, please forgive me
How can I walk away, please forgive me

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BLESSING