



Sunday, 22nd November 2020

led by Robert Sales and Gareth Rutledge

Welcome

Psalm 95 v1-7a

- ¹ Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
- ² Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.
- ³ For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
- ⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
- ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
- ⁶ Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
- ⁷ for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.



Hymn: Light of the World. (STF 175)

LIGHT OF THE WORLD,
You stepped down into darkness,
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You,
Hope of a life spent with You.

*So here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God;
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.*

King of all days,
Oh so highly exalted,
Glorious in heaven above;
Humbly You came
To the earth You created,
All for love's sake became poor.

*So here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God;
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.*

And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.
(Repeat)

*So here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God;
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.*

Light of the world,
You stepped down into darkness,
Opened my eyes, let me see.

Tim Hughes
©2000 Thankyou Music

Opening Prayer

Dear Father God,
We know that your greatness is beyond our understanding,
Yet you chose to send your son Jesus Christ to save us.
We thank You for the blessings we receive every day.
We thank You for everything You have done for us.
Thank You for the beauty that surrounds us,
Thank You for family and friends, for health,
For strength to carry on through the difficult times,
but most of all,
thank You for Your son, Jesus Christ.
In whose name we pray,
Amen.

Introduction to JMA Sunday

JMA video



Hymn: The Lord's my Shepherd (STF 481)

THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD, I'll not want.
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone.
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend

1996 Kingsway's Thankyou Music Edwin Hatch (1835-1889)

Intercessory prayers

Today is also "Women Against Violence Sunday" and we are asked to take some time to think about this disturbing topic, which has intensified during the pandemic.

So let us pray.
Gracious God,
We ask that you stretch
out your hand to bring
comfort, wholeness and peace to all who suffer in
body, mind or spirit.



We thank you that in Jesus Christ You held women
in high esteem,
You understood their secret heartaches,
You inspired their love and trust.

O God, we ask that you will reveal the persistent
wrong in our lives,
The reality we choose to ignore,
Change our heart and our lives, we pray,
That your image may grow in us
And in those we love.

O God, who shows us in Jesus Christ
How your kingdom will come
In love and justice and peace,
Be present to those of our community here
And any of our friends, colleagues or neighbours
Who are suffering at the hands of a loved one
Or have to witness the suffering caused.
May they know your supportive presence with
them.

Give them the strength to share their pain
And enable the rest of us to hear and believe,
That together we may act to change how things
are

So that no-one need live in fear and humiliation.
We pray that your liberating kingdom will come
In truth and hope and love.

We also think about JMA, that our children will
continue to learn about and support the mission
of the Church in a fun, creative and engaging way.

That they might continue to share the insights of
God's people all over the world with children in our
own churches.

All these things, through Jesus Christ, our Lord
and Saviour, Amen

Reading Psalm 139 v1-18

- 1 You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
- 2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
- 5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
- 7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
- 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
- 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
- 13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and
wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
- 15 My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the
earth.
- 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in
your book
before one of them came to be.
- 17 How precious to me are your thoughts,^[a] God!
How vast is the sum of them!
- 18 Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.



Time to Reflect - Psalm 139 : 14

No two trees, no two flowers, no two sheep, no two seals, no two pandas, no two goats are ever the same. So it is with people, all different throughout history.

I'm one of three brothers, we're all very different. Each of us is a one off, unique, never to be repeated. How amazing is that!



“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”
Psalms 139:13-14 NIVUK

So each one of us is wonderful. Perhaps we need to remind ourselves of this sometimes, maybe when we're feeling down, or looking at how others seem to perhaps manage better. Yes, they are wonderful, but so are we, and we are quite unique.

Let's look at part of the creation story.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” Genesis 1:26-28
NIVUK

So each one of us is wonderful, and we are also made in the image of God. All people are made in the image of God. People have been wondering for perhaps thousands of years what being “made in the image of God” means. I'm not going to major on this today, better minds have looked at this, but the Message, a contemporary version of the Bible suggests this means “reflecting God's nature”.

Those who know me well will be aware that in a sermon or message I like application. So what can we do, should we do, with the fact that we are made in the image of God? There is general

advice in Genesis: “‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”
We are called to rule over the earth, “reflecting God's nature.”

What do we do with the fact that everyone is made in God's image? Every single person is of great value, is special. C.S. Lewis writes “There are no ordinary people. You have never met a mere mortal.”

Even the most obscure, seemingly unimportant person in your life, is not ordinary in God's eyes, and therefore each person I suggest deserves dignity and worth, regardless of class, race, gender, disability, or any other label you may apply to them. Maybe labels, such as young, French, wise, handicapped, southerner, asylum seeker etc can be helpful in our understanding. Such labels however often bring all sorts of assumptions, prejudices, and perhaps provoke us to forget or ignore that each individual person is quite special, unique, and also made in the image of God.

There has been much in the media recently about discrimination, and particularly the Black Lives Matter movement, and this has of course been relevant to Ashbourne and the removal of the Blackmore's head from the Green Man pub sign. Discrimination is about treating people differently because of a label applied to them, and particularly if we feel we have power over them. Where people obviously look different, for instance because of the colour of their skin, it is very easy to apply a label to them, and sometimes that label in itself is insulting, and often comes with all sort of preconceptions.

When the British Empire, and I'm sure other empires, was being established, and it is perhaps worth thinking about if we are tempted to glorify the British Empire, explorers tended to go to a new country or land and see what resources were available there to take. The resources found in countries could be food, minerals or even people. These people would be treated merely as resources, and as we know sometimes that meant slaves, the opposite of each person being recognised as unique, special, made in God's likeness.

Much has been achieved by Black Lives Matter, and we are hopefully moving forward, but much is still required so that nobody is disadvantaged by

the colour of their skin, or that of their family or ancestors. We don't though just discriminate based on the colour of people's skin, which may be the most obvious at the moment. We often discriminate against people for other reasons, and particularly because they are different from us. They may be richer, poorer, less intelligent, too intelligent etc. What do we think when we see a person sleeping rough, perhaps sleeping in a shop doorway? Are they a unique special person made in God's image, or a bit of a nuisance or embarrassment, and we hope the council or police can tidy them up, and move them on. Perhaps we give too much deference to rich people or famous people - don't the media love them! I recall a number of years ago not being able to get a Sunday Times one week, because that week the Rich List had been published and so it sold out quickly. We like to put rich or famous people on a pedestal, but often then take great pleasure if they fall off their pedestal, and the media love to push them off their pedestal if possible.

What did Jesus do when he was on Earth? Did he mix with the rich and famous, the people to be seen with? Or did he mix with the poor, the sick, the lepers, women of perhaps ill repute, those in trouble? When Jesus was dying he still spoke and cared for the criminals dying next to him. We read about Jesus having time for tax collectors like little Zaccheus. Many of us will have sung about Jesus coming to Zaccheus' house for tea. A job with the Inland Revenue these days is very good, but in those days, a tax collector was the lowest of lows, working for the occupying power the Romans, and cheating and taking a cut for themselves, perhaps a somewhat similar status to paedophiles today.

Do we discriminate against the young? What might they know? But what energy they may have, or new insights. Or against the elderly? What 'elderly' means to you often depends on how old you are, but what a life they may have already lived, with great experience and knowledge to pass on. Perhaps they are helping us not to make the same mistakes as our predecessors.



Do we discriminate in church? This is not a new problem - in James

"My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" James 2:1-4 NIVUK

How about people who are different because of the things they can or can't do, or who do things differently? Maybe they have reduced mobility, vision or hearing. In the last 50 years we are realising that a number of people are neurologically atypical, meaning their brains are wired in a different or particular way, they maybe autistic, special in a particular way. Do we think of any of these people who are different as perhaps difficult? Or do we look on them all as special, to be treated with dignity as people made in God's image, and look to love these neighbours as ourselves. Loving people as yourself is a practical thing: we look after ourselves don't we, so do we try and make sure people with reduced mobility can get to places, get in our buildings? Do we help those who can't see or hear well or those who may struggle with how we do certain things, perhaps with too much noise, or particular lighting?

How about politics? Perhaps you don't like hearing that word in a sermon, but it's a part of our lives, and affects others, and sometimes the most vulnerable in our communities. Politics can be local, national or international. Do we support, perhaps fight for, those who are being discriminated against, those not being treated with dignity, or being treated fairly? Maybe it's the homeless, the asylum seekers, the young, the elderly, others you find out about.

We've got Black Lives Matter. By the A53 near Market Drayton there is a sign saying "Gypsy Lives Matter", do we actually believe this? What sort of welcome do gypsies or travellers get in Ashbourne or elsewhere in the Derbyshire Dales? It seems almost everyone wants to get rid of them, or at least keep them at a good distance. Has the

reaction of the churches been any different to everyone else?

Do we look out for politicians who look after us, to make sure we can stay in the style we've become accustomed to, or perhaps would like to? Do we support, or at least turn a blind eye to, politicians or companies who support systems which keep people in poverty, maybe in poor or dangerous working conditions, so we can have low cost food or clothes? Or maybe do we look for leaders who seek to provide a voice, support for those who for whatever reason don't have a voice for themselves. This may again be locally, nationally, or internationally. Remember the Christian Aid strap-line "We believe in life before death". Do our actions bear this out?

So do we believe that every single person is wonderful, special, made in God's image, to be treated with dignity, and live our lives accordingly? Following this belief will have consequences for us in our everyday lives. Those we encounter, those we know, those we perhaps encounter when shopping, having a meal or drink out, working, out walking. Do we treat everyone with dignity, try and help them to have a good day, or do we take our frustrations out on them? How about cold callers, are they still special, made in God's image, just doing a job, even if like me you didn't want them to disturb you!

Don't we all like to feel special, can we help other people to feel special, irrespective of any label they may have, or how they may be different to us. Can we give them time, a smile, the help they need? We shouldn't be doing any of this so people think well of us, but in sharing God's abundant love.

The AA (Alcoholics Anonymous, not the motoring rescue organisation with yellow vans), have some excellent suggestions for living day to day, called "Just for Today". One reads "Just for today I will do somebody a good turn, and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count." So how about us all looking out to make sure we do an unseen good turn for somebody each day.

So we're all unique, wonderful, special, made in God's image, and so is each other person unique, wonderful, special and made in God's image too. So, let's treat all people around us, near and far, with dignity, seeking to share God's abundant love with them, and making others too feel special whenever and wherever we can.

The Lord's Prayer

(video with sign language)
Our Father



Hymn: Love Divine (StF 503)

LOVE DIVINE, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down!
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee!
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place;
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.

Charles Wesley.

A prayer of blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make his face to shine on you and be
gracious to you,
The Lord look on you with kindness and give you
peace,
Go in peace to rejoice in God's love and reflect his
glorious nature, Amen

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