



Chet Valley Churches
Last Sunday Praise
29 March 2020



Welcome

Welcome to Last Sunday Praise. In this file you will find links to the songs we have chosen for our worship. Click on the links to take you to each song.

Introduction

Our theme for this service is 'Worship in a Strange Land'. We all feel we are living in a very strange land at the moment, and yet there is always time and space to praise God. So let us praise Him together, starting with an old favourite song by BoneyM – By the Rivers of Babylon, followed by In Christ Alone and Beauty for Brokenness.

♪♪ All the songs link to YouTube. On a PC press the 'Ctrl' key and then click with your mouse on the link. It will take you to a song with on-screen words:

♪♪ **By the Rivers of Babylon**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoHZUxqllIU>

♪♪ **In Christ Alone**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWiFYJMGas0>

♪♪ **Beauty for Brokenness**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaMPE53uP38>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

The world feels as if it is a very broken place just now. We are kept apart, not out of choice but because we have been told that we must do so. We must obey the instructions for the good of everyone, regardless of our own personal preferences. But against this background we have the hope of Christ.

The prayer for today (the Collect) gives us a moment to pause and think of all that we have, because of Jesus.

Perhaps you might read the prayer aloud, line by line, stopping to think about each line as you do so.

The Collect—A Special Prayer for the Day

Gracious Father,
you gave up your Son
out of love for the world:
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,
that we may know eternal peace
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

♪♪ Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yubLGTOcm8c>

♪♪ Jesus, hope of the Nations

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuK5fZ9Ur9c>

♪♪ **My hope is built on nothing less (Cornerstone)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvLxZEU02uI>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

There is no substitute for the hope that is found in Jesus. When we are anxious or afraid we need to focus on this hope and on the love of God. He doesn't have to keep himself at a distance of 2 metres – He holds us in His arms.

Perhaps you might like to read aloud the following prayer that has been written for this time.

A prayer for this time

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.
In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord.

♪♪ **Everyone needs compassion**

<https://youtu.be/caA4sIXkD44>

♪♪ **Christ be our light**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnXX8TbUX-E>

Bible Reading

Psalm 137 verses 1-4

- ¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
- ² There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
- ³ for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
- ⁴ How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?

Talk

Who would have thought a month ago that today we'd all be keeping our distance, contacting people by phone and spending an inordinate amount of time indoors.

Since we first heard about coronavirus a lot has changed. The atmosphere around the world has been one of both disbelief and shock. The pictures we saw a few months back of passengers quarantined on a cruise liner in the Far East have been overtaken by images now of quiet, deserted streets as nations have adopted quite stringent, some would say draconian, measures to prevent the spread of the covid-19 virus. We have seen health services in many countries struggling to cope, we have seen workers putting themselves in the “front line” in dealing with the pandemic.

The use of military language in the media and by politicians is quite noticeable. And why not, since this is in many ways a war against something which to our human understanding is an alien enemy.

Psalm 137 is written during a time of conflict – in fact it is a conflict in which the people of Israel have been taken captive into exile in Babylon. They find themselves living in an alien environment, a strange land which doesn't feel right. They long for their homes, they long for the familiar, they long for normality.

So when the Babylonians asked them to sing the songs of Zion, they couldn't. "How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" the psalmist says.

But isn't that a strange response.

Being a Welshman, there is nothing I find more "Welsh" than singing familiar songs and hymns to remind me of that Welsh-ness. Many of the places that I've lived have had Welsh Societies. Cymry Caer – the Welsh Society in Chester where I grew up – was more Welsh than just across the border in Wales! We had our chapel, our eisteddfodau, our recitation competitions and our hymn singing festivals – Why? to remind ourselves of our heritage of course. So why couldn't the Israelites do the same?

Because to them there was a separation which had been brought about by force not by choice. The psalmist believes that the Babylonians were asking them to sing in order to torment them, and their hearts were downcast.

Now it's easy to be downcast when our normal lives are put on hold, our way of life brought to a standstill and

friends and families are anxious for the future. But let us hold on to the hope which we have that the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, revealed to us in Jesus is with us no matter where we are. For that reason we can lift our voices in praise, recognising, as the writer to the Hebrews says: “We have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” So let us sing a new song of hope, even in a strange land.

♪♪ **There is a hope**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_yv5yGZnBc

Time for prayer...

Let's take time to pray for:

- The leaders and decision-makers of our nation
- Other countries of the world
- The leaders and decision-makers of the church
- People we know who are ill, either with the coronavirus or other ailments
- People who are lonely or afraid
- Ourselves and our families

You might want to pray aloud the prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples.

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and for ever.
Amen.

♪♪ **Because He lives**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsXvclC_zb0

♪♪ **What a faithful God have I**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4foIUV9pfrs>

♪♪ **How great thou art**

https://youtu.be/PdE_NKyY_o0

A blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

Amen