



Chet Valley Churches
Last Sunday Praise
27 June 2021



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

If you're an Anglican, you may know that the many Sundays after Trinity Sunday are referred to as Ordinary Time. And yet it would be a mistake to call the Christian life 'ordinary'. Our theme for this month's Last Sunday Praise is 'The God who Changes Lives'. We may not be able to change our circumstances, but God is able to do wonderful things in our lives. Our response must surely be to praise him, and worship him. We're starting with an old favourite hymn, and moving on to some more contemporary songs .

♪♪ All the songs link to YouTube. Just click with your mouse on the link, which will take you to a song with on-screen words. You may have to skip a few YouTube adverts if we have chosen songs that are not currently on the Chet Valley Churches YouTube channel.

♪♪ Lead us heavenly Father, lead us

<https://youtu.be/OpkEeXWtWg0>

♪♪ You're the Word of God the Father

<https://youtu.be/atxCPCHz5Oc>

♪♪ My Jesus, my Saviour

<https://youtu.be/dr78ff70XKQ>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

People have joined together to sing God's praises for hundreds of years – one of the great sadnesses of the Covid regulations is that we are still not allowed to sing in church. The power of praise is embedded in both the words and the music in a way that lifts our spirits and focuses us on God. We know we have a great and mighty God, but sometimes we need to be reminded that as disciples of Jesus we can expect our lives to be changed. Jesus was obedient to the will of his Father and brought salvation to the world. We too need to be obedient, in the certain hope of experiencing God's power in our lives.

The Collect is a special prayer written for each day. 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,
by the obedience of Jesus
you brought salvation to our wayward world:
draw us into harmony with your will,
that we may find all things restored in him,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

♪♪ Everyone needs compassion

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

♪♪ Jesus, hope of the nations

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=_ZfG2zC7sqU&pli=1

♪ God, I look to you

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

Pause for thought, and prayer...

There is so much sadness in the world. Our international news is so often about countries where there is conflict or crippling poverty. In Britain too there are social injustices that do not sit easily alongside the wealth and comfort of others. Physical poverty and hardship is appalling, but so also is spiritual poverty. We have sung 'Everyone needs compassion, the kindness of a Saviour'. Let's think about how we can let God work through our lives to be part of his wholeness and healing.

Perhaps you might like to ponder the following prayer.

A prayer for our lives

Heavenly Father,

Forgive us for the times when we grumble because we think you don't understand our hardships,

forgive us for the times when we are self-centred and fail to notice the needs of others

forgive us for the fears and troubles that eat away at us, that we know we could bring to you,

forgive us for forgetting how much you've done for us.

Help us to worship you in our lives as well as our praises, and to live in the expectation that you will change us to become the people you want us to be,

🎵 Power of your love

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9_0jiO5ZRM

🎵 All I once held dear

<https://youtu.be/Merf00qcQik>

Bible Reading

Acts 9 verses 1-22

¹Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'

⁵'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked.

'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. ⁶'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'

⁷The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!'

'Yes, Lord,' he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, ‘Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.’

¹³ ‘Lord,’ Ananias answered, ‘I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.’

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, ‘Isn’t he the man who caused havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?’ ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

Talk

Paul Mizen has written this reflection.

For many today, Christian teaching and the Church are seen as irrelevant and outdated. For some, church buildings may have historical or architectural interest or even be handy community halls, but that doesn't mean that such people see any great connection with the Christian message. Is that the fate of the church in the 21st century, or do we believe that God can still change lives today?

In the passage we read, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, as he is originally known, has to be one of the greatest transformations of a life in the whole of history. God took this prolific persecutor of the church and turned him into Paul the apostle, arguably one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, although Paul himself would never have claimed that.

We first come across Saul as a young man looking after the coats of those stoning Stephen, the 1st Christian martyr. At the start of Acts 8, he was giving approval to Stephen's death and this seemed to spur him on to try and destroy the church.

Saul was a fervently religious man, having been brought up as a Pharisee and having trained under one of the leading teachers of the day, Gamaliel. His fervour for his beliefs was such that he wanted to destroy anyone who might in any way seek to undermine those beliefs. Particularly in his sights was what was known as 'The Way.' This was the newly formed church (a group of believers rather than a building). Having persecuted many in Jerusalem, he was on his way to Damascus to imprison any he found there belonging to 'The Way'.

It is on this journey that Saul is confronted by Jesus. There's a blindingly bright light and a voice asking him why he is

persecuting Jesus. Did Saul realise that he was persecuting Jesus? If he did, did he realise that Jesus was and is the Son of God? From a position of great power, he has fallen to the ground and when he gets up has to be led by the hand. He is blind and doesn't eat or drink anything for 3 days. This is dramatic but perhaps it was the only way that God could get his attention.

God had plans for Saul's life as he does for all our lives if we will trust Him. He has been chosen to take the Christian message to the Gentiles. He will also suffer much for his faith. In 2 Corinthians chapters 11 & 12, Paul describes many of the things he has had to endure, but as great as his sufferings were, they do not compare to the greatness of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

God has someone in Damascus to help him - Ananias. When God asks him to go and visit Saul, he is understandably wary. Could he be walking into a trap? But the Lord reassures him in v15 that 'he is my chosen instrument.' So Ananias goes and meeting the man who had come to Damascus to drag him off to prison in chains, greets him as 'Brother Saul.'

Would we have been prepared to go as Ananias did? I'm sure he experienced great blessing in what he did. What would have happened if he'd have said no? I guess God would have sent someone else, who would have been blessed and Ananias would have missed out. There is always great blessing in doing whatever God asks, however hard the task may be.

We see that after Ananias laid his hands on Saul, his sight is restored, he gets up and is baptised (an outward sign of the inward change that has happened) he takes food and he receives the Holy Spirit.

Thus equipped, he astonishes those in the synagogues in Damascus by preaching that Jesus is the Son of God, the very

faith he had come to destroy. What a change happened in his life.

Do we believe that God can still change lives today? During this year, I've been going through the 'Bible in one Year' course, written by Nicky Gumbrel, Rector of Holy Trinity Church, Brompton (HTB) and founder of the Alpha course. If you've never done that course, I would encourage you to think about doing it next year. It generally takes 15-20 minutes a day to read the passages and his comments.

Many of Nicky's comments start with stories of people whose lives have been turned around as a result of going on the Alpha course. Not stories of many years ago, but ones that have happened recently.

I believe God is still in the business of changing lives. I also feel that if we really believed this then it would give us far greater confidence to talk about our faith with others. After all, if you look at where Saul of Tarsus was at the start of our reading and where he came to by the end of it, we can only conclude that with God, there are no impossible cases.

May we trust Him to continue to change our lives for the better and to see others come to put their faith in Him.

♪♪ How deep the Father's love for us

<https://youtu.be/TQ5kqQ359E4>

Time for prayer...

Let's take time to pray for:

- The people we live amongst – family, neighbours, friends far or near, acquaintances
- The many people we don't know who are experiencing depression, sadness or hardship
- Our national leaders who are still trying to find ways to rebuild society after the pandemic
- Members of church congregations tackling their own decisions about life and faith, and those who have found church online to be their way forward
- People who are ill, or who have lost touch with society following isolation and are afraid to venture out
- Those who are fearful of change
- Ourselves, that we might be willing for God to change us and challenge us

And a prayer about the challenge of change:

Lord,

thank you for this opportunity
to turn to you in my weakness.

I know that by doing so true strength happens.

Please, help me to rest in this knowledge
as I journey with you on this road of change
through your power, grace, and love.

Amen.

You might want to pray aloud the prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples. Use whatever version or language you wish!

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.

♪♪ **Hear the call of the Kingdom**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=890lp_POFfs

♪♪ **Amazing grace**

https://youtu.be/gD3E5_Pgfxw

♪♪ **We have a gospel to proclaim**

<https://youtu.be/l5wVRYq57EM>

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