

Worship at Home - 18th October 2020

A short act of worship for use in people's homes, provided by Mrs Rosie Greenhalgh.

Call to worship Psalm 96 vv 8-9

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.
Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

Hymn O worship the Lord (*Singing the Faith* 34) [Click here](#) N.B. verse 4 is omitted from this clip

1. O worship the Lord in the beauty of
holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience and incense of
lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.

2. Low at his feet lay your burden of
carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for you,
comfort your sorrows and answer your
prayerfulness,
showing the pathway your feet should pursue

3. Fear not to enter his courts in the
slenderness
of the poor wealth you would count as your
own;
truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness
these are the offerings to bring to his throne

4. These, though we bring them in trembling
and fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear;
mornings of joy give for evenings of
tearfulness,
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

5. *Repeat verse 1*

John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875)

Prayer of Adoration, Thanksgiving & Confession

Holy, holy, holy Lord, I come into your courts today to praise and thank you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I come to proclaim your glory and to celebrate your mighty acts.

I come to offer you the truth of who I am, of how I feel in this time of Covid crisis; and to rejoice that you will bear my burden of carefulness and bring me comfort in my sorrows.

I come to offer you my love and adoration; and to thank you for answered prayer and your faithful loving kindness towards me. I come to put myself into your hands, knowing that there I am safe.

I come to receive trust for my trembling and hope for my fear.

Holy Lord, I praise you for the countless gifts of love showered on me over the last months. For the sacrificial service of the key workers who have helped me through. For contact with the friends and family I love most, by phone and internet as well as in person. For the beautiful weather this year which has lifted my mood. And I ask you to fill me with your Holy Spirit and make me a lamp set on a stand to help others see your glory.

Holy Lord, forgive me for the despair I sometimes feel; for my fear of a future where things will be different. Forgive me for the times when I focus on my own difficulties and forget to look outward in love of my neighbour and my God. Thank you that when I confess my sins, they are forgiven.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, I come into your courts today to praise and thank you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Read Matthew 22 vv 15-22 ¹ [Click here](#) The relevant verses are found between 1:50-2:54 minutes.

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not?'

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, 'You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax.' They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, 'Whose image is this? And whose inscription?' 'Caesar's,' they replied.

Then he said to them, 'So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1 vv 1-10 ¹ [Click here](#)

Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Reflection

In our gospel reading, the Pharisees and the Herodians come to Jesus with a difficult question: *Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not?* Pharisees held that collaboration with the Romans was sinful, whilst the Herodians believed it was allowed; yet they got together to put this question to Jesus, hoping to trap him. Perhaps the question is really asking how a person can be faithful to God in a country under secular rule. It's a question still relevant to us today.

Jesus' answer is clever and insightful. He talks of the image and inscription on the coin used to pay the Roman tax. That coin was minted by Caesar's authority; stamped with Caesar's image. Jewish law taught that human beings are made in the image of God; stamped with God's image. Jesus tells his hearers that a coin which came from Caesar should be given back to Caesar, but a person who comes from God should be given back to God. An amazing answer, which makes us think hard about the service we owe to secular authorities and the service we owe to God.

How does this translate into modern life? Are we giving to God what belongs to God? Yes, we need to pay our taxes and to be good citizens, but it is so easy for us also to take on the principles of the world around us; to think that a person's status depends on how they look, or who their friends are; on the work they do or the house they live in or their possessions. This is not so. Jesus paid no attention to a person's earthly status; and he was not swayed by others. In Jesus, all have been given the right to become children of God; that is what gives people status and frees them to give themselves back to God in faithful, loving service.

1 Thessalonians is the oldest part of the New Testament, written about 20 years after the Crucifixion. The new believers in Thessalonica didn't have four gospels to read as we do now. They had heard the gospel from Paul, Silas and Timothy, a gospel which came *not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction*. They believed; they gave themselves back to God, turning from the idols their community worshipped, to serve the living and true God.

How are you feeling today? Are you fine, or feeling a bit rough? 'Rough' is an interesting word, because its pronunciation changes with the company it keeps! In fact, it's quite unpredictable in company, as you'll see if you read the next sentence:

'Because of the **drought**, a **rough trough** was brought through.'

The same 5 letters have given us 5 different sounds – foreigners must have a rough time learning to pronounce English! But the lesson for us is to recognise that, like those letters, we too can be swayed by the company we keep. Does our tune change with the group we are in?

In English 'fine' is always pronounced in the same way: 'Refinement defines the finest'. We know what to expect with 'fine'; it never alters. Just as God never changes, those stamped with his image should be constant and faithful. So I ask again, how are you feeling today? Are you feeling 'rough', swayed by the world's opinions - or are you feeling 'fine', accepting the gospel with deep conviction? Are we giving God our loving service at all times? Do we always bear the faithful image of our Lord? Are we lamps set on a stand to give light to all?

Paul says that the Thessalonians welcomed the gospel in the midst of severe suffering. This year may have been a time of suffering for you, but be inspired by these early Christians. They imitated Christ and his apostles; and they became *a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia*. What an accolade! Are we models for other believers? The Lord's message rang out from Thessalonica as we pray it does from our churches. Paul writes to them about *your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*. Faith, hope and love are often mentioned by Paul and are so important for our Christian witness today. Love God and love your neighbour as yourself are still the most important commandments, but we also need faith, hope and endurance if we are to be model Christians, imitating Christ in everything we do.

At the start of another week in this time of Covid crisis, let's give ourselves again to God, determined to feel 'fine' whatever happens. Then we shall be like the lamp on the stand; good examples of faith, hope and love; a model to all believers in West Berkshire and beyond. **Amen**.

Hymn O God, what offering shall I give (*Singing the Faith* 562) [Click here](#)
to the tune of 'Give me the faith which can remove' StF 661 – it starts without introduction!

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| 1. O God, what offering shall I give
to you, the Lord of earth and skies?
My spirit, soul and flesh receive,
a holy, living sacrifice:
small as it is, 'tis all my store;
more would you have, if I had more. | 2. Now, O my God, you have my soul,
no longer mine, but yours I am;
O guard your own, possess it whole,
cheer it with hope, with love inflame;
you have my spirit, there display
your glory to the perfect day. |
| 3. You have my flesh, your hallowed shrine,
devoted solely to your will;
here let your light for ever shine,
this house still let your presence fill;
O source of life, live, dwell and move
in me, till all my life be love! | 5. Lord, arm me with your Spirit's might,
since I am called by your great name;
in you let all my thoughts unite,
of all my works be you the aim;
your love attend me all my days,
and my sole business be your praise. |

Joachim Lange (1670-1744) translated by John Wesley

Prayer of Intercession

Holy God, I come into your courts today to pray for your church and for your world. I thank you that in Jesus, all those stamped with your image have been given the right to become children of God. Display your glory in my spirit and so fill me with your presence that all my life may be love.

May your gospel message ring out to the world from our churches so that all might hear and respond. Lord, fill your people with faith, hope and love: **keep us feeling fine.**

I pray for all doctors and carers as they try to cope with this second wave of Covid-19.....

I pray for those suffering from coronavirus, at home and in hospital...

I pray your blessing on all who are bereaved...

Lord, help me to remember neighbours across the world who, because of poverty, overcrowding and fewer hospitals, are suffering more from this virus than I am....

Lord, fill your people with faith, hope and love: **keep us feeling fine.**

I pray for all in the UK who are struggling because of Covid-19: for those caught up in the new lockdown; for the homeless and the jobless; for all whose business is in serious trouble; for those suffering domestic abuse; for the sick whose operation or treatment has been deferred....

I thank you for all who strive to bring hope to those who suffer, and especially our key workers.... Give wisdom, justice and mercy to our politicians as they consider the best ways to deal with Covid and with Brexit... Lord, fill your people with faith, hope and love: **keep us feeling fine.**

I pray for my family and friends, that they may know your faithfulness and your steadfast love ...

I pray for all the churches in our Kennet & Test Valley circuit and for its staff, asking a special blessing on Peter Bennett and Karen Frost for all they do to keep us together in Christ...

Lord, fill your people with faith, hope and love: **keep us feeling fine.** In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Hymn We have a gospel to proclaim (*Singing the Faith 418*) [Click here](#)

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| 1 | We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth. | 4. | Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for He was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
that we might share His victory. |
| 2. | Tell of His birth at Bethlehem -
not in a royal house or hall,
but in a stable dark and dim,
the Word made flesh, a light for all. | 5. | Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified.
He sends his Spirit on his Church,
to live for him, the Lamb who died. |
| 3. | Tell of his death at Calvary:
hated by those He came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross,
for all he loved his life he gave. | 6. | Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim,
we sing his glory, tell his worth. |

Edward Joseph Burns (b. 1938) ²

Blessing

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. And the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and all those you love, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Acknowledgements

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