

Worship at Home 10 January 2021

A short act of worship for use in people's homes, provided by Erica Gassor

Call to worship

This is the day that the Lord has made;

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We are the family of God

And are called by God's name.

We are heirs of Christ's kingdom

And born of the Spirit.

Let us therefore come together in thanksgiving.

Amen

Hymn STF 553 - I am a new creation ¹ [To join in click here](#)

I am a new creation,
No more in condemnation,
Here in the grace of God I stand.
My heart is overflowing,
My love just keeps on growing,
Here in the grace of God I stand.

*And I will praise You, Lord
Yes, I will praise You, Lord
And I will sing of all that You have done.
A joy that knows no limit
A lightness in my spirit
Here in the grace of God I stand.*

Bible reading: Genesis 1 :1-5 ² [To hear the reading click here and listen until 0.45](#)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

Prayers of adoration:

Lord God, how awesome you are! Your voice is powerful and majestic.
Once, the earth was without shape, dark and empty, then you spoke, awesome God, and light shone. You separated the light from the darkness.
The whole World changed.
You later sent your Son, Jesus, to live and walk among us on the Earth,
His ministry heralded by John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus in the Jordan.
The whole World changed.
The sky split open, and your Holy Spirit came down like a dove.
Then you spoke, awesome God, and continue to speak today through your Holy Spirit.
Majestic, awesome, all-powerful God, we adore your holy name! Amen

Prayer of confession:

Lord, when you came into the World, things changed. When we came into a relationship with you, things changed. Life became filled with a new sense of purpose and peace but, Lord, sometimes we let you down by doing wrong things, or failing to do what is right.

We are sorry Lord

Sometimes, Lord, through pride, stubbornness or fear we build barriers and keep others at arm's length – even you Lord.

We are sorry, Lord

At times we give in to our weaknesses and temptations, failing to draw on your strength. At times we are troubled by difficult situations and find it hard to trust you.

We are sorry, Lord

Help us to turn such things around and turn to you. Help us to learn from the past and, drawing on your strength and peace, make a better future. **Amen**

Reading: Mark 1: 4-11 [To hear the reading click here and listen from 0.26 to 1.36](#)

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: 'After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

Prayer of assurance of forgiveness:

O God, when Jesus was baptized, you spoke of your love for him. You showed your love for us through Jesus' death and resurrection. By the power of the cross, the darkness of our wrongdoing is banished by the light of your loving forgiveness. **Thanks be to God. Amen**

Hymn: STF 440 Amazing Grace [To join in click here](#)

1. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.
3. Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come;
'Twas grace that brought us safe thus far,
And grace will lead us home.
4. When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright, shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.
5. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see.

Reflection:

January is always hailed as a new start and lots of folk make New Year's resolutions. I don't make any resolutions and, although January is the beginning of the New Year, I believe that every day is a new start. It is good to set fresh expectations and fresh challenges each day and, at the close of the day, we often find that we haven't achieved any of them but remember tomorrow is another new day!

Sometimes we set our expectations too high and expect to achieve too much and we must learn to accept that we are only human and will have our successes and our failures. The great thing about *each morning* is that we do have the opportunity to make that fresh start in all that we are doing – whether or not we achieve everything or not!

The great thing about *knowing God* is that whether we succeed or fail he is always there to guide us, love us and forgive us for our failings. It can be very easy to look at individuals whom we meet or know who seem to make the same mistakes over and over again and who seem to be unable to take positive steps forward.....but we must be careful not to be judgemental.

At Christmas Gerald, my husband, bought me a little CD player that I can carry with me when I am doing my daily walks and I was also lucky enough to receive the new Bon Jovi '2020' CD - I not only like Bon Jovi's music but he's a good man who does a lot of work with the homeless and under privileged in the USA. The CD is very much focused on the events of 2020 and one verse in the track 'American Reckoning' struck me particularly. The song is about the killing of George Floyd and the verse says 'I don't know what it's like to walk even a mile in your shoes'. How easy it is to judge people on what we hear or see but unless we have actually lived their lives we do not know their background and the difficulties that each person may have gone through in their neighbourhood or their childhood or are going through at that moment. In my work with West Berkshire Homeless I constantly see the effects of a chaotic childhood and I always tell people that every day is a fresh start and a new opportunity to move forward but I very much realise that a lot will stumble along the way and will need constant support and help to achieve their goal.

One of the amazing advantages of having faith is that you *know* that throughout all events - successes and failures - the love of God is with you and that his guiding hand is there to give you strength in both good times and bad and that His forgiving spirit will pick you up when you fall and help you to move forward again. Every person in this World is one of God's children - he loves all of us and it is important to remember that he is there for everyone. There is never a time that we cannot reach out to him to seek his love, his guidance and his care and, when we fail, to ask for his forgiveness.....and that applies to all his children on this Earth.

We all get things wrong in different ways and to differing degrees and we all need forgiveness and it is important to remember the reading from Matthew 18: 21 and 22 when Peter asked Jesus about forgiveness and how many times we should forgive and *Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."* How wonderful it is to know that we have a fresh start every day and are forgiven and loved by our Father God who is in heaven!

Prayers of intercession:

Father God, we turn to you in prayer bringing before you all those who are struggling in life to make the right choices and decisions.

We pray for world leaders who have to make decisions on such important issues as how to care for your planet and deal with climate change and how to live together in a peaceful co-existence with others so that nations can live in peace and harmony. We bring to you leaders who need to work to ensure an equal sharing of the riches of your earth, working to eliminate poverty and starvation. We pray that the world leaders will work together to combat the coronavirus pandemic and ensure that all nations have access to the vaccines.

We pray for our own country and ask you to give wisdom to our leaders as they handle the pandemic and major issues such as Brexit and for our own Council and its leaders as they struggle with local issues.

We pray for the business communities who are suffering loss of revenue and pray that they may find ways of coping to ensure that they survive and enable ongoing employment for their staff.

We pray for all those who are suffering loss at this time – loss of a loved one, loss of employment, loss of stability.

We pray for all those who are ill and are experiencing pain. We pray in thanks for the wonder of the scientists and medical staff and support workers who are working so hard to find cures and ease the suffering.

Lastly, Father, we pray for ourselves, give us open hearts and minds to reach out to all those who are in need and to show your love and care – teach us how to be your disciples here on Earth.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: STF 442 - Beneath the Cross of Jesus ³ [To join in click here](#)

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| <p>1. Beneath the cross of Jesus,
I find a place to stand;
And wonder at such mercy
That calls me as I am.
For hands that should discard me,
Hold wounds which tell me 'Come.'
Beneath the cross of Jesus
My unworthy soul is won.</p> | <p>2. Beneath the cross of Jesus
His family is my own;
Once strangers chasing selfish dreams,
Now one through grace alone.
How could I now dishonour
The ones that You have loved?
Beneath the cross of Jesus
See the children called by God.</p> |
| <p>3. Beneath the cross of Jesus,
The path before the crown,
We follow in His footsteps
Where promised hope is found.
How great the joy before us
To be His perfect bride.
Beneath the cross of Jesus
We will gladly live our lives.</p> | |

Blessing:

May the strength of God sustain us; may the power of God preserve us; may the hands of God protect us; may the way of God direct us; may the love of God go with us this day and forever. The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us. Amen

Acknowledgements

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