

## ORDER OF SERVICE – Worship at Home 7/02/21

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### HYMN – STF 11

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,  
Who wast, and art, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see;  
Only thou art holy, there is none beside thee,  
Perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth, and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

### Prayer of Praise

Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit at the start of this service we lift our eyes to you and offer our praise, our worship and adoration. We declare you are by nature merciful and mighty, forgiving and strong. You are surrounded by worship in heaven above, where all the saints adore you, and by worship on the earth below, where all that you have made in earth and sky and sea offers you praise. We add our praise to that glorious chorus that is always declaring your greatness and love. There is none like you, only you are holy. We may not see you but you are always present, never far off, always with us. Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity, praise be to you. Amen.

### Reading – Mark 1: 29-39 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!' <sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' <sup>39</sup> So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

## Talk 1

Oh the joys of Mark's gospel, the vibrant and colourful detail it contains – the clear sense of being an eye witness testimony, the focus, the sense of urgency purpose. I'm always encouraging people to sit and read the whole of Mark's gospel.

Here contained within just a few verses we hear of Jesus' preaching and teaching about the kingdom, and his authority and power to heal. In these pictures we learn so much about Jesus, as much about his character and his nature as about what he did. We are being given a portrait composed of individual scenes that build to display the full picture, like slices through your brain taken in a CT scanner and built into a 3-D image with internal structure. There is a real sense of the living and rounded, deep, full technicolour person in this chapter. It is the balance of personal and private, the balance of interior and exterior. We see both the public figure of Jesus, active in the synagogue, on the streets, and the private life of Jesus with a few companions or on his own.

What we see is not two but one, integrity, a true wholeness. This wholeness, consistency of nature, personality, is a real challenge to me and I suspect, if we are honest, to most of us. For it may well be that we have a public persona, the presentable, professional, polished person that we put on like a suit of clothes at the front door when we leave home, and yet our families may see someone who can be very different, the worse side. It may not be so clear cut, so Jekyll and Hyde but it may well be true. The word for any such mask wearing is hypocrisy. Our families should get the best of us too because that is the all there is. That is what you get with Jesus and in this account we also get a clear indication of how Jesus maintains that integrity and wholeness. How he gets his work-life balance right, how he manages the pressures and stresses. How he would manage in a pandemic, in lockdown, when working from home and managing home schooling.

When we are pressurised by the challenges of life with all its demands and complexities we need not think Jesus did not know such pressure or cannot understand such things. His pressure was culturally very different but the stress factors from the demand for attention are very clear and very strong. So we see Jesus moving from teaching and preaching, from the public arena of the synagogue, where he has delivered and released a man from the captivity and oppression of sickness, to the privacy of Peter's house (verse 29). The way I imagine this to be is that Jesus needs food and rest and Peter says, "my house is nearby and so we can go there and my mother-in-law will gladly offer us hospitality." However when they arrive they find she is in bed with a fever and so is unable to offer what she would want to give to any guest, the cultural imperative of hospitality. So they inform Jesus, who remember has come for rest and food. He is tired and hungry. He is indoors away from the public gaze. Now, true to his full, integrated, whole character he does not think of himself but rather goes to her. He takes her by the hand and raises her up out of her bed and she is able, and is doubtless gratefully willing, to offer them the hospitality they need. Her sickness and her embarrassment are both removed.

It's interesting, isn't it, that Jesus does not go looking for people to heal, rather in the course of life, public and private, he comes across people in need and he meets that need in a particular and personal way. So much of what happens is whilst he is on the way to somewhere else. He flows in ministry, in service and in healing naturally. For him it is the norm. His very presence brings the kingdom, brings the good news of which he speaks. He simply is good news for all whom he meets.

Can we not learn something from this, something about serving God, being God's messengers of the good news in the ordinariness of life? Can we not learn something about talking to, caring for, relating with the people we come across, that God brings across our path in an ordinary day? How can we bring good news? How can we be good news to those we meet? How can we bring wholeness and health and hope and peace to those we meet in the ordinary and every day; even though those opportunities may be more limited at the moment?

So Jesus's public ministry now continues (verse 32) at sunset after the end of the Sabbath. Surely no celebrity with the paparazzi camped outside faced greater demands. Again, Jesus, true to character, continues serenely about his ministry not unmoved, detached, dispassionate but with the sincerity of inner stillness, assurance, confidence and power.

What is his secret? Such authority, such composure, such integrity! O how he is to be admired! Such an example, such a challenge to my faltering witness and work for him! How does he do it? Isn't that the question we are led to ask? Before we think about the answer that question let's sing a hymn that reflects on this still centre of power that Jesus has.

### **HYMN – STF 20 <sup>2</sup>**

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here;  
Come bow before Him now with reverence and fear.  
In Him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground;  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned.  
How awesome is the sight, our radiant King of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;  
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace.  
No work too hard for Him, in faith receive from Him;  
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

### **Talk 2**

And here he is our answer verse 35. Very early in the morning well before it was light, the text seems to indicate nearer 3 am than 6 am, Jesus was up, out and praying in the quiet, the stillness, the dark of the secret place. He was not alone for he was with his Father and he was in prayer. The still centre of his being was being maintained and renewed. Prayer was his means to keep the power flowing, the source of his authority and strength. It was the secret place of relationship through prayer with Abba, his Father and ours. Here he prayed and continued to pray.

The disciples, when eventually they woke, found his sleeping place empty and seeing the queues of people forming outside the house went to find him. Did they know where to look? Did they expect to find him in this favoured spot? When they found him, instead of joining him in prayer they showed their sense of the pressure of the expectations of the crowd back in the village by the remark, 'everyone is looking for you'. The subtext might be, 'why are you wasting your time out here when there is work to be done' or 'we need you because we don't know how to cope with all these people'. Jesus typically has another agenda, God's agenda, and he moves on, not to escape but because he knows that is what the Father is telling him.

As recorded in John's gospel Jesus tells us he does nothing on his own but only what the Father tells him. That is the key to his perfect, consistent nature and to his calm, assured actions – never pressurised, always having time for the individual even in the busiest and most demanding of circumstances. He maintains and nurtures his relationship with his Father. He moves in the flow of the Holy Spirit, never rushing yet always in the right place at the right time. What an example from which to learn. If Jesus needed to pray we can be sure we do, so let's pray.

### **Prayer of Confession**

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour, live in me from day to day,  
By His love and power controlling all I do and say.  
May the love of Jesus fill me as the waters fill the sea;  
Him exalting, self abasing, this is victory.  
May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe,  
Looking only unto Jesus as I onward go.

Forgive us, Father when our lives and our living proclaim something other than the good news of Jesus Christ - for the times when our piety is visible on Sundays, but hard to detect in the rest of the week.

Forgive us, Father, when the gospel is proclaimed only in sacred places and sacred ways and not daily in the communities where we live or study or work.

Forgive us, Father for earnestly praising and worshipping you in words and ideas and not in practical service and action.

Forgive us, Father, when our zeal for mission and evangelism is shaped by the state of our finances or the assessment of risk rather than the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Strengthen us through the Holy Spirit to do all for the sake of the gospel, to learn what it is to live for Christ, to live lives of truth and integrity, free from hypocrisy.

Teach us Jesus' way of nurturing and refreshing his relationship with you through solitude, silence and prayer. For your forgiveness and help we thank you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

### **Reading – Isaiah 40: 28-31 <sup>1</sup>**

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

## Prayer for others

We bring our prayers and concerns to God our Creator who never grows tired or weary and whose wisdom is without limits. We pray for all who are weakened by disease of body, mind or spirit, that you would increase their strength by your comforting, healing power.

We pray for all who are wearied by the pressures of life because they are caring for the sick or those who are older or children at home or in school, that you would relieve their tiredness by your refreshing presence.

We pray for all who have lost hope because of the loneliness and isolation of restricted or prohibited human contact, that you would renew their strength and their trust in you.

We pray for all who stumble and fall under the weight of grief or fear or anxiety, that you would cause them to be uplifted as on eagle's wings.

We pray for all we know who are feeling weak or weary among our family, friends members of the church to which you belong. Name them before God now.

We pray for ourselves to know strength, renewal, fresh hope and endurance and pray for our own particular needs now.

All our prayers we ask in the Name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Lord's Prayer

### HYMN – SF 2856 <sup>3</sup>

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| 1. I cast my mind to Calvary<br>Where Jesus bled and died for me.<br>I see his wounds, his hands, his feet;<br>My Saviour on that cursed tree.   | 3. And on the third at break of dawn,<br>The Son of heaven rose again.<br>O trampled death where is your sting?<br>The angels roar for Christ the King.<br><i>O praise the name of the Lord our God;</i>   |
| 2. His body bound and drenched in tears,<br>They laid him down in Joseph's tomb.<br>The entrance sealed by heavy stone,<br>Messiah still and all alone.<br><i>O praise the name of the Lord our God;<br/>O praise his name forevermore.<br/>For endless days we will sing your praise;<br/>Oh Lord, oh Lord our God.</i> | 4. He shall return in robes of white,<br>The blazing sun shall pierce the night<br>And I will rise among the saints;<br>My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face.<br><i>O praise the name of the Lord our God;<br/>O praise his name forever more.<br/>For endless days we will sing your praise;<br/>Oh Lord, oh Lord our God;<br/>Oh Lord, oh Lord our God;<br/>Oh Lord, oh Lord our God.</i> |

## Final Blessing

As this service ends life and worship continue. As God has been present in these moments of praise and reflection so he promises to be present with us always. May you have the certain knowledge of the blessing of God the Father, the peace of Jesus, God the Son and the comfort of God the Holy Spirit ever with you. Amen

## Acknowledgements

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