

WORSHIP @ HOME SUNDAY 22nd August 2021

Good morning and welcome to worship at home. My name is Marilyn Britt and I am a worship leader at Thatcham. It is a joy to share in worship together.

Call to worship STF: 809 Psalm 34.

I will bless the Lord at all times: **his praise shall continually be in my mouth:**
My soul makes its boast in the Lord; **let the humble hear and be glad.**
O magnify the Lord with me, **and let us exalt his name together.**
I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.

HYMN SOF 627 You are the King of Glory

YOU ARE THE KING OF GLORY,	Hosanna to the Son of David!
You are the Prince of Peace;	Hosanna to the King of kings!
You are the Lord of heaven and earth,	Glory in the highest heaven,
You're the Sun of righteousness.	For Jesus the Messiah reigns.
Angels bow down before You,	
Worship and adore, for	
You have the words of eternal life,	
You are Jesus Christ the Lord.	

Prayers of adoration and confession.

King of Glory, Prince of Peace, Creator of us and all around us, we lift our hearts in praise and wonder to you. You are an unchanging and everlasting God, and are the firm foundation of our lives. We praise you for all we have been given and for the gifts bestowed upon us.

And yet, we often forget you. We go our own way. We do and say things we shouldn't and ignore those who need our help. We fail to give the love that you give us. In your mercy, we ask you to forgive our wrongdoings. We reach out to you for healing and forgiveness. Thank you eternal God. Amen

Our readings today **will be read by my husband Jeff** and from the Old Testament is from **Joshua 24: 1 – 2: 14 – 18**

24 ¹ Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God. ² Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods'

¹⁴ Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." ¹⁶ Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was the LORD our God himself

who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled. ¹⁸ And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”

Our new testament reading is from the Gospel of John 6: 56 -69,

⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Many Disciples Desert Jesus

⁶⁰ On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” ⁶¹ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.” ⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ⁶⁷ “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Reflection

In the last 16 months, there has been little opportunity to take Holy Communion and personally, I have missed it tremendously. Being able to worship, give praise and adoration to God together is so important. Prayer, reading and hearing the Bible together with teaching is important for our spiritual growth in order that we can spread Christianity and encourage others to come to God.

In this passage from John, many people move away from Jesus – this teaching is too difficult to understand, and although we may not move away – we too may wander. So what was Jesus saying? He is talking about bread, blood and eternal life. These are shocking words as the idea of drinking any blood was repugnant to the religious leaders because the law forbade it. Some of them did not understand about Living bread –that we live in him and he in us. He is saying that his life had to become our own. Jesus was well aware of the grumbling going on and knew that some disciples would desert him. Was it just that they liked what they saw, the miracles of feeding, the fishing, the healing? Maybe they realised he wasn't going to be a conquering King who would give in to their self-centred requests. He also emphasised faith not deeds, and his teaching was difficult to understand. Jesus also

said 'The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. He knew who believed and would follow him and who would betray him. From that time many of his disciples left him. People can be fickle, but sometimes Jesus seems to talk in riddles and we don't always understand.

Remember Joshua in chapter 24 verses 14 – 18. He had gathered the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He has led them into the promised land and driven out the inhabitants. Joshua gathers them together, reminds them of all the good things God had provided for them on their journey and offers a choice. 'Fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness.' If you don't want to; then choose who you will serve. In the past, they had worshipped other gods but now asks who they want to serve. Joshua makes it clear that that he and his household will serve God. The nation followed God through Joshua's lifetime, a great tribute to Joshua's faith in God and powerful leadership.

Choices – for God or man-made idols. We certainly need spiritual armour. Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 6 and in verses 10 – 20 – Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Christians are called to serve God. We must continue to shine the light of Christ. Christ provides us with strength and the HOLY Spirit stressing the power is available for those who serve God. We need God's protection and armour to stand firm

Verses 14 – 18 read "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

I mentioned earlier the value of Bible groups, discussion groups, and in the past Wesley's class system. Open to everyone, a safe place to be and ask those questions that everybody else is afraid to ask. They are as important as corporate worship on Sunday mornings. And then there is Prayer. It is so important for speaking and listening to God and being able to meditate on his word.

Let's ask ourselves where we stand in the crowd who seek Jesus. It is so important to really KNOW that we can follow Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the only way. It begins and ends with God. He reveals truth to us, lives within us, and then enables us to respond to that truth.

Prayer:

Accepting and loving God, we know you pay attention to those who call on you. Deliver us from fear, fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit to come and serve you.
Amen.

Hymn No. SOF 830 I the Lord of sea and sky

I, the Lord of sea and sky
I have heard My people cry;

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain;

All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
I will speak My word to them.
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
If You lead me;
I will hold Your people in my heart.*

I have wept for love of them –
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone;
I will speak My word to them
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame,
I will set a feast for them –
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
Till their hearts are satisfied;
I will give My life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Intercessions

I will leave silences for you to add your own prayers.

Lord, it is to you we come with our prayers for our world, our church, our community and ourselves.

We bring our planet and our world and the destructive realities of climate change. We pray for the leaders of all countries as they work together to protect us all and to heal conflict between peoples: the health of all nations. We remember peoples unable to reach vaccines as well as those who live in poverty.

We bring to you all churches, remembering all presbyters and deacons and their families who are moving churches. We remember the decisions of Methodist Conference. With your love and grace, help us to accept the changes before us and welcome all with patience and compassion.

We pray for those still living with the pandemic, our NHS, those in social care. But also the relief organisations who can save lives with our help like Christian Aid, All We Can, Oxfam, the Red Cross and other aid agencies whose work, often in the grip of poverty in difficult areas of the world. We pray for those grieving the loss of loved ones and those whose lives have been changed irrevocably.

We also pray for those who have lost their homes, jobs, schooling, and can't see a way forward. We remember those who help with advice, shelter, foodbanks and all other agencies supporting and serving our communities.

And we pray for ourselves. Lord, may my life reflect your presence. Lord, dress me in your armour, that I may stand firm and deliver your good news to the world in which I live. Lord may I know and love you now, and keep on getting to know you for all eternity. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your Name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
Now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn SOF 42 Be thou my vision

BE THOU MY VISION, O Lord of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me, save that Thou art;
Be Thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Both waking and sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true word,
Be Thou ever with me, and I with Thee, Lord;
Be Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son;
Be Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be Thou my whole armour, be Thou my true might;
Be Thou my soul's shelter, be Thou my strong tower:
O raise Thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I need not, nor man's empty praise:
Be Thou mine inheritance now and always;
Be Thou and Thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, Thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be Thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Blessing.

You are the King of Glory, You are the Prince of Peace, You have the words of eternal life, You are Jesus Christ our Lord, and we have come to know and believe that you are the Holy One of God. We pray your blessing on us as we continue our journey with you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.