

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Kathleen Richardson. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

Preparation

My diary tells me that One World Week and British summer time both end today - and a word from the prophet Jeremiah comes to mind, 'the harvest is over, the summer is ended and we are not saved' (Jer 8:20). Our churches are again closed and our movements restricted. But in a similar time of great turmoil Isaiah said, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength' (Is [30:15](#))

A call to worship

Psalm 90: 1-2 Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

So, let us worship.

Hymn God is Love: let heaven adore him (Singing the Faith 103)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyYWW_P9MH4

God is Love: let heaven adore him:
God is love: let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him,
and exalt him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
he who spread the heavens above,
he who breathes through all creation,
he is Love, eternal Love.

God is Love: and he, enfolding
all the world in one embrace,
with unfailing grasp is holding
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.

God is Love: and though with blindness
sin afflicts each human soul,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holds and guides and keeps them whole.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love, so Love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

Timothy Rees (1874-1939)

PRAYER

Adoration

Almighty God, we worship and adore you. Out of chaos and gloom you brought order and light, out of the darkness of night you create each new day.

We praise you, Father, that in the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus, you have demonstrated your power over evil, sin and death and have given us hope and promise.

We rejoice that in the power of the Spirit we share in the joy of your triumph in the presence of pain and suffering, and we praise you for your greatness, your faithfulness and your love.

Confession

But Lord, though we express our faith in your loving kindness, we find it hard to be truthful before you. We want to hide our

anxieties and our fears, our resentments and self-centredness. Help us to be honest before you.

Forgive us, we pray, for the sin we cannot see, or acknowledge, or find it painful to express.

Teach us to affirm what is good in our lives and to put behind us what is unworthy.

Through the healing touch of Christ, set us free to live and to love, that we may be the people you have created us to be.

Words of assurance

The good news is that Christ calls us to new life and enables us to begin again and again.

Let us accept this with joy today and be filled with peace.

TODAY'S READINGS

Psalm 90 vv1-6, 13-17

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. You turn us back to dust, and say, 'Turn back, you mortals'. For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning;
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

Turn, O Lord! How long?
Have compassion on your servants!
Sanctify us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,
and as many years as we have seen evil.
Let your work be manifest to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us,
and prosper the work of our hands – O prosper the work of our hands!

Matthew 22: 34 – 46

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind’. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your

neighbour as yourself’. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: “What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David”. He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying ‘The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’?” If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” No one was able to give him an answer, nor, from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

REFLECTION

I don’t know how many of you listened to the Podcast of last week. In it, Jonathan mentioned a book on the Psalms by Eugene Petersen called ‘A long obedience in the same direction’. I couldn’t get this phrase out of my head. (I eventually bought the book and am enjoying it very much.) The author is referring to the psalms, composed and written over long years – maybe centuries - of faithful living and longing, of travelling to Jerusalem to pray for God’s kingdom to be established in peace and prosperity; sometimes catching a glimpse of it, living with the memory of where their ancestors

came from and the anticipation of where their faith might take them – a long obedience in the same direction.

So I chose today to use the psalm offered in the lectionary – psalm 90, though I left out the verses that made me smile, about our years coming to an end like a sigh after seventy – or perhaps eighty years if we are strong!

It is the only psalm in the whole book that is attributed to Moses, the man of God (though it is unlikely to have been written by him) and was given the title/description of God's eternity and human frailty. It is perhaps a reminder that Moses who had under God brought freedom to the Israelites and led them to the land they were to call their own, died before he could enter it.

The psalm speaks of the power of God in creation and guidance of God's people through the ages. It has that poignant last verse 'Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us; prosper for us the work of our hands, O prosper the work of our hands'. It is the longing that we will not have lived in vain, that something good can be achieved in the present generation.

In Matthew's gospel we are coming to the crunch point of the collision with the Jewish authorities. As Matthew says – there

will be no further questions after this, the test of orthodoxy – which commandment in the law is the greatest? It was a common debating point. In the Jewish law there were 613 commandments – 365 negatives - thou shalt not, and 248 positives. The answer Jesus gave comes three times in Deuteronomy - the book of the Law. 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.' Then he adds another which he says is 'like it' – 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. This comes from Leviticus, where the writer is describing general rules for living in harmony. This is a way of summing up all the Law and the Prophets, says Jesus.

Only Matthew phrases it like this. Luke links the two, love to God and neighbour and follows with the question about who my neighbour is. But Matthew is keen, as we have seen in so much of the gospel, to relate the ancient Jewish law to Christian teaching – a long obedience in the same direction. God, who had spoken through the law and the prophets now speaks through the Son and will speak through the Spirit.

But the law is not the only link between the past and the future, and Jesus turns the tables and asks the pharisees a question of his own about the Jewish Messiah – whose Son is he? They answer: David's, a ruler in Israel. Then Jesus goes to

another psalm, psalm 110, attributed to David – where the writer starts by saying, God says to my Lord, sit at my right hand – an obvious reference to the Messiah and both Mark and Luke make the same point. The Messiah cannot be David’s son if David calls him Lord. The Messiah is God’s son. And this is where the long obedience is going to be put to the test for Jewish readers as Jesus is asking for a wider understanding of the Messiah than to be a saviour for the Jewish people – he is the Saviour of the world.

Today, orthodox Jews still look for the coming of a Messiah, a descendant of David who will return to Jerusalem and lead a kingdom of peace. Reformed Jews pray for a Messianic Age which will be a time of peace and understanding between all people. Christians believe that the promised Messiah has already come in Jesus. There is a history of conflict between the faiths – but all are longing for the consummation of God’s kingdom and all try to be obedient to their faith as they have received it.

What do you think? We all say the same psalm – ‘Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us and prosper the work of our hands’. Will this long obedience

in the same direction lead us one day to a fulfilment of all our hopes?

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Gracious Lord, we pray that as we live through these days of anxiety and fear, the separation from friends and families and the disturbance of the trusted comforts and securities, we may not lose our sense of your presence, our knowledge of your love for all people, and a longing for the fulfilment of your Kingdom.

We pray for respect and a deeper understanding between people of different faith traditions and communities.

We remember in love those who suffer grief and loss in the separation from those they have loved and been loved by.

We pray

for those whose lives are diminished by poor health or loss of earnings

for all who face isolation or loneliness

for all who work in situations of risk

for all who work tirelessly for solutions

Stir up in us

the confidence to discover meaning and purpose even in the chaos and distress of life today;

the determination to love you and our neighbours in creative hope;

and the conviction that nothing can separate us from
your love made known in Jesus.

In his name we pray.

And we say together

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass
against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and
ever.

Amen

**Hymn Make me a Channel of Your Peace (Singing the Faith
707)**

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2svZhZT6Pro>

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;

and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

O Master, grant that I may never seek

*so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, only light;

and where there's sadness, ever joy:

*O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console;*

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving unto all that we receive,

and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928-1997) from the Prayer of St Francis

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you;

The Lord look on you with kindness and give you peace. **Amen.**