

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Sandra Rose. 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 - pray for them as they pray for you. We are in a time of National mourning for our late Queen, Elizabeth II and I have reflected that in the prayers.

Call to Worship

Psalm 95

¹ Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

² Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.

³ For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.

Hymn: StF 563 O Jesus, I have promised

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/1sXgICyqOJE>

O Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
Lord be for ever near me,
my master and my friend;

I shall not fear the battle
If you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if you will be my Guide.

Oh, let me feel you near me;
the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me and within;
but, Jesus, now draw nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

Oh, let me hear you speaking,
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
Oh, speak to reassure me,
to hasten, or control;
Lord speak, and make me listen,
O guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, you have promised
to all who follow you
That where you are in glory
your servant shall be too;

And Jesus, I have promised
To serve you to the end;
Oh, give me grace to follow,
my master and my friend.

John Ernest Bode (1816 – 1874)

Prayers of Approach and confession

Compassionate God,
Creator and faithful provider of all that is good,
Reconciler and Inspirer in life,
as a worshipping community we approach you once more;
seeking to be made aware of your presence with us,
desiring the knowledge of your comfort and peace – peace
such as the world
cannot give.

As we mourn the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II we
cannot help
but see from the example she set throughout her days, the
many ways in
which we have fallen short as faithful servants.
We know we do not always "do to others as we would have
them do to us".
We know how often we forget that "those who humble
themselves shall be

made great and those who make themselves great shall be
humbled".

We know we sometimes ignore the teaching to "love your
neighbour as you
love yourself".

Forgive us our failure to live consistently as your people, as
inhabitants of earth
and citizens of heaven.

And assure us of the forgiveness that you offer in Jesus Christ.
Help us, every day, to live up to the sacrifices made on our
behalf by those who have gone before us.

For we ask all these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

He says to each and every one of us,
"Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven."

Amen

Reading: The Gospel of Luke Chapter 16 verses 1 – 13

Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager
was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in
and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account
of your management, because you cannot be manager any
longer.'

³ “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg— ⁴ I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’

⁵ “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

⁶ “‘Nine hundred gallons^(a) of olive oil,’ he replied.

“The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’

⁷ “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’

“‘A thousand bushels^(b) of wheat,’ he replied.

“He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’

⁸ “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?

¹³ “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Reflection

So we have this very difficult passage. In many ways it is typically Luke - he has a way of using unedifying characters as examples of right response to a crisis. Think of, for example the reluctant friend (11.8) or unjust judge (18.2). Luke is almost teasing his reader to pursue his salvation as ruthlessly as others go after making money or salvaging their own interests and reputations.

We have to try to understand how the story works. It seems very strange to us that the master should commend the steward for doing something that will lead to him losing money. But it looks as if he, himself had been acting in an

underhand manner. Jews were forbidden to lend money and charge interest. But many people got round this by lending in kind, with oil and wheat being easy commodities to use for this purpose. It seems likely that what the steward deducted from the bill was the interest that the master had been charging, with a higher rate on oil than on wheat. If he reduced the bill in each case to the amount that had actually been lent, the debtors would be delighted but the master couldn't lay a charge against the steward without owning up to his own shady business practices. And so the master can only admire the steward's clever approach.

We also have to remember that this is a parable not a piece of moral teaching about money and how not to use it.

When faced with a first-century Jewish story about a master and a steward, we would usually expect the master to represent God and the steward to stand for Israel. Israel is God's property – manager, set over His possessions and responsible to God. But Israel has failed in the task and is under threat of instant dismissal. What should, what could be Israel's response?

The Pharisees automatically tried to make Israel more holy by tightening up the law. This excluded the people that Jesus was reaching out to. Luke is challenging the lingering pharisaism of us, his readers. The most important message of the whole

passage is the last sentence. You cannot serve both God and money. In fact you cannot serve both God and anything else. In the past few days we have been thinking about our late Queen, Elizabeth II. I have to confess that I can remember when her father, King George VI died. I was 4. My mother always had the radio on when she was working around the house and I was playing. I didn't understand all that was said but I knew where in the day we were by the programme that was on. On the day the king died the BBC replaced their programmes with classical music which I found scary. I asked mum why 'Woman's Hour' wasn't on and she said it was because the king had died. I couldn't see the connection and wanted the frightening music to stop and the normal programmes to be played.

As we now look back over her life and reign, one of the things that stands out is the depth of her personal faith. She spoke often of her reliance on God and how He guided her through good times and bad. For her the service of God was so important.

What an example she is! If only we are remembered for our devotion to God.

A time of thanksgiving and intercession

Gracious God, your relationship with your people is open and loving and liberating.

It is through knowing you that we discover our real humanity, and through knowing you that we understand who we are and are set free to live as your people.

We give thanks for that life-giving and life-altering relationship; for all we have been and all, through you, we have yet to become.

So we pray for our world, knowing that it is *your* world.

We pray for those people and places kept apart from, or closed to, the values of the kingdom of God where peace and justice, and compassion and grace will reign in abundance and will direct all things.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are bereft of love, considered unlovable, reduced to living a lonely life, grief stricken, outcast, forgotten. May they experience the love you offer us all.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are bound by that which restricts them or damages them in life; addiction, ill health in body, mind or spirit. We pray that in you they may find the freedom they crave for their flourishing.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

And as we give thanks for all those who have gone before us in faith, we bless you again for our late Queen Elizabeth II, for her courage in the face of overwhelming expectation, for her sense of duty, for her hospitality and kindness offered to so many, and for her daily trust in the example and grace of Jesus Christ.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Commending again her family to your care and trusting that she lives now in your presence, we pray for our King as he assumes his many responsibilities. May he find support and strength for the way ahead. Direct his steps and guide his paths in the days and years to come.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

These prayers we offer through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. 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**

Our final Hymn is StF566 Take my life and let it be

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/Gf11rReeWIs>

Take my life , and let it be
Consecrated, Lord to thee
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee

Take my silver and my gold
Not a mite would I withhold
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose

Take my will, and make it Thine
It shall be no longer mine:
Take my heart, it is Thine own
It shall be Thy royal throne

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836 - 1879)

Blessing

Go out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to live and to work for the kingdom of God. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. **Amen**

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