

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Deacon Jacqueline Esama-John. 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.

## Introduction

Today is the 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary time. Our service today is going to focus on the theme of Resurrection. In our gospel reading, Jesus is confronted by the Sadducees, who ask him about seven brothers who married the same woman. They want to know whose wife she will be in the resurrection. This is real heavy stuff but as we continue to trust in the power of God, we are enlightened by Jesus' response which gives us hope and security in the reality of the resurrection.

## Call to worship

I offer you this song as our call to worship today- **Calm me Lord as you calm the storm**. You can access it on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/Fu6Z-P2y2WU>

It was written by Margaret Rizza, an English composer primarily of church music.

Calm me Lord, as You calmed the storm

Still me Lord, keep me from harm  
Let all the tumult within me cease  
Enfold me, Lord in Your peace (repeat it as many times as you are able)

**Amen**

## Opening Hymn- STF 407- Hear the call of the Kingdom

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here.  
<https://youtu.be/WL-UdwB0Qvc>

### **Verse 1**

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
Lift your eyes to the King  
Let His song rise within you  
As a fragrant offering  
Of how God rich in mercy  
Came in Christ to redeem  
All who trust in His unfailing grace

### **Verse 2**

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
To be children of light  
With the mercy of heaven  
The humility of Christ  
Walking justly before Him

Loving all that is right  
That the life of Christ may shine through us

## Refrain

King of Heaven we will answer the call  
We will follow bringing hope to the world  
Filled with passion filled with power to proclaim  
Salvation in Jesus' name

## Verse 3

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
To reach out to the lost  
With the Father's compassion  
In the wonder of the cross  
Bringing peace and forgiveness  
And a hope yet to come  
Let the nations put their trust in Him

## Refrain

King of Heaven we will answer the call  
We will follow bringing hope to the world  
Filled with passion filled with power to proclaim  
Salvation in Jesus' name

*Keith Getty (b.1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980)  
and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)*

## Prayer of Adoration and Thanksgiving.

### Let us pray.

Eternal God of all hopefulness and Joy. In Christ you make all things new. We stand in awe of your creation and your power. You are the God who created the world and who spoke through the prophets from Generation to generation. Today we are reminded of Moses' encounter in the burning bush where you revealed your Holy name as the I Am. We give you thanks that you are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We thank you that you love us unconditionally and in equal measure. We thank you that you sent your beloved son Jesus to die for our sins. We praise you for the resurrection experience that will continue to lift us out of the enclosures of our lives. To you belong all the glory honour and praise. Now and forevermore. Amen.

## Prayer of Confession

Merciful and loving God, we confess our sins and seek forgiveness for those times:

- . when we have failed to love one another as Jesus loves us.
- . when we have lost the yearning to bring your saving word to those who hunger or need clarity.
- . when we have failed to reach out to someone in need.
- . when we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.....

## Silence

## Absolution

Hear these words from the Lord:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

## 1<sup>st</sup> Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17: New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

### **The Man of Lawlessness**

As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>2</sup> not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one<sup>[b]</sup> is revealed, the one destined for destruction.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>4</sup> He opposes and exalts himself

above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. <sup>5</sup> Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you?

### **Chosen for Salvation**

<sup>13</sup> But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters<sup>[a]</sup> beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits<sup>[b]</sup> for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. <sup>14</sup> For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news,<sup>[c]</sup> so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup> So then, brothers and sisters,<sup>[d]</sup> stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

<sup>16</sup> Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, <sup>17</sup> comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Luke 20:27-38: New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised**

### **The Question about the Resurrection**

<sup>27</sup> Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him <sup>28</sup> and asked him a question, ‘Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man<sup>[a]</sup> shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. <sup>29</sup> Now there were seven brothers; the first married and died childless; <sup>30</sup> then the second <sup>31</sup> and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. <sup>32</sup> Finally the woman also died. <sup>33</sup> In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.’

<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; <sup>35</sup> but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. <sup>36</sup> Indeed they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. <sup>37</sup> And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the

bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. <sup>38</sup> Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.’

### **Time to reflect**

It is interesting that after weeks of campaigns and protests in which women’s rights has been a featured issue, our gospel reading today is the one in which a group of men pose a challenge to Jesus asking whom a woman should be serving in heaven, among her seven husbands who predeceased her.

Jesus answers, saying that heaven is not like that. Jesus says, “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.”

This is the most radical aspect of this biblical episode and real heavy stuff. Indeed, as I sat down to write my sermon, I wondered as a woman, a female, a She/her, a feminist, what this far-fetched case is of a woman being bounced from one husband to the next, seven times! What was all this about? I think about patriarchal societies where women’s human rights are non-existent. We’ve just seen an example of such on our Television screens- protesters come out in solidarity with the

“Women’s revolution” in Iran, sparked by Mahsa Amini’s death. I think about places and cultures where women are the properties of men. I think about the constant struggle of women fighting for equal pay, making choices between raising a family or career progression. Again, you just have to listen to stories of the “March of the Mummies” demonstrators and their pursuit for affordable childcare, flexible working and properly paid parental leave.

And it is not to say that the Men or the gender neutral are not affected by these challenges but the proportion of women suffering far outweigh other categories of the human sphere.

And the challenge does not only come from the changing world of which so many Christians are constantly critical. It comes too from the Bible.

Going back to our gospel passage, Jesus is in his final visit to Jerusalem and continues to face opposition and controversial questions from the religious authorities. Today he is confronted by the Sadducees who ask Jesus about seven brothers who married the same woman. They want to know whose wife she will be in the resurrection. Jesus knows that the question the Sadducees have posed to him is a political one, finding yet another reason to discredit his teachings. The question about seven brothers who married the same woman was based on the law of Moses about the obligations of a man

for his brother's childless widow based in Deuteronomy 25: 5. They argued that, as it would be ridiculous for a woman to be married to seven men in the way that this happened, so it makes perfect sense to believe that there is no such thing as a resurrection in which a situation like this could arise.

It is worth noting that the Sadducees did not believe in the Resurrection and rejected any ideas of angels or divine reward or punishment in an afterlife. This came about because they only recognized the original “five books of Moses” normally referred to as the Pentateuch, as fully authoritative in Jewish law. The Sadducees considered themselves to be the descendants of Zadok the High priest in the time of King David and had primary authority over the Temple looking down on the pharisees for example as mere laymen.

I know that in the other gospel accounts of this story in both Matthew (22:23-33) and Mark (12:18-27,) Jesus begins his response by calling into question the Sadducees’ knowledge of Scripture as well as the power of God. The assumptions of the Sadducees expose their inability to comprehend God’s kingdom with all its possibilities. Jesus responds to what lies beneath their questions, explaining that although marriage is part of this world, it does not exist in the afterlife, because in heaven, angels do not have sexual relations. In heaven, Jesus says, people neither marry nor is anyone given in marriage.

The resurrection experience will lift people out of the enclosures of their lives which means that ordinary events and relationships by which we track our journeys through this mortal life; things like marriage, childbirth, etc will not characterize our eternal lives because resurrection life will take on a different form. We will no longer be cribbed or confined. We will be able to think of ourselves as no longer being restrained within the straitjacket of things like fashion or peer-pressure for example. We will be enabled to reconfigure the meaning of our existence. And just to reiterate the power of the resurrection, Jesus uses another passage from the Pentateuch and quotes Exodus 3: 6, noting that Moses wrote that God did not use the past tense when describing to Moses his relationship to the long dead Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus concludes that as that relationship continues, then these patriarchs must be alive after they had been seen to die. He reminds them that God is God of the living, those living on earth and those living eternally, not the dead.

The resurrection enables us to look into the future- a new era where so many of the ills and failures of the past will be eradicated-where there will not be a need for “the Women’s revolution” or the “March of the mummies”. The prevailing ethos is one of hope, now more than ever before, in the bewildering times in which we live. Jesus offers us new life in the resurrection.

Before long, the Sadducees will receive the living proof of Jesus’ defence of the Resurrection when he himself dies but is alive again. I will finish with words from hymn writer Eliza Hewitt

“When we all get to heaven what a day rejoicing that would be

When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory”

In the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Our news feeds are full of environmental, political, economic and social turmoil etc. We therefore hold all these situations in our hearts as we pray:

. For climate change... as communities continue to live with the shattering impact of earthquakes and storms and rain and global warming- We lift up the people of India and the Philippines who have been on our news coverages this week. We remember all others experiencing the same. We call to mind all those attending COP27 that they might enable their compatriots to be good stewards of your bountiful creation.

- . For all those carrying the burden of the cost-of-living crisis.  
For the homeless and destitute- that you will meet them in their need, enabling them to get help and advise and giving them hope and peace.
- . For places experiencing political unrest, civil war, or terrorism - that you will send peacemakers.
- . For women and girls facing oppression- Give them courage and resilience to promote justice and equality
- . For all refugees and asylum seekers that they will find places of welcome and hospitality. May your joy hope and peace be theirs.
- . For the leaders of the nations- for a clear understanding of the work you have set before them, for wisdom in their counsel and a fresh commitment to service.
- . For the global church -that you will be present with us as we seek to live out the gospel wherever we are placed.
- . For those with progressive or chronic illness, those who are lonely or depressed, those who find it difficult to believe in anything or anybody. That they may receive healing in body mind and spirit.
- . For those who have lost hope that they may heed to your promise that you will make all things new.

. We give thanks for the departed and for those starting a new life in heaven. May they enjoy eternal rest. We pray for peace and comfort for the bereaved and those grieving.

. We share a moment of silence together for those who want to bring their own prayers to you O God. May they feel your love and embrace.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### The Lord's Prayer

**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 those who 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.**

## Closing Hymn – STF 351- In Christ Alone my hope is found

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

<https://youtu.be/C77pE9-V0vU>

### **In Christ alone my hope is found**

He is my light, my strength, my song  
This cornerstone, this solid ground  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm  
What heights of love, what depths of peace  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease  
My comforter, my all in all  
Here in the love of Christ I stand

### **In Christ alone who took on flesh**

Fullness of God in helpless babe  
This gift of love and righteousness  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
Till on that cross as Jesus died  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live

### **There in the ground His body lay**

Light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again  
And as He stands in victory

Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am His and He is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

### **No guilt in life, no fear in death**

This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

*Keith Getty (b.1974) and  
Stuart Townend (b. 1963)*

### Benediction

We go now in the righteousness of faith upholding  
God's promise of everlasting life.

Continue to live boldly as resurrection people, full of  
new beginnings and proclaiming the good news to the  
world.

And may God's presence forever remain with you.

May Christ Jesus continue to be your saviour and your redeemer.

And may the Holy Spirit stir in you a deep desire to be a force for good.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen**

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