

**Circuit Service, Sunday 10th January 2021
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



Welcome and Call to Worship:

This the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
We are the family of God.
And are called by God's name.
We are heirs of Christ's kingdom.
And born of the Spirit.
Let us, therefore, come together in thanksgiving.
Amen.

Hymn:

O worship the King, all-glorious above;
O gratefully sing his power and his love:
our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
his chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your power has founded of old;
established it fast by a changeless decree,
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Your bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in you do we trust, nor find you to fail;
your mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.

O measureless Might, ineffable Love,
while angels delight to hymn you above,
your ransomed creation, though feeble our praise,
in true adoration our voices we raise.

Robert Grant (1779–1838)

Prayer of Praise:

Lord we praise and Thank you because we know that love never fails.
Even in the darkest moments, love gives hope.

Love compels us to fight against coronavirus alongside our sisters
and brothers living in poverty. Love compels us to stand together in
prayer with our neighbours near and far.

Love compels us to give and act as one. Now, it is clear that our
futures are bound together more tightly than ever before. As we
pray in our individual homes – around the nation and around the
world – we are united as one family.

So, let us pause and find a moment of peace, as we lift up our hearts
together in prayer.

[Pause]

God of heaven and earth, in these times of isolation, apart from
loved ones, distant from friends, away from neighbours, thank you
that there is nothing, in all of creation, not even coronavirus, that is
able to separate us from your love.

Lord we praise and thank you for your support and may your love
that never fails continue to be shared through the kindness of
strangers looking out for each other, for neighbours near and far all
recognising our shared vulnerability, each of us grateful for every
breath, and willing everyone to know the gift of a full and healthy
life. Keep us all in your care.

We thank and praise you for the gift of your Holy Spirit who gives us – your people – strength, and the blessing of peace. **Amen**

Prayers of Praise and Confession:

Lord, when you came into the world, things changed. When we came into a relationship with you, things changed. Life became filled with a new sense of purpose and peace. But, Lord, sometimes we let you down by doing wrong things or failing to do right things.

We are sorry, Lord.

Sometimes, Lord, through pride, stubbornness or fear we build barriers and keep others at arm's length – even you, Lord.

We are sorry, Lord.

At times we give in to our weaknesses and temptations, failing to draw on your strength. At times we are troubled by difficult situations and find it hard to trust you.

We are sorry, Lord and ask for your forgiveness

Help us to turn such things around and turn to you. Help us to learn from the past and, drawing on your strength and peace, make a better future. **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.

Hymn:

My soul finds rest in God alone,
my rock and my salvation;
a fortress strong against my foes,
and I will not be shaken.
Though lips may bless and hearts may curse,
and lies like arrows pierce me,
I'll fix my heart on righteousness,
I'll look to him who hears me.

*O praise him, hallelujah,
my delight and my reward;
everlasting, never failing,
my Redeemer, my God.*

My soul finds rest in God alone
amid the world's temptations;
when evil seeks to take a hold
I'll cling to my salvation.
Though riches come and riches go,
don't set your heart upon them;
the fields of hope in which I sow
are harvested in heaven.

O praise him, hallelujah, ...

I'll set my gaze on God alone
and trust in him completely;
with every day pour out my soul
and he will prove his mercy.
Though life is but a fleeting breath,
a sigh too brief to measure,
my King has crushed the curse of death
and I am his forever.

O praise him, hallelujah, ...

Aaron Keyes and Stuart Townend (b.1963)

Reading: Genesis 1: 1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Reading: Psalm 29

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;
worship the LORD in holy splendour.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over mighty waters.
The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl,
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king for ever.
May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Hymn:

Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is the anchor,
my hope is in you alone.

Brian Doerksen (b.1965)

Reflection: Alex Laing

We are ten days into the new year. How are you feeling? Fully uplifted, motivated and energised? If you are, I salute you. I really hope this feeling continues. For many of us, we're not feeling all that uplifted and energised. This last year has really taken its toll and there are many of us who are feeling flat. Especially after the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday night. So, today's reflection is more of a Bible study, to help us strengthen our resilience a wee bit, by going right back to the beginning and discovering again who our God is.

We have two fantastic lectionary readings today, to help us do just that. The first really does take us back to the beginning, in fact it begins with the words, 'in the beginning'. The first chapter of Genesis describes God creating order from nothingness. It's such a well-known narrative. Each day God creates anew, using only his voice to speak a new thing into being. God says, 'let there be' and it

is. Just by a stated word. There's no drama, no shouting, no grand gestures – just the word 'let'. God is not a God who needs high drama in this creation account. God is completely in control.

Compare this to the way God creates in Psalm 29. Here God 'thunders' creation into being. Verse 3 says:

'The voice of the Lord is over the waters.
The God of glory thunders,
The Lord thunders over the mighty waters.' (Psalm 29:3 NIV)

God's creative voice is so mighty, that it can snap a tree in half with its power, in verse 6. It can strike the earth in flashes of lightning, in verse 7. It can shake the desert, in verse 8. God is mighty and in charge, and, in verse 10, God is enthroned as King forever.

You might think that this point would be a great place for the psalmist to end. God has created with huge displays of power and continues to be active on the earth with quite terrifying acts of physical strength. God is then enthroned as King, and rightfully so, as a deity of incredible, visible power. But the Psalm does not end there. The actual climax of the psalm is a surprising contrast to all this. It is peace. Take a look at verse 11:

'The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.' (Psalm 29:11 NIV)

Isn't that what we need right now? God's strength and God's peace. I am very drawn to the simplicity of this verse. In contrast to the voice of thunder of previous verses, here God simply 'gives' strength and 'blesses' God's people with peace. No song and dance needed here. It's like the 'let it' command of the first creation story in Genesis. God simply brings it into being - and God does this for us! We have been given God's strength and peace.

Whichever presentation of God you prefer – that of Genesis 1, simply speaking creation into being, or whether you prefer to think of God as in Psalm 29, thundering over the waters, physically powerful - God is completely in control. It may not feel like it today, it may not feel like it since Boris' announcement on Monday, but God is an almighty powerful God, whose voice alone can bring things into being. Perhaps this is why the psalmist ends with God's people having strength and peace – because of the peace of mind that comes with the knowledge that only God is in charge of today and tomorrow, not us.

That said, when we are feeling low, it can be an isolated and isolating place. It can be hard to feel that God is in control of the situation when we are feeling so out of control ourselves. So, I'd like us to think about one more thing, and it's back in our Genesis reading for today. Genesis 1:2 states:

'Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.' (Gen. 1:2 NIV)

The earth was 'formless and empty': in the original Hebrew language that's *tohu wa-bohu*. It translates as nothingness and desolation. It's a phrase that could be symptomatic of some of the feelings we are having at the moment. But note that in this creation story, it was this very nothingness and desolation that attracted the Spirit of God to hover over it. God did not look at the nothingness and dismiss it. God stayed with it.

So, if you are feeling a bit *tohu wa-bohu*, empty and desolate, remember that the Spirit of God is hovering over the waters. God is right here with us, even when we find things tough. It's ok not to be ok. However we are feeling, God is right here, hovering over the waters. And, going back to our psalm, God gives us strength and peace.

To end I'm going to read out a hymn from Singing the Faith. If you have a copy there, its number 521. If you don't, not to worry, I'm going to read it out.

StF 521

Here as we kneel, here as we pray,
Here as we plead, so many words to say,
So, you are here, never to leave,
Pouring peace into the hollow of our hearts.
And you give us the strength for coping, just for today,
And you grant us peace in going in your way,
And your power flows in where faith is faltering,
Never weakening, never altering,
Lord, we believe that your grace is sufficient for today,
For today.
(Clare Stainsby)

Amen.

Hymn:

Father, I place into your hands
the things I cannot do.
Father, I place into your hands
the times that I've been through.
Father, I place into your hands
the way that I should go,
for I know I always can trust you.

Father, I place into your hands
my friends and family.
Father, I place into your hands
the things that trouble me.
Father, I place into your hands
the person I would be,
for I know I always can trust you.

Father, we love to see your face,
we love to hear your voice.
Father, we love to sing your praise
and in your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with you
and in your presence rest,
for we know we always can trust you.

Father, I want to be with you
and do the things you do.
Father, I want to speak the words
that you are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
that you will draw to you,
for I know that I am one with you.

Jenny Hewer (b. 1945)

Prayers for others and for the world:

Creator God,

God of power and might,

God of meekness and majesty. We worship and praise you.

Out of darkness and nothingness, you created a wonderful world for us to enjoy, to live in and to marvel at. You entrusted your world to us to care for. But sadly your beautiful world is now a world in pain, damaged and broken because humanity has not cared for it, as you would have us do. Ice caps are melting, forest fires rage, animals are becoming extinct, pollution fills the atmosphere and we, as the human race are responsible for climate change, change which we know is destroying your beautiful world. Help us all to play our part, however large or small that part may be, to halt climate change that all future generations may enjoy the wonders of your creation to it's fullest.

CREATOR GOD, in your mercy. HEAR OUR PRAYER

Loving God, you created us in your image, you formed us to be like you, to be caring and compassionate, to be forgiving and merciful, to seek justice and to love one another as you love us. As we witnessed unbelievable scenes in America this week, we pray for calm as a new president takes office in the next few days.

We know that at this moment the whole world is crying out in anguish and pain. Countries and nations are torn apart by violence and war. People in their thousands are fleeing their homes, risking their lives in order to try to make a better life for themselves and their families, a life which they hope will give them a future not lived in fear but in peace, joy and happiness.

On top of all that Lord God, the whole world is reeling from the devastating effects of Covid 19. A virus which has robbed all nations of their freedoms, their families, their livelihoods, but more importantly the lives of so many people before their time and we mourn the loss of each and everyone of them and we pray that you will wrap your loving arms around their loved ones and fill them with your comfort and your peace.

LOVING GOD, in your mercy. HEAR OUR PRAYER

Caring God, we pray for all N. H. S. and care workers as they selflessly put their lives at risk to care for those who are suffering throughout this pandemic. We also pray for all key workers, for those working from home and home schooling their children as well and those who sadly have lost their jobs and their businesses during this last year. Whilst the numbers of infections and deaths sadly increases daily we thank you that there is light at the end of the tunnel as the vaccine is rolled out in our communities. We thank you for those scientists who have worked so hard to bring this about as we also thank you and pray for those who will organise and

administer the vaccine which will save many lives and hopefully will soon bring some normality back to life.

CARING GOD, in your mercy. HEAR OUR PRAYER

Awesome God, we thank you for your presence with us, for in your presence we can find your peace, regardless of all that is going on around us, for the peace you freely offer and give to us, is beyond all human understanding.

AWESOME GOD, in your mercy. HEAR OUR PRAYER,

for we ask them in and through the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our Saviour, **Amen.**

Offering:

(For those who are setting aside their offering each week this prayer may be said:)

We give back to you, creator God,
all that you have given to us -
our voices to praise you,
our strength to help others in your name,
our energy to perform your tasks,
our minds to be used according to your holy will,
our hearts to love you.

Bless all that we bring and use it, we pray, in your service.

We ask it in the name of Jesus, who gave his all for us. **Amen**

Hymn:

Through the love of God our Saviour
all will be well.

Free and changeless is his favour;
all, all is well.

Precious is the blood that healed us,
perfect is the grace that sealed us,
strong the hand stretched forth to shield us;
all must be well.

Though we pass through tribulation,
all will be well.

Christ has purchased full salvation,
all, all is well.

Happy still in God confiding,
fruitful, if in Christ abiding,
holy, through the Spirit's guiding;
all must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow;
all will be well.

Faith can sing through days of sorrow
all, all is well.

On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying,
then in living or in dying,
all must be well.

Mary Peters (1813–1856)

Blessing:

Lord, help us to be open to your prompting
as we seek to discover what you would have us be and do.
Remind us again and again that you have promised to be our
guide and companion on our journey.

Help us to look forward with renewed commitment,
and bless our thinking and speaking and doing.

And the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God

And the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all, now and forever more.

Amen.

**After Service Telephone Chat:
Sunday 10th January 11:45 AM**

Telephone Number: 0333 011 0616
Access code: 623 5908

Please note the call asks you to press the '£' key after entering the access code. You can either press the '#' key, or just wait, and you will be connected to the telephone chat.

**After Service Zoom Chat:
Sunday 10th January from 11:45 AM**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?
pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09)

Meeting ID: 217 268 7931
Passcode: RevDazzer

Online circuit services are available to view:

on YouTube, search 'Darren Garfield'
on websites/Facebook pages of all churches in the circuit where available
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