

East Durham Methodist Circuit:

On-line Service for 2nd May 2021

compiled by Rev Alf Waite, Gwyneth Walsham

Reader (video): Susan Pinkerton

Theme: Thy Kingdom Come.

Call to worship:

God of grace, we come with all we have: bodies, souls, minds, all here to worship you.

We have come for a glimpse of your kingdom of kindness - a world where love rules over all, a world where enemies embrace, distinctions between friend and foe evaporating in the light of your love.

We dedicate this hour of worship to you and to your kingdom come.

Amen

Hymn: To God be the glory

Fanny Crosby

StF 94 / H&P 463

1. To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

**Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.**

2. Oh perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives. **Praise the Lord...**

3. Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. **Praise the Lord.**

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Creator God, You, who loves us more than we can possibly know, who chose us from the very beginning to be part of Your family, we come now to praise Your Holy name.

Your majesty cannot be measured by human instruments and cannot be constrained by human boundaries - receive now our simple act of worship.

We are so thankful that You made each of us as unique beings, able to build relationships with You and those given to us on earth. May we never take these gifts lightly and shout with joy and thanksgiving for all we have .

Thank You that in worship we can put aside the uncertainties of this world and rest upon the certainties of the Kingdom. For You keep Your promises to us.

During this time together may we be transported from a world of concerns and fears to a place where we can be at peace in Your presence. Thank you Lord God for this amazing opportunity, denied to so many. May we never take it for granted and spend time each day giving you the thanks and praise you rightly deserve. **Amen**

Reading: Matthew 6:5-15 Prayer

New International Version

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Reflection on prayer:

Gwyneth Walsham

Why does prayer cause so many of us problems?

I thought I knew how to pray. I had been taken to Church at two weeks old - and gone most weeks since.

I knew the Lord's Prayer, said Grace before meals and prayers at bedtime. Yet I still did not feel comfortable praying out loud. Somewhere along the way I had missed the lessons on "How to pray in front of others".

How did others always seem to find the right words, so deep and meaningful, making mine sound silly in comparison?

I could start with "Dear Father God" and end with "Amen", but the middle was just a jumble of random thoughts.

Then someone told me to think of it as a conversation with a friend! Well anyone who knows me knows I have no trouble with that. I can chat with friends all day long.

And that is when the light bulb moment happened, I also found the more I prayed the more comfortable I became. I realised that I didn't have to use fancy formal words.

God knew me and He knew how I expressed myself, He was my best friend. I could talk about my day, the things that had gone well and those that seemed a disaster.

I realised I was praying more often, not just when I needed help. I could pray in the traffic jam, in the queue for shopping, when I had done something good or of which I wasn't so proud of. When I needed help with a decision or in fact any part of my day just as I would with a friend.

I also learned to stop and give God a chance to reply. There is nothing worse than a friend who doesn't allow you to get a word in.

The Lord's Prayer is a great template to remind us of some of the things we need to discuss even if we do not use it word for word.

First we greet God and let him know how much we appreciate just who He is. We then pray for God's Kingdom here on earth and that we might be ready to hear and respond to His answers.

We can ask Him for what we need and also the needs of others.

The hard bit comes next, admitting to what we have done wrong and asking God for forgiveness. We can then ask Him to help us to stay on the right track and make us better at following His will.

Finally we close in praise and an acceptance of God's answers to our prayers.

Never forget to make it a two way conversation, for the more you pray and listen the more you will recognise God's responses.

Hymn. Millennium Prayer (Tune: Auld Lang Syne) Jez Ashurst / Charlie Grant / Pete Woodroffe

Our Father who art in Heaven

Hallowed be thy name
Thy Kingdom come thy will be done
On earth as in heaven

Give us today our daily bread
And forgive our sins
As we forgive each one of those who sin
against us

And lead us not to the time of trial
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom the power and
the glory

And all the people say Amen
In every tribe and tongue
Let every heart's desire be joined
To see the kingdom come

With every hope and every dream
We fall in love again
Let all the world sing with one voice
Let the people say Amen

Prayers:

Come Holy Spirit and guide us in our prayers.

Our Father in heaven, we take time to consider how great You are. We know that You are always with us like a caring Mother or Father and we wonder and thank You for all You do for us. Reveal Yourself to us and all those we pray for today.

Thank You Holy Spirit that you bring the peace and joy of God's Kingdom, we ask that each one of us may find that peace and joy as we pray to You now.

Your Spirit knows everything about us and knows what is best for us. Show us what it is You will for us and leave us with an assurance that You intend the best for everyone we pray for, be it family, friends or the stranger we pass in the street.

You would never give us a stone if we asked for bread, but You give to each one of us exactly what we need the most, feeding us both physically and spiritually, whatever our present circumstances.

We pray for the sick and bereaved, for those who have touched our lives in some way. May they be reassured of your continued love and support both in this life and the next. So many are still struggling with the effects of Covid, particularly at this time in India. We ask You now Father that each person we remember in the silence will receive Your Holy Spirit and exactly what they need the most according to Your loving kindness.

Silence

Help us all to be ready to forgive and receive Your forgiveness. You alone know who needs to forgive and be forgiven. We tell You these things so that we can be made right with You and each other.

Please steer us away from the Devil's temptations which ultimately lead us away from You. We thank You Father that Your Son overcame Satan's power so that we can experience Christ's victory over the powers of darkness in our present situation.

May You know our gratitude and praise of You forever and ever

Amen

Song:

Faithful One

Brian Doerksen

StF 628

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 **(Repeat)**

Reading: Revelation 1:1-8

New International Version

¹The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testifies to everything he saw - that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

⁴ John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

⁷“Look, he is coming with the clouds and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen.

⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Message: Text: Thy Kingdom Come Matthew 6:10

We are planning to take a serious part in the ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ campaign this year as part of our recovery. We have looked at prayer loads over my time in the circuit, maybe it was for such a time as this. Churches can be open for private prayer, so we plan to have prayer days around the churches.

Thy Kingdom Come is a prayer initiative between Ascension Day and Pentecost to empower the mission of the church. What is important is that God’s Kingdom does come in this world of need, into the communities we are called to serve and to hearts that are lost without knowing the love of God. We do not know how prayer works but we know it does.

We also know that it is one way God wants us to be involved. I love the words of the old hymn, **“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed, the motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast”** and further on: **“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath, the Christian’s native air.”**

Prayer is so vital that Jesus teaches a pattern in the Sermon on the Mount and we are going to look at that pattern in this message under four headings: **approach, requests, reflection, and praise.**

How do you approach God? What names or titles do you choose to use? There are so many to choose from. I think they often come out of the ways we experience God or how we have been taught to think of Him. I believe that is alright as long as we don’t judge others for the ways they approach Him. Example views of God from scripture: Eternal God, I Am Who I Am, The Lord is peace, faithful God, God of gods and Lord of lords, the Lord Almighty, Immanuel, the God of heaven, and so many more. Think about the way you address God and why you use those terms. Do they come out of the way God has related to you? Has He proven His faithfulness or brought you peace in difficult circumstances? Have you had your eyes open to His Lordship or to His consistent presence, Immanuel?

Jenny was a student at Cliff College and a co-leader with me on a couple of church missions. She told me that she thought our Principal, Dr Davies, was the best example of God that she had found in any human being. He was a powerful, wise, authoritative leader with a sense of fun. I thought she was very perceptive and right.

In Matthew 6 Jesus calls Him ‘Our Father in heaven’. I realise that this name may cause issues for people because the image relates to a human relationship that may not have been good. It is though the name Jesus uses and encourages His followers to use. Not because He wants to cause upset or pain but because it relates to the intimacy that God desires us to have with Him and He with us. It is the how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 7.

What should we be asking of this loving God? Matthew 6:10-11, **“your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.”**

There seems to me a lofty thing in this and a basic request. The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God in this world, our communities and in individual lives. So in praying for the kingdom of God to come you are praying for the saving grace of God that brings life, healing, justice, fairness, peace of mind (shalom which means wholeness), for many Christians it has become a life changing experience an eternal experience. If you ask what God’s will is, maybe in the past it was believed that was to make people toe the line.

People believe that that is the purpose of any religion. It takes away our freedoms. The true answer has to be though that His creation would flourish. Life is too valuable not to be lived and that is why he sent His Son into the world.

Jesus does not stop at the lofty prayer for His Kingdom to come. He turns our attention to the need for our basic needs to be met. Give us today our daily bread. It is incredible that even in our country people lack the basics of life. So, it is not just a problem in the developing world. We can ask God to help us with anything. Like any loving parent He would love to help and would love us to ask Him for help. Too many Christians think because of the abundance of needs in the world their needs are not important enough for God, but be assured that is not true.

I love a good mystery drama and I have come to the conclusion that most of the mysteries would not be as serious if only they shared the problem. And God is listening and waiting.

Then in prayer we can reflect on who we are and the possible flaws or foibles we have. **Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.** I love the idea that God is concerned enough about us that He wants to make us aware of our flaws or foibles not to shame us or do us down but enable us to live in relationship with Him and those around us. We can live in freedom rather than oppression. I have tried to make a garden at the manse, and it is good to see the shrubs and plants flourish when they are given the space and food to grow. So, it is for us as we are freed from our sins. I used to worry that God wanted to reveal my sins to those around me but rather than doing that He lets me know forgiveness and encourages me to forgive those who have sinned against me. Again, it is about life.

Then last but not least, all that leads to praise. Revelation 1:5-6, **“To Him who loves us and has freed from our sins by His blood and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.** It is more usual to start with praise recognising God for who He is. I want to encourage you to get involved in our programme of private prayer for the mission of our churches coming out of lockdown. Please do visit your church if you can for a few moments but pray at home as well.

But now we are going to sing our praise as a response for what God is going to do with us and for us.

Songs of Praise:

1. Father God

Ian Smale

StF 72

Father God I wonder How I managed to exist without the knowledge of your parenthood and Your loving care.

Now I am Your son and I am adopted in Your family
And I can never be alone 'cause Father God, You're there beside me

**I will sing your praises, I will sing your praises, I will sing your praises
Forever more**

**I will sing your praises, I will sing your praises, I will sing your praises
Forever more**

2. Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow B Ligertwood / S R Ligertwood / C M Davenport

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow
Praise Him All Creatures Here Below
Praise Him Above You Heavenly Host
Praise Father Son And Holy Ghost

Give Glory To The Father
Give Glory To The Son
Give Glory To The Spirit
While Endless Ages Run

Worthy The Lamb All Heaven Cries
To Be Exalted Thus
Worthy The Lamb Our Hearts Reply
For He Was Slain For Us

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow
Praise Him All Creatures Here Below
Praise Him Above You Heavenly Host
Praise Father Son And Holy Ghost

Blessing:

The Lord fill us with joy, send us out in hope.

Fill us with power, send us out with His word.

Fill us with His presence and send us out in His service.

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us and those we love.

Amen

