

## Service Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Welcome to this joint time of worship for Christ Church and the Bridgwater Drive church.

### Prayer of Adoration

Holy God, blessed are those whose delight is in you,  
who are attentive to the gentle whisper of your call.  
Blessed are those who can set aside  
the sound of this world and meditate on your word alone.

*(John Birch, The Act of Prayer)*

Let's have a moment of silence to prepare our hearts and minds to worship our God this morning.

### *Silence*

Come among us living Lord. Amen

Christ is the world's Light, he and no other;  
born in our darkness, he became our brother.  
If we have seen him, we have seen the Father:  
glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Peace, he and no other;  
no man can serve him and despise his brother  
who else unites us, one in God the Father?  
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Life, he and no other;  
sold once for silver, murdered here, our Brother -  
he who redeems us, reigns with God the Father:  
Glory to God on high.

Give God the glory, God and no other;  
give God the glory, Spirit, Son and Father;  
give God the glory, God in man my brother:  
glory to God on high.

### Prayer of Praise

Lord we praise you for your greatness which gives us courage and your mercy which fills us with hope, for your truth which enlarges our understanding of you and your purposes, and for your glory which enriches our worship.

We praise you that when we feel lost, uncertain and afraid your mighty presence shows us the way and when we are empty you supply joy, courage and life in abundance.

We praise you our Creator, Sustainer and Lord. We praise you for the life you have given

us and for your promise to share every moment of our journey with us.

We praise you that in Christ you have given us the assurance that no matter who we are or where we go you will be there.

He is your word that we shall never be alone again. Lord we praise you that even in the midst of our anxieties, doubts and fears we can place our trust in you, the giver of life, hope and peace.

May our praises reach out from this place to the ends of the earth and beyond time and bring you glory for all eternity. Amen.

*(David Clowes, 500 Prayers for all Occasions)*

### Prayer of Confession

Forgiving God, we bring to you our incompleteness,  
and ask that you will make us whole.

We say the words and sing the hymns  
but some days we seem firmly anchored  
in this kingdom and not yours  
struggling to find the faith to carry on.

Forgiving God, we bring to you our incompleteness  
and ask that you will make us whole.

*(John Birch, The Act of Prayer)*

### Lord's prayer

### Offering and prayer

Please remember the work of the churches in your prayers and continue to make your regular donations to support this work by bank transfer or cheque to the Treasurer.

God, the source of all that is good, you give power and strength to your people. Thankful for all your mercies, we present our gifts and our lives, praying that they may be used not for our glory but for yours. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

*(Neil Dixon, Praying with the Scriptures)*

### Readings: Psalm 1 and John 17:6-19

In our reading from John's gospel we find Jesus coming to the end of his earthly ministry and his time with the disciples. We find Jesus praying for the disciples and he says in his prayer that "I have given them (the disciples) your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. <sup>15</sup> My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."

What does it mean for us as followers of Jesus to be sent by Jesus into this world but at the same time not to be part of the world?

Let's start by being clear what it doesn't mean. To be in the world but not of it does not mean we should hide away and do everything possible to live in isolation from the rest of the world. Just the opposite. As followers of Jesus we are called to be actively involved in daily life and to engage with the suffering, mess, greed and inequality that we see around us every day. We are called to speak out against injustice in whatever form it takes and to challenge those in positions of power and authority to make the changes that are needed to make this world a better place.

But alongside this Jesus also calls us to put him first in our priorities and not to allow ourselves to become so engaged with the world that we lose our identity as followers of Jesus and end up living by the standards of this broken world.

So how can we be engaged in the realities of this world but also remain completely loyal to God?

According to the psalmist in our reading from psalm 1 we must be like trees planted by streams of water. Here, the author describes fruit bearing trees with deep roots that have a constant water source. Ancient Israel was a largely agrarian society that understood prosperity in terms of agricultural production and weather.

Trees need water. New trees need 10 to 20 gallons per week during the dry season. Water availability has a direct impact on the health of forests and their inhabitants, which shows the importance of the relationship between forests and water. Trees are made up of more than 50 percent water and need a steady source of it in order to grow and stay healthy. A healthy 100-foot-tall tree can take 11,000 gallons of water from the soil and release it into the air again, as oxygen and water vapor, in a single growing season. They "drink" in the water using their small, hair-like roots. Water from the soil enters their roots and is carried up the tree's trunk all the way to the leaves.

Water is commonly understood as a biblical metaphor. Here, water is a constant source of nourishment for the tree—which symbolizes humanity and life. This means we need to be constantly drawing our nourishment from God and his love and provision for us. This will enable us to be strong and secure in our faith and our relationship with God and to withstand the battering that we will sometimes receive in this life – much like a well-rooted tree.

In order for us to draw our nourishment from God we need to be daily in touch with God through prayer and reading God's word in the Bible which will help to guide us in how to respond to situations we find ourselves in and how to follow God's ways.

Once we're receiving our constant nourishment from God we can then find ways to actively engage with those who are in positions of power and leadership in politics, industry, technology and so on to seek to bring about change for the good of all. But in doing this we must also ensure that our first loyalty is to God and to following God's principles.

We as Jesus' disciples are called to be agents of change to bring about God's kingdom of justice in our world. In the letter from James we read that 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.'

But knowing how to bring about change can be a daunting thought for us and we may feel inadequate in our knowledge and skills to try to engage with those in positions of power. Naomi is currently running a series on Thursday evenings called 'How Change Happens'

which takes a step by step approach to help us learn more about the Biblical basis for making change happen and how we can play our part in this.

When we start challenging some of the systems and processes that create injustice and inequality in the world we can find we are exposed to criticism and challenge. In our reading from John's gospel, Jesus prays to God for the disciples to receive God's protection constantly once Jesus is no longer with them and we too can be confident that we will never be separated from God's love no matter how challenging the situation is that we are facing. Paul writes in Romans chapter 8 that 'neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Jesus also asks God to enable the disciples to be as one, just as Jesus and his heavenly Father are one. It's important that as Christians we work for unity between ourselves so that we can overcome any divisions and differences and not allow anything to distract us from doing God's work and following Jesus.

And throughout every part of life and every situation and challenge we face Jesus longs for us to have the full measure of his joy within us. Paul encourages us in Romans chapter 12 to 'be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer'.

God is sending us as his followers out into the world to bring love, to challenge injustice, to take action against greed and exploitation. What does this mean for us and our churches at this moment in time? How might we respond to being sent out by God into our world in light of the continuing pandemic and the climate crisis?

Let's pause for a moment of quiet to reflect on those questions.

As we follow the call of Jesus to go out into our world, we do this in the knowledge that we are surrounded by the love and protection of God through Jesus. So let's go out in confidence, hope and faith.

Thanks be to God. Amen

#### Prayer after sermon

Holy and gracious God, we pray for all who seek to follow you, for all Christians known to us. Help us to rise above our differences, drawing together, one heart and mind, in your way of love.

Holy and gracious God, show us what it means to live holy lives. Help us to make choices faithful to your way, choices leading to truth, justice and peace, choices that carry your light into hopeless places, choices that fill us with your joy.

Holy and gracious God, as we seek to follow you, show and tell others of your love, keep us safe from evil, and bless our work in your world, that your joy may touch and transform lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

*(Nan Maxwell, URC Prayer Handbook 2015)*

The kingdom of God is justice and joy;  
For Jesus restores what sin would destroy.

God's power and glory in Jesus we know;  
And here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God is mercy and grace;  
The captives are freed, the sinners find place,  
The outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share;  
And hope is awakened in place of despair.

The kingdom of God is challenge and choice:  
Believe the good news, repent and rejoice!  
God's love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross:  
Our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal;  
In Jesus begun, in heaven made whole.  
The heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call;  
And all things cry "Glory!" to God all in all.

### Prayers of Intercession

God our Creator, Saviour and Sustainer we pray to you for all those you have called to live out their Christian commitment in the exercise of power: for politicians, for industrialists, for journalists, for educators asking that they may be strengthened against the temptation to misuse their power and that they may remain faithful to their calling to serve you.  
In your loving mercy, hear our prayer.

God our Creator, Saviour and Sustainer we pray to you for all those you have called to live out their Christian commitment in the service of the church: for ministers and lay workers, for pastoral visitors and church stewards, for those who teach the young or lead groups, for each member of our congregation, asking that they may be strengthened against the temptation to forget the needs of the world outside and that they may remain faithful to their calling to serve you.  
In your loving mercy, hear our prayer.

God our Creator, Saviour and Sustainer we pray to you for ourselves, a people called to live out our Christian commitment in the service of others: for our caring for the frail and sick, for our listening to the troubled and bereaved, for our giving to the hungry and destitute, for our sharing of the Good News of Christ, asking that we may be strengthened against the temptation to use others in the fulfilment of our own needs and that we may remain faithful to our calling to serve you.  
In your loving mercy, hear our prayer.

*(Christine Odell, Intercessions)*

One more step along the world I go,  
One more step along the world I go;  
From the old things to the new,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
*And it's from the old I travel to the new;*  
*Keep me travelling along with you.*

Round the corners of the world I turn,  
More and more about the world I learn;  
All the new things that I see  
You'll be looking at along with me.  
*And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.*

As I travel through the bad and good,  
Keep me travelling the way I should.  
Where I see no way to go,  
You'll be telling me the way, I know.  
*And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.*

Give me courage when the world is rough,  
Keep me loving though the world is tough;  
Leap and sing in all I do,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
*And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.*

You are older than the world can be,  
You are younger than the life in me;  
Ever old and ever new,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
*And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.*

### Blessing

As you continue on your way, may you know that God goes before you.  
By the strength of his Spirit, share your faith with the uncertain,  
share your love with the unlively,  
share your presence with the lonely  
and share God with everyone just as God has shared himself with you.  
In the unfading blessing of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.