

Service Sunday 13th March 2022 Rayleigh

Welcome

Good morning friends and welcome to this time of worship on this 2nd Sunday in Lent. We have the cross on the platform and the items on the cross which we add each Sunday in the run up to Easter which help us to think about the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus leading up to his crucifixion.

Call to worship

We're going to use some verses from Psalm 27 to help us focus our minds and hearts on this time of worship. Please join in by saying the words in bold type.

The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

**When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.**

One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

**For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.**

I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.

**Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.**

Song – Our God is a Great Big God WF 79

Our God Is A Great Big God
Our God Is A Great Big God
Our God Is A Great Big God
And He Holds Us In His Hands

He's Higher Than A Skyscraper
He's Deeper Than A Submarine
He's Wider Than The Universe
And Beyond My Wildest Dreams
And He's Known Me
And He's Loved Me
Since Before The World Began
How Wonderful To Be A Part
Of God's Amazing Plan!

Jo & Nigel Hemming

Promises

What does it mean when we make a promise to somebody to do something? Can you remember any promises you have made recently or a long time ago? What types of promises do we make eg in the Scouts/Guides, at a court, at a wedding, when we become a church member. This morning we're going to look at how God makes and keeps promises and what this means for us.

Prayers of thanksgiving

We're now going to have a time of thanking God for the many good things in our lives and world. What would you like to give thanks for?

Let's bring all those things together now in a time of prayer of thanks.

Offering including Silver Coin Collection for Lent

And as another sign of our thanks to God for all the good things we've received we're going to bring our gifts of money which will be used for God's work.

Also if you have any silver coins you'd like to give as part of our Lent collection which is supporting the work of Water Aid please pop them in the separate cups that are coming round now. This will help provide vital clean water and sanitation in developing countries.

Lord's prayer

Our Father in heaven, you are awesome!
Show us who you are and how you want us to be.
Make earth more like heaven.
Please give us what we need to keep going each day.
Help us when we are wrong and clean us up on the inside.
Help us to let other people off and move on.
Keep us from bad stuff.
You're in charge!
You're strong and powerful and always there.
Forever! Amen.

Sketch - Genesis 15: 1-12

Abraham pacing up and down and grumbling to himself

God: What's up Abraham? What's the trouble?

Abraham: Oh Lord, sorry to moan but I'm feeling a bit fed up.

God: Why's that Abraham?

Abraham: Well, you know, I've got all these sheep and goats and everything but I'm getting old. And I haven't got any children to leave it all to and that makes me sad. It'll all go to someone else instead.

God: Abraham?

Abraham: Yes Lord?

God: Get up and go outside.

Abraham: Get up and go outside? Oh, yes, alright Lord. Anything you say.

(Abraham breathes deeply and looks up at the sky)

Mmmm. That's better. It's so beautiful outside. And look at all those stars.

1.....2.....24.....309.....4,082. There's far too many to count. It's wonderful, Lord God. You are wonderful. You made all this. Blessed be your name forever.

God: Thank you Abraham Abraham?

Abraham: Yes Lord?

God: How many stars are there?

Abraham: No idea Lord. I was just trying to count them but I gave it up. Loads and loads.

God: Listen Abraham. You won't be leaving all your belongings to someone else. You'll have a son to leave them to.

Abraham: A son? Really?

God: Not only that but I will make all your family to be as many as the stars in the sky. You will be the father of a great nation, Abraham.

Abraham: As many as the starts in the sky! A great nation! My own son! Lord you are amazing.

Philippians 3:17-4:1 from The Message version

¹⁷⁻¹⁹ Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other goals, and trying to get you to go along with them. I've warned you of them many times; sadly, I'm having to do it again. All they want is easy street. They hate Christ's Cross. But easy street is a dead-end street. Those who live there make their bellies their gods; belches are their praise; all they can think of is their appetites.

²⁰⁻²¹ But there's far more to life for us. We're citizens of high heaven! We're waiting the arrival of the Saviour, the Master, Jesus Christ, who will transform our earthy bodies into glorious bodies like his own. He'll make us beautiful and whole with the same powerful skill by which he is putting everything as it should be, under and around him.

4 My dear, dear friends! I love you so much. I do want the very best for you. You make me feel such joy, fill me with such pride. Don't waver. Stay on track, steady in God.

Song – May the mind of Christ my Saviour WF 71

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.

Kate B. Wilkinson

Talk

We heard earlier about a man called Abram who was a very wealthy man with many possessions including large flocks of sheep, cattle, donkeys and camels along with silver, gold and a large household with many servants.

But Abram was unhappy because he didn't have a family who could take over all his animals and his home as he got older. In Abram's time having a son who would take over the running of the family was seen as very important. So although Abram had received many blessings from God he still felt like the most important things was missing. Perhaps we feel that God has blessed us in many ways but that the one thing that really matters to us is still missing.

God's promise to Abram

God made a promise to Abram that he would have a son and a family so large it would be like the number of stars in the sky. It was an amazing promise and Abram believed that God would keep his promise. But God hadn't finished – he then promised Abram would have land – something he'd never had before and hadn't even asked God for. God's promise of a son to Abram did come true for Abram to see. God's second promise of land didn't come about while Abram was still around and not for hundreds of years.

David was affected by God's promise to Abram

Let's look at how some of Abram's descendants experienced the promises of God. One of them was King David who wrote lots of the psalms in the Bible. By the time David was born Abram's descendants had moved into the land that God had promised to Abram and David could look back and see that God's promises to Abram had come true. So David

has real confidence in the promises of God – and David wrote about this in 1 of his Psalms which we read at the start of our service this morning and he said “I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”.

Paul was affected by God’s promise to Abraham

Then there was Paul who was also descended from Abraham. He could also look back over hundreds of years and see how God had kept his promises from Abraham onwards, past David and up to the time that Paul was living. We read earlier from the letter that Paul wrote to the Philippian church. Paul talked about other promises that we can be sure of – he says there’s far more to life for us. We’re citizens of high heaven! We’re waiting the arrival of the Saviour, the Master, Jesus Christ, who will transform our earthy bodies into glorious bodies like his own. This is a promise about our final place where we belong and will spend eternity with God in heaven – a promise that Jesus will come again in power to bring all things under God’s control. So Paul was totally sure that the promises made by Jesus were also true and would come into being.

We are affected by God’s promise to Abraham

We can also believe that God keeps promises to us – even if they take many years to become real – because we see how God has kept promises in the past. We can have confidence in God and God’s promises because of our own personal experience of God working in our lives and because of how we’ve seen God at work in the world.

Let’s look at just a couple of the promises that Jesus made which apply to us today just as much as to his disciples.

Jesus said “If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will** come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” ([John 14:3](#)). Jesus said I will come back. We have that promise. He is preparing a place for us in heaven and when He is ready, we will be with him in that place. Our futures are settled. We have peace knowing we have a home being prepared by Jesus and that he will come for us.

In [Matthew 11:28](#), Jesus says “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and **I will** give you rest.” The greatest promise we can receive on earth is one that says you will never be alone. Jesus promises that when we are tired, we can rest in Him. When we feel like we can’t go on, He reassures us.

Sometimes God’s promises to us can happen quickly so we’re able to have the benefit of the promise – like Abram received the promise of his son.

Sometimes a promise takes much longer to come about such as God’s promise to give Abram and his family land and we may have to wait a long time before we see God’s promise actually become reality. This isn’t always easy but we have to be patient and to put our trust in God to deliver on what has been promised.

Amen.

Song – My Jesus, My Saviour WF 75

My Jesus, my Savior
Lord there is none like you
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of your mighty love
My comfort, my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have
In YOU

Darlene Zschech

Prayers of intercession

We're going to have a time of prayer now to bring all the concerns and the people that we love to God. If you'd like to write on your sticky star a person, place or situation you want to pray for and then bring it to the front and stick it on the large sheet of paper.

Let's come to God in prayer.

Loving God we ask you to receive all the prayers that have been brought forward this morning. You know the concerns and the longings that are in our hearts. We bring these people and places and situations to you Lord because we know that you want healing and happiness and hope for all people everywhere.

God challenge us and take away our fear as we face the world with all its trouble, despair and darkness.

And yet make us afraid.

Make us afraid for peoples who are oppressed and tormented by tyrants and dictators, deprived of their homes and all hope for the future.

Make us afraid, yet come with your infinite compassion and, taking hold of our hearts, fill them with your love that drives all fear away.

And with that love, renew our faith and hope, so that we may believe in your promises and become your peacemakers, your true daughters and sons with Christ, who dared to face his fear and die for the love he bears for all humanity.

We ask all these prayers in the name of Jesus our savior and Lord.

Amen.

(URC Prayer Handbook 2010 - adapted)

Song – Teach Me To Dance WF 88

*Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart
Teach me to move in the power of your Spirit
Teach me to walk in the light of your presence
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart*

*Teach me to love with your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart*

You wrote the rhythm of life
Created heaven and earth
In You is joy without measure
So, like a child in your sight
I dance to see your delight
For I was made for your pleasure
Pleasure

Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say 'yes'
A will that leaps to obey you
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in your face
Let my whole being praise you
Praise you

Graham Kendrick

Closing blessing

May our faithful God bless you with life in all its fullness
May you know the love and friendship of Jesus our Saviour
And may the Holy Spirit fill you with peace and hope now and every day.

Amen.

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