

Christ Church, 3 July 2022.

Music before worship – Joy Comes in the Morning, Gloria Gaynor

Call to worship (based on Psalm 30)

We praise You, O God, for You have saved us!
We cried out to You for help, and You were there.
We were sinking down,
burdened by the weight of our doubts and fear,
but You lifted us up and restored us to life.

So we praise You! We give You thanks!
Together, we remember the stories of Your mercy and love.
For Your anger lasts only a moment,
Your goodness for a lifetime.
God, You are our God.
We will give You thanks forever!

Psalm 30:11-12

Hymn Lord of the dance R&S 195 omit v 4

I danced in the morning
When the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon
And the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven
And I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem
I had my birth.

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he*

I danced for the scribe
And the pharisee,
But they would not dance
And they wouldn't follow me.
I danced for the fishermen,
For James and John
They came with me
And the Dance went on.

Dance, then, wherever you may be,

I danced on the Sabbath
And I cured the lame;
The holy people
Said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped
And they hung me on high,
And they left me there
On a Cross to die.

Dance, then, wherever you may be,

They cut me down
And I leapt up high;
I am the life
That'll never, never die;
I'll live in you
If you'll live in me -
I am the Lord
Of the Dance, said he.

Sydney Carter

Gifts

In the offering of our gifts, as well as the living of our days,
may we not grow weary of doing what is right,
but commit to speaking up for the voiceless,
healing the broken, feeding the hungry,
and all those mercies which are such a part of your heart
and hopes for all your children.
In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Opening Prayer URC Prayer Handbook, p48

Bible reading: 2 Kings 5:1-14

Reflection

All of today's given lectionary readings seemed to have something useful to say to us, especially I think on Church Meeting day when we will make a decision about our ongoing and future mission and outreach. In music, call to worship and reading we have heard bits of Psalm 30 – Let us keep in mind these phrases for that psalm - God's anger only lasts for a moment, God's favour and grace is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes in the morning. In the life of a church, all the discussions and disagreements about the details of a building project may seem like they go on for ever, and may indeed go on for two, three or even more years, but they are nothing in a history of over 100 years, and to God they are not even a blink of the eye. God has turned our mourning into dancing so that we may praise Him and not be silent. And praise as we know, is not only singing and dancing, but thoughts and actions as we will hear later. But for now, we come to the story of Naaman the leper.

First we have a servant girl, who was taken captive in a raid, in other words during a war. She serves Naaman's wife, presumably as a slave. And this girl, is so kind and generous to her captors that she tells her mistress how Naaman could be cured. There is more than enough material for a sermon just there, but for now keep her at the back of your mind – in today's terms, a victim of modern slavery, helping the people who have wronged her. How might we be more like her, when we are wronged, usually in very small ways?

Then there is the king of Israel, who misunderstands the intention of the king of Aram, perhaps understandably as the Arameans had been capturing people from Israel, but despite the gifts and a letter requesting help, the king of Israel says, 'look how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.'

Book mark with a reflection on Naaman's story – we are going to use the back of it to make some notes, just for yourself – no one else is going to look at it – If you have ever misunderstood someone and think they are picking an argument with you, put a yellow sticker on the bookmark.

And now we come to Naaman - Naaman feels entitled, because he is an important man. He is the commander of a king's army and that king thinks so highly of him that he sends gold and fancy clothes to the king of Israel, with a letter asking him to cure him of his leprosy. The prophet Elisha hears of this and tells the king to send Naaman to him. Naaman arrives with great fanfare, horses and chariots, but Elisha doesn't go out to meet him and talk to him face to face; he sends a messenger telling him to go and wash in the Jordan. Naaman is furious; he is indignant. He says, 'I thought that for me he would come out and call on his

Christ Church, 3 July 2022.

God and wave his hands to cure the leprosy.’ Naaman thinks his status entitles him to a personal audience with the prophet. Do you ever feel entitled? Do you think because you’re older you’re entitled to respect? Because you’re the minister or an elder that you should be listened to? Because you have been a member here all your life, your views should hold more sway than others? And there are many other entitlements we could think of – should asylum seekers be entitled to live here safely while they fill out their applications? Should descendants of slaves be entitled to compensation? Are there things you think you are entitled to because you have worked all your life? Probably most of us don’t think we are ‘entitled’. We don’t like to think that we have an advantage over others because of the colour of our skin, or our education, or where we happened to grow up – but we do. Have a think and if you think may be ‘entitled’ in some way, put a red sticker on the back of your bookmark.

Hymn O Christ the healer, we have come

O Christ, the healer, we have come
to pray for health, to plead for friends.
How can we fail to be restored
when reached by love that never ends?

From every ailment flesh endures
our bodies clamour to be freed;
yet in our hearts we would confess
that wholeness is our deepest need.

How strong, O Lord, are our desires,
how weak our knowledge of ourselves!
Release in us those healing truths
unconscious pride resists or shelves.

In conflicts that destroy our health
we recognize the world's disease;
our common life declares our ills.
Is there no cure, O Christ, for these?

Grant that we all, made one in faith,
in your community may find
the wholeness that, enriching us,
shall reach the whole of humankind.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

Bible readings: **Luke 10:1-5**
 Galatians 6:1-10

Do you like to travel light? Or are you the kind of person who packs everything bar the kitchen sink for one week away? Do you like to have everything organised and prepared before you go on holiday or on a work trip, or do you just go and trust that everything will be OK? There was one of those silly questions on Facebook the other day, what did you use to do as a child that would be considered risky now and I put going out without a phone or money. Of course, mobile phones didn’t exist then, but I have always liked to go out carrying as little as possible. If it doesn’t fit in my pocket, chances are I think I don’t need it. I still quite often go out without a phone or money to Claudia’s great consternation! Perhaps I get it from my dad who went out with as little as possible, although he did always have a

Christ Church, 3 July 2022.

paperback in his jacket pocket because you never know when you might have a spare five minutes to read!

Jesus sends his disciples out telling them to take no money, no bag, not even shoes. They are to trust that God will provide for their needs. The reading continues if anyone they give the peace to returns it, they are to stay in that house eating and drinking whatever is provided, but if they are not welcomed, they are to shake the dust from their feet and move on. Are we like the disciples of Jesus? Are we prepared to trust in God that we will find the money to do the building project? That we will find the volunteers for the projects and outreach we want to do with the community? – ‘the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.’ Are we prepared to take the risk of travelling light? Or are we going to be weighed down by the luggage of the past – the way we used to do things? The reluctance to change? The negative thinking that we won’t raise enough money, that we won’t have enough helpers, that no one will come to our events?

If you like to travel light, if you’re prepared to take a risk, and trust that in God everything will be OK, put a blue sticker on your bookmark. If you like to have everything prepared and leave nothing to chance before you start on a project, put a green sticker on your bookmark. And if you are not sure, or think it depends on the situation, put a purple sticker on the bookmark.

And now we come to our final reading from Galatians. This leads on from what we have just been talking about. Paul is writing to the Gentiles in Galatia explaining that they do not need to take on the rules of the Jewish faith to be Christians. In these few verses, Paul gives them maxims for their behaviour – do not judge others – if you find someone doing something wrong, explain to them in a spirit of gentleness, not with harsh words and criticism. They are to bear each other’s burdens with love. Everyone must test their own work, not others work – which is another way of saying look to what you are doing, rather than criticising others or saying others are doing things the wrong way. I won’t ask anyone to put a sticker this time, but perhaps take time to reflect – are you too quick to criticize others rather than thinking about your own actions? Are you too quick to accept defeat and give up on things? The early Christians suffered all kinds of set-backs and hardships, including imprisonment and death – our difficulties are nothing in comparison.

Finally, Paul encourages them to ‘not grow weary in doing what is right’, to not give up, but to work for the good of all. So let us trust in God, take nothing for the journey and never grow tired of working for the good of all. Amen

Hymn Brother, sister let me serve you R&S 474 omit v5

Christ Church, 3 July 2022.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;

I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

Richard Gillard

Prayers of intercession

Heavenly Father, even as you healed Naaman both of his leprosy and his pride,
heal us of all that separates us from true wholeness with you.
Let us walk: **In the light of the Lord.**

Lord God, no matter our feelings, our station in life,
our wealth, health or lack thereof,
we are only as secure as your nearness.
We praise you for wanting to be our only God.
Let us walk: **In the light of the Lord.**

Holy Spirit, help us care for souls beyond our own.
Keep evangelism from dying in our churches,
for you yearn to grant eternal life to all.
Let us walk: **In the light of the Lord.**

Lord Jesus Christ, look with mercy upon all of us in our needs,
especially those needs we are most reluctant to acknowledge.
Heal us from pride, selfishness, lethargy for the gospel, criticism and judging
and the many unnamed other wrongs we succumb to.
Let us walk: **In the light of the Lord.**

Eternal God, you come to us in so many ways, and you come as a gracious and caring healer.
You have made our world with such lavish beauty that many times we cannot take it all in because it
is so overwhelming.

We thank you also for the healer, Jesus. We thank you that you care about our infirmities and
illnesses. We thank you that Jesus was often moved to compassion by the needs of those he
encountered. We thank you that he reached out to the most needy of his society and provided them
healing and wholeness. And so,

We pray this day for all those who face illness and because of it, stress and anxiety.
We pray that you would provide your healing touch for all of us, and especially those known to us in
this congregation who are ill and in hospital at the moment.
We pray that you would be with us when we are anxious and fearful and provide a sense of your
quieting and steady peace.
We pray that you would give us courage to face difficult decisions and difficult days and your
wisdom to make the right decisions for our church and our community.
We pray that you would give us stamina and strength when we feel overwhelmed by weakness.
We pray that you would give us hope during dark days.
Be also with our world. Especially be with all of those unstable places marked by violence and

Christ Church, 3 July 2022.

hatred – Ukraine, United States, Afghanistan (earthquake), Bangladesh (floods), immigrants (Spanish border, found dead in Texas), heatwaves
We pray that the world might one day know peace; not only the absence of violence, but your all encompassing *shalom*. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Hymn Go to the world! Tune *Engelberg* at R&S 414

Go to the world! Go into all the earth.
Go preach the cross where Christ renews life's worth,
baptising as the sign of our rebirth.
Alleluia!

Go to the world! Go into every place.
Go live the Word of God's redeeming grace.
Go seek God's presence in each time and space.
Alleluia!

Go to the world! Go struggle, bless and pray;
the nights of tears give way to joyous day.
As servant Church, you follow Christ's own way.
Alleluia!

Go to the world! Go as the ones I send,
for I am with you 'til the age shall end,
when all the hosts of glory cry 'Amen!'
Alleluia!

Sylvia G. Dunstan (1955-1993)

Blessing (inspired by Luke 10:1-11)
Go forth from this place refreshed and empowered
to do the ministry to which God calls you:
Travel lightly, for you carry within you all that you need.
Notice God's presence in simple, everyday experiences.
Whenever opportunity arises, labour for the good of all.
And the blessing and joy of God, our Creator, Healer, and Life-Giver
go with you today and always. **Amen.**

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