

Christ Church URC, Rayleigh
Service 10.00am Sunday 23 October 2022

Call to Worship:

Leader : Lord, you call us to life, you called us into being. We are people of action and contemplation, work and rest, prayer and ministry.

All: Help us find the right balance in our lives

Leader: Lord, you created us individually, we are all wired differently. Some of us are more geared towards action; some excel in reflection. We all need both.

All: Help us to find the right balance in our lives.

Leader: Lord, we live in a culture, where actions both, good and bad are valued more highly than contemplation, where doing is rewarded and reflection is sometimes forgotten.

All: Help us to find the right balance in our lives.

Leader: We live in a culture where we think of ourselves and not others and where free speech means that we sometimes speak or write things without thinking how we affect other people.

All: Help us to find the right balance in our lives.

Leader: May your Saviour, Jesus Christ guide you in all your saying and doing. May the Holy Spirit strengthen you, through its power, its grace and its love to do or say the right thing.

All; Amen

Hymn Word Folder No.3

All over the world the Spirit is moving,
all over the world as the prophet said it would be;
all over the world there's a mighty revelation
of the glory of the Lord, as the waters over the sea.

All over His church the Spirit is moving,
all over His church as the prophet said it would be;

all over His church there's a mighty revelation
of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Right here in this space the Spirit is moving,
right here in this space as the prophet said it would be;
right here in this space there's a mighty revelation
of the glory of the lord, as the water's cover the sea.

Collection

Now that we have dedicated our gifts, we are now going to talk to God in prayer, so let us bow our heads.

Creator God, we all come before your throne of grace, both young and old, praising your holy name.

We give thanks for all the gifts and talents that you have given each one of us, especially

the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, who died to save us all, who gave those who

believe in him everlasting life and through him forgiveness of our sins.

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that we have not always been true in following both you and your Son

and we come before you to humbly say that we are so sorry, not only for the things

that we have done, which have not pleased you, but also for the things which we have not said or done.

We acknowledge our weakness and ask that you strengthen us with your Holy Spirit, so that

whoever we are we can follow in the footsteps of you Son, Jesus Christ throughout our lives

and at the end of our lives live with you and your Son Jesus Christ, in whose name we always pray,

sure that you hear every word. And now we say the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples:

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,

forever and ever Amen.

Children's Talk

Do you know what pride is? If you look it up in the dictionary, one definition is:

“excessive self esteem.”

Later on I shall be talking about Pride, but this can be a fault both in children and adults.

I want to tell you about a little girl called Mary. She was born around 1919, so over a hundred years ago. Her family were well off and she was proud of all the gifts that her parents gave her and even more proud of the praise that she got at school from her teachers. However Mary was really sad because she had few friends and could not understand why. This was the time when a lot of people had lost their jobs and families were very poor as a result. Most of the children that Mary knew had very little compared to her and often went hungry.

She came home crying one day, because another child had called her bad names. Her mother asked why she was crying and when Mary told

her, she was really sad for her. "Do you keep telling them what you have or about our holidays?" she asked. "Of course I do" said Mary "I am very proud of what I have". Her mother explained, that although she was a very lucky little girl, many of her fellow pupils had nothing as their families were very poor. Perhaps she should be thinking about them, rather than always saying what she had.

So Mary went away and thought about what her mother had said and do you know what she did? She started giving away her toys and books when a child had a birthday or at Christmas, and started setting aside part of her pocket money so that she could help others. Suddenly Mary was a lot happier, because what she did for others filled her with a sense of doing something right and her fellow pupils stopped thinking of her as "stuck up" and were a lot kinder to her.

You know, sometimes we are all like that. We are always thinking of what we want or need, but perhaps we should be thinking of what others need. Now you might think "What can I do, I am only a child, but even the smallest action or gift, no matter what it is, may have an effect far beyond the size of the gift or the immediate effect of the action. May God give you grace to think of others and what you can do.

Hymn R&S No 474

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 have seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

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 to.

Reading Psalm 66

Talk 1

The word "awesome" has made its way into popular culture and vocabulary. I hear young people saying that a new friend is awesome or perhaps a new mobile phone is awesome. Now there is no doubt technology can be great and good friendships can be a great help to mental health,

the word has a special meaning in the bible, because psalmist it reserves "awesome" to describe God. His awesomeness gives us a totally different perspective on what ever trials beset us.

For example instead of complaining as his ancestors had down in the wilderness, the psalmist sees testing as further evidence of his awesome relationship with God. He says that he has purified the people as silver is refined, he brings us through all our trials to superabundance just in John Ch. 10 verse 10, Jesus tells us that he has come in order that we might have life, but not just an ordinary life – a life in all its fullness.

But there is a snag with all this. Yes, it is good to praise God but such praise must come from the depths of our being in thankfulness for what God has done and not from a sense of pride, where we are saying “Look at me God! I am so glad that you have singled me out for all your goodness and not my colleagues at work or my next door neighbor who certainly do not deserve it, or the person who is always trying to take me down a peg or to! Our New Testament reading delves into this further.

Hymn R&S 489

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
naught be all else to me, save that thou art –
thou my best thought in the day and the night,
waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord,
thou my great Father, thy child let me be,
thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight,
be thou my dignity, thou my delight,
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my strong tower,
raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise,
thou ,my inheritance, now and always,
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
grant me its joys after vic'try is won,
hear of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Reading; Luke Ch. 18 verses 9-14

Talk 2

I ended my earlier talk with a warning about what our hymn called "empty praise", where our praise of God comes from a false position. In our reading from Luke's gospel this is confronted head on! Here, Jesus preaches by a parable to some who were self consciously sure that they were righteous and who despised others. Two men went up to pray at the Temple, one a Pharisee the other a tax collector. The Pharisee prayed, thanking God that he was not like the rest of men, thieves, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector on the other hand collector. I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of all that I get. In other words absolutely full of himself!

The tax collector, on the other hand stood afar off and would not even lift his eyes to heaven, constantly beating his breast and asking God's mercy as a sinner. Jesus tells us that it was the tax collector rather than the Pharisee who went home, accepted by God because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

The problem here was that the Pharisee did not really go to pray to God. He prayed with himself. True prayer is always offered to God and God alone. A cynical American once described a preacher's prayer " as the most eloquent prayer ever offered to Boston audience" The Pharisee

was really giving himself a testimonial before God, amongst other things for fasting outside the one obligatory fast on the Day of Atonement, and tithing when there was no obligation to do so.

The tax collector, on the other hand stood apart continually berating himself and asking for God's mercy on him as a sinner. It was this heartbroken, self depreciating even self despising prayer that won him acceptance before God.

Well, what does this say to us? I think it carries three messages:-

- (1) No-one who is proud can pray. The gate of Heaven is so low that no one can enter it other than being on their knees.
- (2) No-one who despises others can pray. In prayer we do not lift ourselves above others. We should remember that we are on of a great army of sinners all kneeling before the throne of God's mercy.
- (3) True prayer comes from setting our lives beside the life of God. No doubt all that the Pharisee said was true, but rather than asking "Am I as good as or even better than my neighbour?" he should have been asking "Am I as good as God?" That question would definitely get a very different and less complimentary answer!

So in conclusion I think we should always be asking ourselves "why am I praying?" Is it from a sense of self congratulation or is from a sense of truly being aware of our own failings and asking God's forgiveness for them.

AMEN

Hymn R&S 522

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served, but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.
***This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow Him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.***

There in the garden of tears,
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
“Yet not my will but yours”, he said
This is our God etc.

Come and see his hands and feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space,
to cruel nails surrendered.
This is our God etc.

So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer
for it is Christ we're serving.
This is our God etc.

Prayers of Intercession (Joyce)

Hymn R&S 558

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown?
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare,
will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you love the “you” you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you’ve found
to reshape the world around
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I’ll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I’ll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

Blessing

**Our service is ended. Go out from here knowing that your
God holds you in his loving arms,
That your Saviour Jesus Christ walks beside you
And that God’s Holy spirit will guide you.
The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face to shine upon you
and be gracious unto you
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace.**

Amen