

# **The Bridgwater Drive Church (URC)**

**Service, Sunday 26 March 2023**

**10.30 am**

**Call to worship:** Brothers and sisters in Christ, come to worship our God and his son, our saviour, Jesus Christ in awe and wonder. Come and worship in the knowledge that through our faith in Jesus Christ that we can accomplish all the tasks he has set for us.

## **Hymn MP 486 (R&S 72)**

1) Now thank we all our God,  
with hearts, and hands, and voices  
who wondrous things hath done  
in whom His world rejoices;  
Who from our mothers' arms,  
hath blest us on our way,  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.

2) O may this bounteous God  
through all our lives be near us,  
with ever-joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us in His grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
in this world and the next.

3) All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given,  
the Son, and Him who reigns  
with them in highest heaven;  
the one eternal God,  
whom heaven and earth adore;  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.

## **Prayer of adoration and confession**

Creator God, we come in awe and humility to kneel at your throne, for we feel ourselves unworthy. We give thanks for all the gifts that you have given to us, especially the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, through whose death on Calvary Hill, those who believe in him will have everlasting life and their sins forgiven. Father and Mother God, we acknowledge our failings, sometimes taking all the glory on ourselves without acknowledging that without you we are nothing. We acknowledge mankind's failure to nourish this planet we live on for we are mere custodians looking after it for future generations and ask that you help us to do better. We acknowledge our mistakes when the things we have done or said do not receive your blessing and also when we leave things unsaid or undone. You know that we are weak, failing in what you would like us to do and we ask that you strengthen

and sustain us with your Holy Spirit, so that we may always seek to follow in your Son's footsteps so that when our lives on earth are done, we may live with you and our Saviour Jesus Christ in heaven above.

And now we continue in prayer with the prayer Jesus taught his disciples:-

"Our Father, who art in Heaven,  
hallowed be your 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,  
For ever and ever. AMEN

### **Collection and blessing**

#### **Hymn MP 31 (R&S 92)**

- 1) Amazing Grace – how sweet the sound –  
That saved a wretch like me,  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.
  
- 2) 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fear relieved  
how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed.
  
- 3) Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.
  
- 4) When we've been there  
ten thousand years  
bright shining as the sun  
we've no less days to sing God's praise  
than when we first began.

## Reading: Psalm 130

### Talk.

This psalm is one of the songs of the ascent, sung by pilgrims as they journeyed up to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. The song is begun with a cry for help and the best place to run to in that situation is the presence of God. Hiding under his wings or in his strong tower provides a secure and safe haven. The psalmist is full of despair, drowning in his trials and tribulations and entanglements of depression – not an enviable place to be in. He is also well aware of his own sin, but at least is on the right road as he climbs up to Jerusalem to ask for God’s forgiveness and mercy as he prays in the temple.

How often do we find ourselves in a similar place to the psalmist, when everything seems to be going against us and we are drowning in our own despair, with no resolution insight, yet, as we see from this psalm, this situation is not new and we are not treading a brand new path. We should take consolation in that as with those who have proceeded us we can find solace and safety in God’s presence.

Let us turn again to the psalmist who now confesses that his soul longs for the presence of the Lord, even more than a watchman who awaits for the dawn. Imagine how a watchman would rejoice at the rising of the sun, marking the end of his watch by chasing away the shadows and the chill from the air. He finishes his song by expressing his hope that all Israel will return to God and be saved, for only with the God of Israel is there forgiveness, mercy and salvation. How are we to react to this. In broadly similar terms, I would hope, with one major difference! We know that God’s Messiah has come! God sent his Son to earth to save God’s people and through him we can receive God’s forgiveness and grace.

### Hymn MP 478 (R&S 207) (Verses 1, 2, 6 and 7)

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|---|--|
| 1) My song is love unknown,<br>my Saviour’s love to me;<br>love to the loveless shown,<br><br>that they might lovely be.<br>O who am I,<br>that for my sake,<br>my Lord should take<br>frail flesh and die? | 2) He came from His blessed throne<br>salvation to bestow;<br>but men made strange, and<br>none<br>the longed-for Christ would<br>But O my friend,<br>my friend indeed,<br>who at my need<br>His life did spend. |
| 6) In life no house, no home,   | 7) Here might I stay and sing,   |

my Lord on earth might have,  
in death no friendly tomb,  
but what a stranger gave.  
What may I say?  
Heaven was his home;  
but mine the tomb  
wherein he lay.

no story so divine;  
never was love, dear King,  
never was love like thine.  
This is my friend,  
in whose sweet praise  
I all my days  
Could gladly spend.

## **Reading John Ch. 11 vv 1-45**

### **Talk**

I did offer my apologies to Margaret that this was so long a reading. In fact last week's reading about the healing of a blind man was only slightly shorter. John places a great deal of importance in both these texts as carefully placing Jesus at the start of his final journey to Jerusalem. Who was Lazarus. The obvious answer was that he was the brother of Martha and Mary. But surely there is something more? Yes there is! Jesus had received notice of Lazarus' ill health, but chose to stay where he was for a little longer. The house at Bethany was a home from home for Jesus. The three occupants loved Jesus and Jesus loved them. So why wait? Jesus knew that whatever he found at Bethany, he had the power to deal with it. But he said that the sickness had happened for God's glory – and his.

Obviously, it would enable people to see God's glory in action, but there was more to it. Time and time again in John's gospel, Jesus links his glory to the cross that awaited him in Jerusalem, In John 7:39, John says that the Spirit had not yet come because Jesus was not yet glorified, that is he had not yet died on the cross. Yet again in John 12:23 when the Greeks came to him, Jesus said that the time had come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And it was of his cross he spoke, for he went straight on to speak of the grain of wheat which must fall into the ground and die. Finally, John says in 12:16, that the disciples remembered these things after Jesus had been glorified – that is after he had been crucified and risen again. In this gospel it is clear that Jesus regarded the cross both as his supreme glory and the way to glory. So when he said that the cure of Lazarus would glorify him, he was showing that he knows perfectly well that to go to Bethany and to cure Lazarus was to take a step which would end in the cross -as indeed it did. With open eyes, Jesus accepted the cross to help his friend. He knew the cost of helping, and was well prepared to pay it.

What does this mean for us? A great deal I think. When some trial or affliction comes upon us as it did for the psalmist in Psalm 130, especially if it is as a direct result of remaining faithful to our Lord and Saviour, it would make all the difference in the world if we saw that the cross we have to bear is not only our glory, but also the way to greater glory still. So many people who have gone before us have accepted just that, for example Gladys Aylward who was so determined to get to China, that

after rejection from a missionary society, that she saved hard and eventually fulfilled the task that God called her to do. For Jesus there was no other way to glory than through the cross; and so it must continue for all those who follow him, ourselves included.

### **Hymn MP 457 (R&S 141)**

1) Make way, make way,  
For Christ the King -  
In splendour arrives  
Fling wide the gates  
And welcome him into your lives  
*Make way, make way,  
For the King of Kings;  
make way, make way,  
and let his kingdom in.*

2) He comes the broken hearts to heal  
the prisoners to free,  
the deaf shall hear,  
the lame shall dance,  
the blind shall see.  
*Make way, make way etc.*

3) And those who mourn  
with heavy hearts,  
who weep and sigh,  
with laughter, joy and royal crown  
He'll beautify.  
*Make way, make way etc.*

4) We call you now to worship Him  
as Lord of all,  
to have no gods before Him,  
their thrones must fall!  
*Make way, make way etc.*

### **Prayer of Intercession**

Creator God, you are our loving shepherd and know us better than we know ourselves, but we come before you knowing that through your Son, Jesus Christ, you hear our prayers. We remember those who mourn the loss of a loved one and those who are ill or awaiting test results especially those in this congregation (read names). We ask your blessing on them and also those who cannot be with us this morning. We remember those who are finding it difficult to feed their families or pay their bills, may your Holy Spirit strengthen and sustain them. We remember those who are caught up in conflict or who have had to leave their homes because of war, famine or natural disaster, may your Son Jesus Christ walk beside them. We pray for those who are suffering at the hands of injustice, may we be guided to support them. We pray for our leaders and our government, not only in England, but also in Scotland, Wales and northern Ireland, asking that they act in the best interest of the people rather than in the best interests of their party<sup>3</sup>. Heavenly Father we bring all these our prayers to you, through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord and Saviour.  
AMEN

### **Hymn MP 1346 (R&S 549)**

1) 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.*

2) 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 etc.*

3) 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 to go,  
*And it's from the old etc.*

4) 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 etc.*

5) 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 etc,*

Our service now is ended. Go out from here strengthened by the Holy Spirit,  
strengthened in the knowledge that Jesus Christ lights up your way and  
strengthened in the knowledge that your Heavenly Father loves you so that you can  
be God's face in the community.

### **Hymn MP 460**

May God's blessing surround you each day  
As you trust him and walk in his way,  
May his presence within  
Guard and keep you from sin,  
Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.

