

Call to worship

We come together this morning, as it says in Ephesians chapter 2, as fellow citizens, as members of God's household, built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Himself as the Cornerstone. So in that faith we sing our first hymn.

Hymn STF 186 Tell out my soul <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srkfvhANW7Y>

- 1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord !
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice ;
tender to me the promise of his word ;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.
- 2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name !
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done ;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same ;
his holy name — the Lord, the Mighty One.
- 3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might !
Powers and dominions lay their glory by ;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.
- 4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word !
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore !

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926)
Based on the *Magnificat*

Prayers

Lord God, You stretch out the skies like a tent. In the teeming galaxies we glimpse your longing to create beauty. The air of your eternity seeps through the universe and suns, moons, stars and planets inhabit your creation. Your everlasting glory dips into time and we see nature resplendent. Your Spirit composes the songs of the birds; your creation is a million wondrous miracles.

We see you in the Spring with her colour, warmth, and scent: season of budding, rebirth, The broken, cold, and stagnant earth awakes with miracles of birth and promise.

We see you in the Summer flowers of a thousand colours, their beauty and their brightness - each one more lovely than humans could design.

We see you in the Autumn, Harvester God, gathered in grain and crops, autumn light shining on falling leaves and bright berries, migrating birds wing across the sky. The year crowned with your goodness.

We see you in the Winter in the simplicity of the bare earth, in the strength of the fierce elements, in the beauty of cold-clad land.

Lord God,

For the Person you sent to restore us when we fell away from the goodness of your creation, we give you thanks, O God: in Jesus we your image, hear your purposes and receive your salvation. For harmony restored through your Spirit moving upon the turbulent waters of our lives and for

the fruit brought forth in our lives by that indwelling, we give you thanks, O God. For the honour you give us as part of your creation. For setting each of us, like the stars upon their courses, within the orbit of your love, we give you thanks, O God.

This morning we ask of you just one more miracle: beautify our souls. May each one of us have a fresh anointing of your Holy Spirit and know that we are in the presence of the Living God. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

We gather up all our prayers, in the words that Jesus taught us:

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 and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen

All Age Talk

(Holding up hair brush and comb) I wonder what you would say if I told you that I hadn't brushed or combed my hair for the last five years?

(Holding up toothbrush) I wonder what you would say if I told you I haven't brushed my teeth since last Christmas?

(Holding up soap) I wonder what you would say if I told you that I hadn't washed since Easter?

(Holding up T-shirt) I wonder what you say if I told that I intend to wear this T-shirt with the label aged 10?

I can guess at some of your responses! You need to keep brushing and washing to be healthy and fit to live in the world. You can't squeeze yourself into clothes which were okay for years ago and don't fit now.

It is just like that with us and God. We need every day to be in the best shape we can before him: we do that by keeping on praying, but keeping on joining in with church services and activities, we do that by keeping on doing what we can to follow Jesus and saying sorry and starting again when we go wrong.

And what about the T-shirt? Sometimes things which were okay in the past aren't okay now. So, for example, we are all aware of climate change and plastic pollution and because we are now aware of that we are changing the habits of the past and doing better to protect and preserve God's Creation. All of can do that in our day to day lives individually and as a church becoming more eco-aware and active.

Prayer

Thank you God that each day we can start new in joining with you to be the people you want us to be. Thank you for helping us to be more and more like Jesus. Help us to look after your world. Bless us as we continue to learn what it means to live to your glory and praise. Amen.

Prayer and Hymn chosen by young people

Today in Junior Church we will be looking at Psalm 8 and how we are responsible for looking after this world which God created.

Let us pray....Amazing God,
 You have created the heavens and the earth.
 You put the stars in the sky, and set the sun and moon in place.
 You created everything we see.
 Everything you have made is wonderful.
 Help us to care for this world you have made.
 We praise you for your glorious creation, and thank you for the place you have given us in it.
 Amen.

We will now sing "**My God is so Big**", please join in the actions
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLV1e4qGtXg>

*My God is so big,
 so strong and so mighty,
 there's nothing that he can not do.
 My God is so big,
 so strong and so mighty,
 there's nothing that he can not do.*

The rivers are his.
 The mountains are his.
 The stars are his handiwork too.
*My God is so big,
 so strong and so mighty,
 there's nothing that he can not do.*

Ruth Hamrs Calkin

Bible Reading Ezekiel chapter 8 verses 1-3a, 7-10, 14-16

¹ Then, late in August of the sixth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, as I was talking with the elders of Judah in my home, the power of the Lord God fell upon me. ² I saw what appeared to be a Man; from his waist down, he was made of fire; from his waist up, he was all amber-coloured brightness. ³ He put out what seemed to be a hand and took me by the hair. And the Spirit lifted me up into the sky and seemed to transport me to Jerusalem. ⁷ Then he brought me to the door of the Temple court, where I could see an opening in the wall.

⁸ "Now dig into the wall," he said. I did and uncovered a door to a hidden room.

⁹ "Go in," he said, "and see the wickedness going on in there!"

¹⁰ So I went in. The walls were covered with pictures of all kinds of snakes, lizards, and hideous creatures, besides all the various idols worshipped by the people of Israel. ¹¹ Seventy elders of Israel were standing there worshipping.

¹⁴ He brought me to the north gate of the Temple, and there sat women weeping for Tammuz, their god.

¹⁵ “Have you seen this?” he asked. “But I will show you greater evils than these!”

¹⁶ Then he brought me into the inner court of the Temple, and there at the door, between the porch and the bronze altar, were about twenty-five men standing with their backs to the Temple of the Lord, facing east, worshipping the sun!

Bible Reading Ezekiel chapter 12 verses 1, 2-6a.

¹ Again, a message came to me from the Lord:

² “Son of dust,” he said, “you live among rebels who could know the truth if they wanted to, but they don’t want to; they could hear me if they would listen, but they won’t, ³ for they are rebels. So now put on a demonstration to show them what being exiled will be like. Pack whatever you can carry on your back and leave your home—go somewhere else. Go in the daylight so they can see, for perhaps even yet they will consider what this means, even though they are such rebels.

⁴ Bring your baggage outside your house during the daylight so they can watch. Then leave the house at night, just as captives do when they begin their long march to distant lands. ⁵ Dig a tunnel through the city wall while they are observing and carry your possessions out through the hole.

⁶ As they watch, lift your pack to your shoulders and walk away into the night.

Bible Reading Mark 12 verses 41-44

⁴¹ Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and began watching how the people were putting money into the offering box. Many rich people were putting in a lot. ⁴² Then a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, worth less than a penny. ⁴³ Calling His disciples over, He said to them, “Amen, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those contributing to the box! ⁴⁴ For they all put in from their surplus; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything she had, her whole living.”

Sermon

Anniversaries can be happy and blessed occasions. Nigel and I are already looking forward to our Golden Wedding Anniversary next year and have a few ideas for the celebration. However, anniversaries can also be a time of looking back with grief and sadness and sometimes with anger. This week is the anniversary of the death of the Uganda Anglican Archbishop Janani Luwumand who was killed by Idi Amin’s orders following his repeated speaking out against the atrocities of that regime.

“Janani was very committed to his prophetic mission as a spiritual and religious leader – to defend the people, to expose evil, to call for justice and human rights. In those most trying times, he chose the path of speaking the truth to power.”
Ambassador Olara Otunnu, president Uganda People’s Congress.

Throughout the Old Testament we see the prophets speaking out against injustice and wrong doing. We have heard this morning two snippets of stories from Ezekiel.

In Ezekiel chapter 8, God gives Ezekiel a vision. Ezekiel he is taken to the temple in Jerusalem. But he doesn’t enter through the front: he has to dig through a wall to both see and expose the wrongdoing. In this story, he sees

- 1) various unclean animals and idols in dark chambers which we can translate to our age to the worship of power and control which influences the economic life of the world and happens in ‘dark chambers’, that is behind closed doors;
- 2) he sees women weeping for the god Tammuz, a Babylonian God associated with extreme sexual practices so abhorrent that the cult was banned by Constantine the Great in the 4th Century AD, which we can translate to our age where all too often we hear about sexual abuse, pornography, the grooming of minors and the sexual slave trade where there is forced prostitution;

- 3) men worshipping the sun, having their back to the temple, which we can translate to our age as turning their backs on the basic commandments of decent living. Also widen out to turning our backs to the Creator God and not caring as we should for his Creation as climate change, species loss and plastic pollution are the features of our time.

In Ezekiel chapter 12, we again see Ezekiel breaking through a wall, this time carrying baggage.

In Ezekiel the carrying of baggage was the mark of the exile- they are leaving the place they call home for a place where they will be captive. There is a picture by the German artist Sieger Koder of that event. He puts into one picture Ezekiel also carrying a rod.

In Hebrew there are two words for rod: the first is "shebet" which means authority, and the second is "matteh", which means correction.

So the prophet is breaking through the wall to expose those things which are destroying the life of the nation, and in doing so is prepared to go into a place of exile where he will be captive to whatever lies in wait for him- but does it with authority and does it so that the wrong is corrected.

It may seem strange to marry up these Ezekiel visions with the story of the Widows Mite. But in fact, is entirely in keeping. When we hear that story of the widow we are usually focused on the money aspect. But the end of the little story puts that money into a wider context. She **put in everything she had, her whole living.**

So, this is the question this morning. Are we prepared to put in our whole living – what we say, what we do, what we speak up for? For some like the Ugandan Archbishop it was not just exile but cost him his life.

She **put in everything she had, her whole living.**

- We as a circuit and as individual churches within our circuit have been engaged in putting together our MAPS, Mission Action Plans. Yours has much in it which is aimed at correcting, at speaking out in practical actions to address the wrongs of our age.
- Such as the Aim for Eco Church Bronze award; include as many folk in the congregation as possible & also young people in youth organisations & groups. Awareness of the need to care for God's creation will be increased. This will lead to practical steps being taken to combat climate change, both by individuals and as a church family. Involvement of many folk will lead to a sense of 'belonging'.
- Such as Build a community for the Community – Rainbow Cafe & 'Connection Point', by consolidating & developing their work.
- Such as Pick up the huge opportunities for engagement with our building users, especially young people.

Climate issues, loneliness, the need for connection, and the need for followers of Jesus to be, and I quote again from your MAP

- exposed to different & varied acts of Worship, will become more responsive and Spirit-filled Christians. Church family will be encouraged & their faith strengthened.

She **put in everything she had, her whole living.**

That is the message for this morning's address: are we in the tradition of the prophets of every age (we have mentioned Ezekiel and the Ugandan archbishop this morning) in putting our whole selves into what we say and what we do AND WHO WE ARE, so that God's Kingdom will be brought about where we are? Our MAPS are our starting places and we can be assured that our wonderful God will lead us as he has led the prophets of every age to be living witnesses, inspiration examples and righters of wrongs. We hear the call of the Kingdom. Let us put our whole selves into it. Those whom he calls, he equips. And we have written on our hearts and on our wills BEST OF ALL, GOD IS WITH US.

Prayer

Merciful God,
 You asked for our hands,
 that you might use them for your purpose.
 Forgive us, if we gave them for a moment, then withdrew them,
 for the work was hard.
 You asked for our mouths
 to speak out against injustice.
 Forgive us if we gave you a whisper that we might not be accused.
 You asked for our eyes
 to see the pain of poverty.
 Forgive us if we closed them, for we did not want to see.
 You asked for our lives,
 that you might work through us.
 Forgive us, if we gave a small part, that we might not get too involved.
 Lord, forgive our calculated efforts to serve you—
 only when it is convenient for us to do so,
 only in those places where it is safe to do so,
 and only with those who make it easy to do so.

Thank you that you stretch out nail scarred hands to offer us forgiveness. As we gratefully accept that renew us. May we hear and follow the call of your Kingdom. Amen.

(Adapted from The Worship Source Book)

Hymn StF 407 Hear the call of the kingdom <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RO0jwhbFLvQ>

- 1 Hear the call of the kingdom,
 lift your eyes to the King ;
 let his song rise within you
 as a fragrant offering
 of how God, rich in mercy,
 came in Christ to redeem
 all who trust in his unfailing grace.
- 2 Hear the call of the kingdom
 to be children of light
 with the mercy of heaven,
 the humility of Christ ;
 walking justly before him,
 loving all that is right,
 that the life of Christ may shine through us.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.
 We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
 filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
 salvation in Jesus' name.*

- 3 Hear the call of the kingdom
 to reach out to the lost
 with the Father's compassion
 in the wonder of the cross,
 bringing peace and forgiveness,
 and a hope yet to come :
 let the nations put their trust in him.

King of heaven, we will answer the call ...

Prayers of intercession

Lord God, we thank you that through all of human history your desire to abide with us and create places of meeting with us has never wavered. You plant us like a green olive tree, secure and whole, rooted in the rich soil of your deep love, so that none can sever and no power on earth separate us from your steadfast love which we see so completely expressed in the Passion of Jesus.

So with confidence we bring our prayers before you.

Lord God, we pray for all your church. May we proclaim your word boldly, live our lives sacrificially, and worship faithfully. Grant to all your people holiness of spirit, joy in your service and constancy in prayer. That your will may be done and to the glory of your name.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, we pray for those who bear heavy responsibilities of government and leadership. Give to them all the wisdom to know what is right and the strength and integrity of purpose to do it. We pray for justice, relief from war, relief from poverty and for peace in all places.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, we pray for those lives are scarred by difficulty and disfigured by pain. We intercede for those who need to hear words of comfort, those who need to be assured they are held in your embrace, those who are sick in mind, body or spirit.

By your grace, swaddle them in garments of peace and strength so that they are able to face today and all the tomorrows to come.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, we hold before you those who grieve the death of a loved one. In their loss and sorrow, be their refuge and their strength and give them also the assurance of the abundant life of heaven where your goodness and your mercy reign forever.

Lord God, thank you for the hope you have set before us that one day we will see you face to face and worship you in the New Jerusalem with your angels and with the people of every generation and every nation who cry out in praise to you.

Amen

Hymn StF 338 There is a Redeemer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdDhy-p8xNM>

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| <p>1 There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One.
<i>Thank you, O my Father,
for giving us your Son,
and leaving your Spirit
till the work on earth is done.</i></p> | <p>2 Jesus my Redeemer,
name above all names,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain.</p> <p>3 When I stand in glory
I will see his face,
and there I'll serve my King for ever
in that holy place.</p> |
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vv. 1-2 Melody Green (b.1946)

v. 3 Keith Green (1953-1982)

Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

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