

**Call to Worship: 2 Corinthians 5:15**

Jesus died for all, so that those who live should cease to live for themselves.

**HYMN StF 663 I the Lord of sea and sky**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PS2Z41nN6ew>

1 I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
my hand will save.  
I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.  
Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord,  
if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.*

2 I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain;  
I have wept for love of them.  
They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my word to them.  
Whom shall I send?

3 I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts are satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send?

Daniel L. Schutte (b.1947)

**Prayers of Approach**

O God, in these days, now winter is dead and spring has come, as light floods the grey spaces and colour emerges, we pause and look anew at our familiar surroundings. Purple and bronze leaf-buds that wait on the branches, the bank of daffodils in the corner of the park, the sun bright on our sleeve, the blackbirds, finches and robins that are more restless and more vocal every morning. We wake to sun, and we go home after work in the remains of bright day.

Lord, we thank you for your world, for its energy, its brilliance and its fountain of life. We bless you for our creation, preservation and for all the blessings which we inherit. We thank you for our health, for the life we have together, for our family and friends; for the peace we enjoy, and for the inner peace which you bring. We bless you for the love you have taught us, for the love we have found, and for all the opportunities there are to multiply kindness by kindness.

We thank you for the way you guide us, when we allow you into our hearts. Forgive us, we pray, for the times when we have rejected that help, gone our own way, when we wanted to decide, when we did not even think of you. Forgive us for being headstrong, impatient, for being blind to the light which you throw on every situation. Forgive us when we do not care, when we do not notice the misery of others, when we are dismissive of their doubts and fears, when we just think that people could do better.

Fill our hearts and minds, O God, and make us instruments of your grace, that following in all things that pattern set by Jesus, we may come closer to you, and be your better servants.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## Junior Church

**The Thwaite Debate:** Thwaite considers cheese & rescue [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QH\\_rgbt5yA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QH_rgbt5yA)

James Allen introduces the topic for the day and leads us in prayer

## Junior Church Hymn: Who put the colours in the rainbow?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPQzzdvwKs8>

Who put the colours in the rainbow?  
Who put the salt into the sea?  
Who put the cold in the snowflake?  
Who made you and me?  
Who put the hump upon the camel?  
Who put the neck on the giraffe?  
Who put the tail upon the monkey?  
Who made hyenas laugh?  
Who made whales and snails and quails?  
Who made hogs and dogs and frogs?  
Who made bats and rats and cats?  
Who made everything?  
  
Who put the gold into the sunshine?  
Who put the sparkle in the stars?  
Who put the silver in the moonlight?  
Who made Earth and Mars?  
Who put the scent into the roses?  
Who taught the honey bee to dance?  
Who put the tree inside the acorn?  
It surely can't be chance!  
Who made seas and leaves and trees?  
Who made snow and winds that blow?  
Who made streams and rivers flow?  
God made all of these!

Junior Church leaves us for their own activities and takes a blessing with them.

## Reading Psalm 104

BOTH: <sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, my soul.

READER 1: LORD my God, you are very great;  
you are clothed with splendour and majesty.

<sup>2</sup> The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment;  
he stretches out the heavens like a tent

<sup>3</sup> and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.  
He makes the clouds his chariot  
and rides on the wings of the wind.

<sup>4</sup> He makes winds his messengers,  
flames of fire his servants.

- <sup>5</sup> He set the earth on its foundations;  
it can never be moved.
- <sup>6</sup> You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment;  
the waters stood above the mountains.
- <sup>7</sup> But at your rebuke the waters fled,  
at the sound of your thunder they took to flight;
- <sup>8</sup> they flowed over the mountains,  
they went down into the valleys,  
to the place you assigned for them.
- <sup>9</sup> You set a boundary they cannot cross;  
never again will they cover the earth.

READER 2: He makes springs pour water into the ravines;  
it flows between the mountains.

<sup>11</sup> They give water to all the beasts of the field;  
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

<sup>12</sup> The birds of the sky nest by the waters;  
they sing among the branches.

<sup>13</sup> He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;  
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

<sup>14</sup> He makes grass grow for the cattle,  
and plants for people to cultivate—  
bringing forth food from the earth:

<sup>15</sup> wine that gladdens human hearts,  
oil to make their faces shine,  
and bread that sustains their hearts.

<sup>16</sup> The trees of the LORD are well watered,  
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

<sup>17</sup> There the birds make their nests;  
the stork has its home in the junipers.

<sup>18</sup> The high mountains belong to the wild goats;  
the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.

<sup>19</sup> He made the moon to mark the seasons,  
and the sun knows when to go down.

<sup>20</sup> You bring darkness, it becomes night,  
and all the beasts of the forest prowl.

<sup>21</sup> The lions roar for their prey  
and seek their food from God.

<sup>22</sup> The sun rises, and they steal away;  
they return and lie down in their dens.

<sup>23</sup> Then people go out to their work,  
to their labour until evening.

READER 1 How many are your works, LORD!  
In wisdom you made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

<sup>25</sup> There is the sea, vast and spacious,  
teeming with creatures beyond number—  
living things both large and small.

<sup>26</sup> There the ships go to and fro,  
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

- <sup>27</sup> All creatures look to you  
to give them their food at the proper time.
- <sup>28</sup> When you give it to them,  
they gather it up;  
when you open your hand,  
they are satisfied with good things.
- <sup>29</sup> When you hide your face,  
they are terrified;  
when you take away their breath,  
they die and return to the dust.
- <sup>30</sup> When you send your Spirit,  
they are created,  
and you renew the face of the ground.
- <sup>31</sup> May the glory of the LORD endure forever;  
may the LORD rejoice in his works—
- <sup>32</sup> he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,  
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.
- <sup>33</sup> I will sing to the LORD all my life;  
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
- <sup>34</sup> May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
as I rejoice in the LORD.
- <sup>35</sup> But may sinners vanish from the earth  
and the wicked be no more.

BOTH: Praise the LORD, my soul.  
Praise the LORD.

### Reading John 10:4-18

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

### HYMN StF 668 Teach me, my God and King <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGzxLDpRjg0>

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| <p>1. Teach me, my God and King,<br/>in all things thee to see,<br/>and what I do in anything<br/>to do it as for thee.</p> <p>2. A man that looks on glass,<br/>on it may stay his eye;<br/>or if he pleaseth, through it pass,<br/>and then the heaven espy.</p> <p>3. All may of thee partake;<br/>nothing can be so mean,<br/>which with this tincture, "for thy sake,"<br/>will not grow bright and clean.</p> | <p>4. A servant with this clause<br/>makes drudgery divine:<br/>who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,<br/>makes that and the action fine.</p> <p>5. This is the famous stone<br/>that turneth all to gold;<br/>for that which God doth touch and own<br/>cannot for less be told.</p> |
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George Herbert (1593–1633)

## Sermon

In the book of Deuteronomy, at Chapter 6 verse 5, we read that we should love God with all our heart and soul and strength; with our whole being.

I want to use this command as a way into what Ruth Valerio has to say in Chapter Five of our Lent book, 'Saying 'yes' to God'. The chapter, headed 'let the waters teem with living creatures and let birds fly', is a wide-ranging survey of forms of life and how they are mentioned in the Bible. I'm not going to summarize it here, because it is itself a sort of summary, and so any abbreviated version would tend to be superficial. Instead, I am going to look with you at what lessons there are for us in God's creation, and how his love for the world translates into duties for us in loving and maintaining his creation.

Before we begin, we need to sort out the word 'love' as we have it in our English translation of the Bible. If you remember that wonderful passage in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians<sup>1</sup>, Paul says that we should have faith, hope and love, and that the greatest of these is love; without it we are a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, sound without substance.

In the original Greek, there are three words for love, which identify different aspects: sexual love, which is *eros*; affectionate regard, which is *philia*; and a third sort called *agape*, which involves willing the good of another person<sup>2</sup>. It is this third sort of love which is mentioned in texts like "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son..."<sup>3</sup> and the much earlier line from Deuteronomy that I referred to, "love God with all your heart and soul and strength..."

This sort of love is not particularly an emotional or sentimental thing. It is about a personal commitment which is not selfish, but favours the wellbeing of something or someone outside ourselves or our personal sphere (which includes our friends and relations). God is committed to the wellbeing of the world, in the case of the quote from John; in the case of the quote from Deuteronomy, it is not about sentimental feelings about God, but about a commitment to God, which must include all the things that God favours. Hence, in Judaism, the love of the Law, which defines God's wishes for humanity. And in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, the requirement for a meaningful life, the thing that keeps us from being superficial or hollow - like a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal - is a commitment to the good of others.

I was thinking about the big shift in emphasis I had found, and I confess that I was feeling a loss at the removal of emotion from the meaning. I was looking for some balance to it. The phrase from Jesus's baptism<sup>4</sup> came to mind: "This is my beloved son, in whom I take delight". I looked it up in Greek and found the same word, *agape*. This changes the sense: "this is my son to whose wellbeing I am committed. In him I found good". It's therefore a statement about

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<sup>1</sup> 1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

<sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

<sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:1-3 [NIV]

<sup>2</sup> This definition comes from St Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>3</sup> John 3:16

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 3:17

sponsorship and approval more than affection. If the intention had been to convey a sense of family affection, a different word – *philia* – would have been used.

Let us put these things together. God is committed to the world; we are committed to God and to God's causes; the nature of this commitment is not selfish or sentimental but is a clear ethical bias in favour of God's world and all the souls within it, now and in the future.

This really makes it easy for us to think in terms of protecting God's creation as a religious duty. We can do it wholesale; we no longer have to trawl the scriptures search for references to species so that we can somehow assemble them into a portfolio of God's created stuff. We don't have to count them all up and reference them. Instead, if we find them in the world, we can say categorically that (a) they belong to God, and (b) that it is our duty to look after them. Further, it is our job to do so even if it costs us, because we are called to sacrifice to God, and the cost of the sacrifice to us translates into benefits for others. This is what we pay for. Similarly, Jesus forgave those who condemned and killed him, taking the whole cost on himself. He did so because of his love – his *agape* – for the wellbeing of us all.

Jeremiah says that our covenant with God is to be written on the heart, because God's law will be established within us<sup>5</sup>. As God cares for the world and all that lives within it, we too are called to this duty of care.

I was a bit shocked by the changes of meaning that I found. However, let us go back to that first chapter of Genesis, and remember how God at various stages surveyed his handiwork of creation and pronounced it “good, good, good and very good”. It is as though God was struck by wonder when he contemplated what he had made. When we contemplate the natural world in all its intricacy, variety and splendour, we too are struck by wonder, as was described in Psalm 104, which we heard earlier. So let us hold these two things in balance: the call to seek the good of God's world, and the wonder that delights and motivates us in so doing. And by doing so, let us love God with our whole heart.

Grant me, O lord, to know what is worth knowing,  
To love what is worth loving,  
To praise what delights you most,  
To value what is precious to you,  
And to reject whatever is evil in your eyes.  
Give me true discernment,  
So that I may judge rightly between things that differ.  
Above all, may I search out and do  
What is pleasing to you;  
Through Jesus Christ my Lord.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 31:31:33

<sup>6</sup> Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471)

**HYMN StF 611 Brother, sister let me serve you** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqr762YcQCK>

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| <p>1 Brother, sister, let me serve you,<br/>let me be as Christ to you ;<br/>pray that I may have the grace<br/>to let you be my servant too.</p> <p>2 We are pilgrims on a journey,<br/>and companions on the road ;<br/>we are here to help each other<br/>walk the mile and bear the load.</p> <p>3 I will hold the Christ-light for you<br/>in the night-time of your fear ;<br/>I will hold my hand out to you,<br/>speak the peace you long to hear.</p> | <p>4 I will weep when you are weeping ;<br/>when you laugh I'll laugh with you ;<br/>I will share your joy and sorrow<br/>till we've seen this journey through.</p> <p>5 When we sing to God in heaven<br/>we shall find such harmony,<br/>born of all we've known together<br/>of Christ's love and agony.</p> <p>6 Brother, sister, let me serve you,<br/>let me be as Christ to you ;<br/>pray that I may have the grace<br/>to let you be my servant too.</p> |
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Richard A. M. Gillard (b.1953)

**Prayers for Others**

As the year slowly climbs out of darkness we thank you for the things it brings: the tawny and fiery colours of bracken and bush; the purple in the trees; for misty mornings; for the low sun that throws golden light up under arches; the black river at twilight, and the magpie water lying in the fields; the daylight coming ever so slightly earlier, and the new buds which, when we look, we see everywhere.

If only we were awake, awake in our hearts, O God, to see how fantastic and beautiful and full of artistry is all the cycle of being; how the spring of new life comes out of the decline of age; how new birth is contingent on the dying of the old light. Teach us, who like things to remain the same, who resent our own aging, to understand how we are part of this world, and its cycle of growth and decline, until we come into your kingdom. The facts we know, but it is hard for us to accept the process. Let us be happy in our lease of life on earth, content with its limits, accepting of its finite cycle, confident that as you know us, we will know you, and that in knowing you we will find eternal life. For we are drawn to you, the magnetism is there; sometimes, we feel your presence within us like the sun in the morning, but for the moment we cannot see you. Give us the strength and the grace to be inspired by your creation, thankful for what we have, and the faith to accept that one day, we shall know you better.

And now we turn our thoughts and our prayers to all those who look for direction, and cannot find it. For those who rely on their own strength, rejecting all help, and who despair; for those who need a leader and long for leadership, who would gladly help themselves and others on the way if they knew where they were going. We bring you this prayer O God, knowing that we are sometimes in this position ourselves, and know the fear in it, the frustration, and the waste involved in floundering.

And we pray also for those who are too confident, too convinced of their own certainties, who reject all disagreement, who set themselves up to defend their own position at all costs; we pray for all involved in warring factions, political in-fighting, and border disputes, raids and guerrilla action; for bitter vendettas both outward and inward.

Bring your peace, we pray, on all who suffer.

And now we remember people known to us who stand in need of your help today. [Please state their names when invited to do so].

Mary Varndell  
Jo McElveen  
Beryl Langton

Rosemary Woodman  
Janet Morris  
Margery Sargent

Douglas Rippon

Dear God, help them from their suffering. Let them understand and accept that in your will, is their peace, and show them your love, that they may reflect it on others.

And we pray also for all who have reflected your love on us, and particularly for those who are no longer with us. O God, who holds us all in the palm of his hand, hold them in your peace, who are beyond all torment, whose sufferings are at an end, who rest in your presence.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord,  
*Amen*

### HYMN StF 83 Praise my soul

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzRk2T0I8js>

<p>1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven ; to his feet thy tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, who like thee his praise should sing ? Praise him ! Praise him ! Praise the everlasting King !</p> <p>2 Praise him for his grace and favour to his people in distress ; praise him, still the same for ever, slow to chide, and swift to bless. Praise him ! Praise him ! Glorious in his faithfulness.</p>	<p>3 Father-like, he tends and spares us ; well our feeble frame he knows ; in his hands he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes. Praise him ! Praise him ! Widely as his mercy flows.</p> <p>4 Angels in the height, adore him ; ye behold him face to face ; sun and moon, bow down before him, dwellers all in time and space. Praise him ! Praise him ! Praise with us the God of grace !</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Henry Francis Lyte (1793–1847)</p>
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### Blessing

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to all people, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life eternal.

And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and always. *Amen*.