

## Call to Worship Psalm 19:1-6

- <sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
<sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.  
<sup>4</sup> Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.

- In the heavens God has pitched a tent for  
the sun.  
<sup>5</sup> It is like a bridegroom coming out of his  
chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.  
<sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

## Hymn StF 99 All creatures of our God and King <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqJHw1FU-MY>

- 1 All creatures of our God and King,  
lift up your voice and with us sing,  
alleluia, alleluia!  
O burning sun with golden beam,  
and silver moon with softer gleam:  
*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*
- 2 O rushing wind that is so strong,  
and clouds that sail in heaven along,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
O rising morn, in praise rejoice,  
and lights of evening, find a voice:
- 3 O flowing water, pure and clear,  
make music for your Lord to hear,  
sing 'Praise him, alleluia!'  
O fire, so masterful and bright,  
giving to all both warmth and light:
- 4 Dear mother earth, who day by day  
unfolds rich blessings on our way,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
The flowers and fruits that bloom and grow,  
let them his glory also show:
- 5 And all who are of tender heart  
forgiving others, take your part,  
sing, 'Praise him, alleluia!'  
All who long pain and sorrow bear,  
praise God, and on him cast your care:
- 6 And now, most kind and gentle death,  
waiting to hush our fading breath,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
You homeward lead the child of God,  
and Christ the Lord the way has trod:
- 7 Let all things their creator bless,  
and worship him in humbleness,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,  
and praise the Spirit, Three in One:

St Francis of Assisi  
(1182-1226)

## The Countrey Parson *George Herbert 1593-1633*

The Countrey Parson upon the afternoons in the week-days, takes occasion sometimes to visite in person, now one quarter of his Parish, now another. For there he shall find his flock most naturally as they are, wallowing in the midst of their affairs: whereas on Sundays it is easie for them to compose themselves to order, which they put on as their holy-day cloathes, and come to Church in frame, but commonly the next day put off both. When he comes to any house, first he blesseth it, and then as hee finds the persons of the house employed, so he formes his discourse.

...But then he admonisheth them of two things; first, that they dive not too deep into worldly affairs, plunging themselves over head and eares into carking, and caring; but that they so labour, as neither to labour anxiously, nor distrustfully, nor profanely. Then they labour anxiously, when they overdo it, to the loss of their quiet, and health: then distrustfully, when they doubt Gods providence, thinking that their own labour is the cause of their thriving, as if it were in their own hands to thrive, or not to thrive.

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### Prayers of Approach and Confession *By Frank Topping*

Dear Lord, keep us from anxiety, from worrying about our mistakes and faults, as though we were condemned in your sight without appeal. Show us that if we confess our faults and do our best, that you will forgive us and help us on our way. Keep us too from the mistaken belief that we can do everything ourselves, or that we are the authors of our own success.

Lord of life, why do I anticipate the worst when time and time again the worst never happens? Even when it does, life goes on, and every day comes to an end. Lord, help me to overcome my fears in this brief moment of reflection. Calm my mind, help me to relax. Let your comforting Spirit enter into me and fill me with peace. *Amen*

### Lord's Prayer:

*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 talks about his favourite vehicle <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJidqjnZJOU>

Today in Zoom Junior Church we will be considering how we can all do small things, which can build to become something bigger. We will hear the story about the feeding of the 5000. How the act of kindness of the small boy, in sharing what little he had, was made into something much bigger by Jesus, who was able to feed everyone. Let us pray....

Dear God, Help us to be your servants in this world. Help us to do little acts of kindness, for our families, friends and neighbours, and for strangers who need our help.

*Amen.*

### HYMN StF 256 **When I needed a neighbour were you there?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SL7ul11zfNo>

1

When I needed a neighbour, were you there,  
were you there?  
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

*And the creed and the colour  
and the name won't matter,  
were you there?*

2

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there,  
were you there?  
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?

3

I was cold, I was naked, were you there,  
were you there?  
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?

4

When I needed a shelter, were you there,  
were you there?  
When I needed a shelter, were you there?

5

When I needed a healer, were you there,  
were you there?  
When I needed a healer, were you there?

6

Wherever you travel I'll be there,  
I'll be there,  
wherever you travel I'll be there.

*And the creed and the colour  
and the name won't matter,  
I'll be there.*

**Reading Exodus 17:1-7**

<sup>1</sup> The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, travelling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> So they quarrelled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.”

Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?”

<sup>3</sup> But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?”

<sup>4</sup> Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”

<sup>5</sup> The LORD answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup> I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the LORD saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

**Reading: John 4:5-42**

<sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

<sup>11</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

<sup>16</sup> He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

<sup>17</sup> “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

<sup>19</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

<sup>21</sup> “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

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*Commentary: Jesus is speaking to the Samaritan woman, but is also speaking about the religion of Samaria and its relationship to that of Israel. The two countries had a basically similar religion, but when the Samaritans were in exile in Babylon, they picked up elements of the local religion, which had five gods. The Jews strongly deplored this and would have nothing to do with the Samaritans and their religion. That is why he tells the woman that she has had five husbands and that her marriage is not valid.*

*Jesus and the woman discuss the difficulty of drawing water from the well. This is Jacob's well, and therefore represents the common religious tradition of both the Samaritans and the Jews. The water stands for the holy truth, what men live by. She observes that Jesus has no means of drawing the water from the well, and he replies that although she keeps coming back to the well to assuage his thirst, he can give her 'living water', something which will refresh her for ever.*

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

<sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" <sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." <sup>33</sup> Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

<sup>34</sup> "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. <sup>35</sup> Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. <sup>37</sup> Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."

<sup>39</sup> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. <sup>41</sup> And because of his words many more became believers.

<sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world."

*Commentary: Jesus has spoken about 'water', and now turns to food; he says that his food is to do God's work and to finish his work. He refers to the fields ripe for harvest, and of course means a human crop of people to be garnered for God. This is the crop for eternal life. This persuades everyone; not just the Samaritan woman he met at the well, but many others from the town.*

### **HYMN StF 409 Let us build a house where love can dwell**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPQJ3HXAoHo>

1 Let us build a house where love can dwell  
and all can safely live,  
a place where saints and children tell  
how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,  
rock of faith and vault of grace ;  
here the love of Christ shall end divisions :  
*All are welcome,  
all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.*

2 Let us build a house where prophets speak,  
and words are strong and true,  
where all God's children dare to seek  
to dream God's reign anew.  
Here the cross shall stand as witness  
and as symbol of God's grace ;  
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus :  
*All are welcome,  
all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.*

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- 3 Let us build a house where love is found  
in water, wine and wheat :  
a banquet hall on holy ground  
where peace and justice meet.  
Here the love of God, through Jesus,  
is revealed in time and space ;  
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us :
- 4 Let us build a house where hands will reach  
beyond the wood and stone  
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,  
and live the Word they've known.  
Here the outcast and the stranger  
bear the image of God's face ;  
let us bring an end to fear and danger :
- 5 Let us a build a house where all are named,  
their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed  
as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter,  
prayers of faith and songs of grace,  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter :
- All are welcome,  
all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.*

Marty Haugen (b.1950)

### Sermon

I begin this morning with a quotation from the poet and artist William Blake:

“For everything that lives is holy, life delights in life.”

This Lent, we are following chapter three of the book ‘Saying ‘yes’ to life’, by Ruth Valerio. This chapter has the title, ‘Let the land produce vegetation’. She concentrates on the difficulties that face farmers in these days, particularly in the Third World. It’s as though God’s blessing, which we read about in Genesis 1, is ceasing to be valid. Ruth Valerio puts this down to the loss of a sense of a contract between people and the land, in which there is reciprocity. This reciprocity involves giving back to the land, as well as taking from it. It also means holding natural human greed back, so that nature is not overwhelmed. She talks about the troubles that affect indigenous peoples, including loss of land, and in some cases their slow decline towards extinction; but on the other hand, some people – and some populations – have cornered the best bits for themselves. Broadly speaking, those who have particularly benefitted have also led the way in despoiling not only their own lands, but the lands of all, the whole of the earth by undermining the ecosystem through excessive consumption. Riches are therefore evil in themselves (I refer you back to the parable of the talents, which we discussed recently), and also poisonous to the very ecology that gives and sustains life.

The Biblical truth within all this is that God gave the land. The Earth is his great gift to us all. But the gift only remains real when it is treated properly. If it is abused, it withers away, and misery, suffering and loss of life appear on every side.

Now, so far, what I have described within a religious context is a conventional ecological view. It’s a view which we have been hearing for a long time now from the Green party, from nature experts like David Attenborough, and more recently, and with increasing force and conviction, from the Church.

We can think of the earth as ‘Gaia’, a self-regulating entity, but how do we talk about our relationship to it? The ‘green’ agenda is a very recent thing. For contrast, let us take the example of Bertrand Russell, a scientist and Nobel Laureate of enormous importance, who died half a century ago. He approvingly described man as being in the process of conquering nature. That now seems an extreme view. A more modern, moderate stance on this matter is that of Mary Midgley:

“To speak of duties ...expresses merely that there are suitable and unsuitable ways of behaving in given situations. People have duties as farmers, parents, consumers, forest dwellers, ...etc. As such, it is the business of each not to forget his transitory and dependent position, the rich gifts which he has received, and the tiny part he plays in a vast, irreplaceable and fragile whole.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Midgley, Mary (1983) *Duties Concerning Islands*, p.101, in Benson, (1999) p.20

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Do you see that this links the way people behave to emotions of awe and a religious sense, and may even make it dependent on them. What has up to now been a discussion about one's duties as a citizen suddenly is seen to pivot on awe and wonder. This perspective on the world provokes astonishment<sup>2</sup>. It is in the province of mystical understanding and reverence.

Ruth Valerio draws attention to those words in Genesis, "and God saw that it was good". You could go further. God says it four times, ending "very good". It's as though God himself is beginning to be astonished at what he has achieved. He set up a self-multiplying system, so that one blessing leads to many more. Genesis 1 is a story of God's abundance, which seems to go on and on. Psalm 150 makes this point; it is a source of amazement, and calls for praise, not attempts at control. "Heaven and earth did sing my Creator's praises, and could not make more melody to Adam, than to me"<sup>3</sup>

Psalm 104 celebrates the resilience of creation and says there is no need to be anxious. Indeed, this is the thrust of the whole New Testament; do not be anxious, God has you in his care.

But we are anxious. We are anxious that we are failing God, and failing his world, because we have somehow reversed the cycle of God's abundance and have begun to make the world poorer. It's suddenly clear that this is a genuine scare on a big scale. There have been scares before, of course. There was the scare of starvation, when Joseph was in Egypt. He managed this by cornering the market in corn; there was the very different scare when Israel was in the wilderness, which God through Moses managed, by distributing food which was adequate but not aspirational; that is, it was quite boring and did not keep. You could not corner the market in that. God's abundance transcends the market economy.

The theologian Walter Brueggemann talks about the human tendency to create myths of scarcity<sup>4</sup>. He observes that we are driven by fear, and it is when we are afraid that we behave worst. Think about Pharaoh in his actions against the Israelites. He was looking for scarcity to work to his advantage because he cornered all the resources. The manna in the wilderness shows that God is the ultimate provider, but also that you cannot store up his generosity. Do you see – God is working in a counter human greed and reward not those who are adept at seizing and holding onto resources, but those who do not take more than they need.

Jesus, in the wilderness, tempted by the Devil, was offered opportunities for power and riches. He saw that this was not the path he was called to. Instead, he took a path which led to few material gains and avoided the normal measures of power and success in the world, one of which is to survive intact. In that lies the conundrum which he mentions: If you try to grab everything, you will have nothing; if you give everything to God, you will have eternal life.

Our lives and the lives of everything on this planet depend on us changing our focus and taking this view. Abundance for all, that is, all *including ourselves*, comes out of us not trying to grab it for ourselves. Instead, we should quietly and thoughtfully position ourselves so that God's benefits nourish us where we stand. Those who do that (in the words of Psalm 1) -

"...Flourish like well-watered trees  
Set by a riverside,  
Whose fruit matures, whose leaves remain –  
They prosper and abide."

Let us take trouble to know where God stands, and find our pleasure in the encounter; "for I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Edmund Burke *A Philosophical Enquiry* Part 2, Section 1.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Traherne

<sup>4</sup> Brueggemann, Walter *see end notes*

<sup>5</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Wreck of the Deutschland*.

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### HYMN StF 728 O God, you search me and you know me (Ps 139)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZD7ZTCE1CE>

1. O God, you search me and you know me,  
all my thoughts lie open to your gaze.  
When I walk or lie down you are before me:  
ever the maker and keeper of my days.
2. You know my resting and my rising.  
You discern my purpose from afar,  
and with love everlasting you besiege me:  
in every moment of life or death, you are.
3. Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,  
you have known it's meaning through and through.  
You are with me beyond my understanding:  
God of my present, my past and future too.
4. Although your spirit is upon me,  
still I search for shelter from your light,  
there is nowhere on earth I can escape you:  
even the darkness is radiant in your light.
5. For you have created me and shaped me,  
gave me life within my mother's womb.  
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:  
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Bernadette Farrell

### Communion: Introduction

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the space is thin between them.  
Distance may divide, but Christ's promise unites  
Those bounded by time, and those blessed by eternity.  
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the church above and below is one.  
Peter is here, and Paul, Martha and all the Marys,  
Columba and Francis, Theresa and Luther King;  
The saints from far back, and those who left us not long ago.  
And only sight prevents us from seeing them,  
One with us on the other side.  
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the God who made them is present.  
The Lamb, glorious on the throne, sits beside us;  
The Spirit of God, the Dove, makes her resting place among us.  
God inhales the breath of our prayers and spreads a table for our satisfaction.  
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

We come as we are, because Jesus told us only to have a loving heart, and we remember his invitation and his promise:

"Come", he said, "all ye who travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you peace. Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest."

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger; and he that believes in me shall never thirst. I will not cast out the one that comes to me. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; they shall be satisfied."

We come today in that peace, to inherit that rest.

### Song: Lord of Life (v.1) StF 651

Lord of Life, we come to you  
Lord of all, our Saviour be,  
Come to bless and to heal  
With the light of your love.

## Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you  
**And also with you**

Lift up your hearts  
**We lift them to the Lord**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
**It is right to give thanks and praise**

It is indeed right, it is our duty and our pleasure to give thanks to God for his grace; for his bountiful creation, for the love which has fathered us forth, for his great gift to the world, our Lord Jesus; for his guiding ministry, for his death on the Cross, and for his presence ever with us, alive in the world, we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.

*Amen*

## Breaking

In doing this, we follow Jesus's example and command.

On the night when he was arrested, Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in memory of me. Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, and said, "This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me."

## Sharing

*Please take bread and wine/juice as you are able*

## Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.  
**And also with you**

## Song: Lord of Life vv 1 & 2

Lord of Life, we come to you  
Lord of all, our Saviour be,  
Come to bless and to heal  
With the light of your love.

Through the days of doubt and toil  
In our joy and in our pain,  
Guide our steps in your Way,  
Make us one in your love.

## Peace

On the evening of the first Easter Day, when the disciples were together behind locked doors for fear, Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you!" he said; then he showed them his hands and his side. On seeing the Lord, the disciples were overjoyed. Jesus said again, "Peace be with you".

Joyful in the presence of our risen Lord, let us share, as we are able, signs of peace.

## Prayers for Others

Dear God, we bring you our thanks for many things

For the rising days of spring, for the sun in the morning; for those first tentative signs of new life that peep up in the corners of gardens and parks.

Lord, in this world, where there are such possibilities for joy and for sorrow, we bring before you all who are vulnerable, and who suffer. The lonely, and the isolated; those whose loved ones have gone away, or have died. Those for whom the great love of their life is a thing of the past, kept alive and sanctified in memory, and in your company.

Lord, we pray for justice and for the forgiveness of those who have done wrong, so that all may understand your way, and so that all may work for the peace of the world.

We think of the whole of the world, and its many areas of trouble. We pray for all those in danger, particularly in from Coronavirus, in many parts of the world. We pray for those affected by war and civil strife, in Myanmar, in Yemen and in Afghanistan; for those who are victims of violence, & for those who fear it:

and for those who have come to be possessed by their hatred of their enemies, so it dominates their thinking and makes peaceful change impossible. Give them and their leaders vision to see the truth, and the generosity to acknowledge it.

We think of those whom the news ignores; for those whose suffering is not sudden, or newsworthy, but which goes on, relentlessly.

Farmers whose crops are insufficient, or ruined by weather; fishermen who try in vain to catch enough, when the sea is fished out; those in old industries that are fading away; for those whose once secure job has vanished in bankruptcy, or takeover, in some round of cuts, and who find it hard to get another; for those whose lives just don't go all that well; for everyone who has made a mistake, and continues to pay the price; for the unlikely victims of those impossible dilemmas that muck up lives; for all those in low-wage jobs, with neither interest nor adequate reward;

For those who can never get a job that lasts; those who never have any money; who scrimp and save year in, year out, but are never clear of trouble; for those who do not feel that they are part of society, who drift away from family and friends, until their alienation becomes complete; those who find their only comfort in drink or drugs; those who end up living on the street; those with long-term debilitating diseases, for those who suffer the curse of Aids; and for the many, many unimaginably poor of the third world, whose existence goes unregarded so much of the time.

We bring before you in our minds the sick and the very old. We remember before you those known to us who stand in need of your help today.

To every soul that is distressed, grant mercy, grant relief, grant refreshment, and to all those whom we have loved, who are no longer with us, but rest in your care, give peace.

Almighty God and father of us all, have mercy on this troubled world of ours.

We are a pilgrim people made of clay, captives of our own greed and frailty. And yet, we are the work of your hands, and we bear within us your spirit of life.

Give us, we pray, stronger faith, so that we may take on the unknown, and make sense of it; an unshakable hope, so that we may comfort the despairing, and a love as vast as all the oceans, so that we may hold all mankind in our hearts.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord; *Amen*

**HYMN SoF 780 How deep the Father's love for us** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4brqdi\\_yEx4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4brqdi_yEx4)

1. How deep the Father's love for us  
How vast beyond all measure  
That he should give his only Son  
To make a wretch his treasure.  
How great the pain of searing loss;  
The Father turns his face away,  
As wounds which mar the chosen one  
Bring many souls to glory.

3. I will not boast in anything,  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
His death and resurrection.  
Why should I gain from all of this?  
I cannot give an answer;  
But this I know with all my heart,  
His wounds have paid my ransom.

2. Behold the man upon a cross,  
My sin upon his shoulders;  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
Call out among the scoffers.  
It was my sin that held him there,  
My pardon he accomplished;  
His dying breath has brought me life-  
I know that 'it is finished'.

Stuart Townend

## Blessing

Bless to us, O God, the road that is before us  
Bless to us, O God, the friends who are around us,  
Bless to us, O God, your love which is within us,  
Bless to us, O God, the light that leads us home.  
*Amen*