

October 4 2020 [Year A] Communion, Network Fellowship

Notices

Call to Worship

Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives.
(Ephesians 4:3)

Network Fellowship Section

HYMN STF 328 Jesus shall reign *[tune: Rimington]*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SCE2TZ49M>

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does his successive journeys run ;
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more. | 4 Blessings abound where'er he reigns ;
the prisoner leaps to lose his chains ;
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who are in want are blest. |
| 2 For him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head ;
his name like sweet perfume shall rise
with every morning sacrifice. | 5 Let every creature rise and bring
its grateful honours to our King ;
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen. |
| 3 People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest song ;
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name. | |

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)



Jerusalem 1918. Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9392900>

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Prayers of Approach

Spirit of love and gentleness
Enlighten our hearts
You know our faults
Our failings
Our necessities
The dullness of our understanding
The waywardness of our affections
The perverseness of our will.
When we neglect to practice what we
know
Visit us with your grace
Enlighten our minds
Rectify our desires
Correct our wanderings
So that, guided by your grace
We may be preserved
From making shipwreck of faith
And at length be landed safe
In the haven of eternal rest;

Merciful G, you made us in your image
With a mind to know you
A heart to love you
And a will to serve you
But our knowledge is imperfect
Our love inconstant
Our obedience incomplete
Day by day we fail to grow into your
likeness

Yet you are slow to be angry with your
children
For the sake of Jesus Christ
Your son, our saviour
Do not hold our sins against us
But in your tender mercy, forgive us.

Almighty God
You created the heavens and the earth
And made us in your image
Teach us to discern your hand
In all your works
And to serve you
With reverence and thanksgiving

When we are lost, loving shepherd
Search for us, rescue us
Heal the hurts that life brings
And our self-inflicted wounds
Guide us onwards, calling us by name
Forgiving us when we stray
Lift us up, and bring us safely home.

Almighty and merciful Lord
Grant us pardon
And remission of all our sins
Time for amendment of life
And the grace and
comfort of the Holy Spirit.

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.

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Junior Church

Have you been in a thunderstorm? Do you like it? Thwaite has mixed feelings.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1ky_LtVLgE

HYMN Junior Church - The parts of the body

Readings

Isaiah 5:1-7

I will sing for the one I love
a song about his vineyard:

My loved one had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside.

² He dug it up and cleared it of stones
and planted it with the choicest vines.

He built a watchtower in it
and cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
but it yielded only bad fruit.

³ “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.

⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard
than I have done for it?

When I looked for good grapes,
why did it yield only bad?

⁵ Now I will tell you
what I am going to do to my vineyard:

I will take away its hedge,
and it will be destroyed;

I will break down its wall,
and it will be trampled.

⁶ I will make it a wasteland,
neither pruned nor cultivated,
and briars and thorns will grow there.

I will command the clouds
not to rain on it.”

⁷ The vineyard of the LORD Almighty
is the nation of Israel,

and the people of Judah
are the vines he delighted in.

And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed;
for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Commentary (by Minister)

On being a waiter.

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Philippians 3:3-14

³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Sermon

The great commission¹, which comes right at the end of Matthew's gospel, sets one of the main Christian agendas – to make disciples of all nations - but we ignore it much of the time. At the beginning of this service, we sang the grand hymn by Isaac Watts, *Jesus shall reign where'er the sun*, and we remembered how that seemed to be a fact of the moment to the British soldiers who accepted the surrender of Jerusalem in 1918. For us, a hundred years later, the glory of that moment is tarnished by decades of conflict and the implacable hatred between the state of Israel and its neighbours which makes that whole region dangerously unstable. The peace of the world is at stake. We therefore approach the whole status of Jerusalem and the Holy Land with caution and some humility, I hope. We are also so advanced in interreligious dialogue and ready to see the truth lurking within beliefs which are not our own that we are a lot more reticent about religious belief than those soldiers and the whole public of a hundred years ago were.

So, what are we to make of the idea in the hymn that Jesus's reign shall extend everywhere, coupled with another idea: that Jerusalem is God's centre on earth and that it should be in the hands of Christians. These are both ideas that can be interpreted very crudely and exclusively. This morning, I want to open those ideas up by using some of St Paul's teaching, such as we heard of in our second reading this morning, in Psalm 122, and in the Book of Lamentations.

The Psalm talks about the quality of life within Jerusalem. Unity, peace, justice and prosperity are mentioned. Please, when you have a chance, read it. The key phrase, which comes right at the end is,

¹ Matthew 28:16-20

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“And for the house of God our Lord, I’ll seek your good always”.

So, what the Psalmist is saying is, the meaning of Jerusalem and the house of God – the Temple – set within it is, the good of the whole community. The place stands for a set of attitudes and a state of mind. In this, we can see a link with the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, which I was telling the children about earlier. God gave the Israelites the Law, and the purpose of the Law is to channel their hearts and minds towards God, to mould or form them as a people in a complex mindset that directs their behaviour. That’s much more than just a set of rules. It’s the governance of heart and mind. And so Jerusalem is set up to produce a culture which is Godly. Attached to this point, for us as Christians, is the view which Jesus took, that this God-sanctioned mission had failed, and the institutions of Jerusalem were no longer in tune with God but just going through the motions in a meaningless way.

Can we think of other attempts to build a heavenly city? I hesitate even to mention the hideous example of Islamic State! But there was during the Reformation the city of Geneva, under John Calvin. His scheme of government was based on faith, law and prayer, in that order. I think it was genuinely an attempt to recreate the holy city – Jerusalem – in what was then the modern world. However, I think you may not have found life there all that comfy or congenial. Calvin’s doctrine of predestination meant that a fear of hell was ever-present; there was a hard edge to the preaching and there was an awful lot of it. Two sermons on Sundays, of more than an hour each, and a heavy focus on not just key Biblical texts, but all of them. Calvin preached over two hundred sermons on the book of Deuteronomy alone.

We do not need to be so heavy-handed. I want to turn for guidance on the holy city of Jerusalem to the book of Lamentations, which was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 568 BC. As the name suggests, it is a very sad book, in which the writer says time and again, we are being punished, we have lost God’s favour, we have no Jerusalem. And in this destitute state, the writer says, “The Lord is all I have”². “It is good to wait in patience and sigh for deliverance by the Lord”³. Though Jerusalem is gone, we cling on to the Lord, confident that he will reinstate us. Though how God will reinstate us is perhaps not what you would expect. There is no talk here of re-building the city itself or reverse the desolate state of Mount Zion; instead, the prayer is

“O Lord, turn us back to yourself, and we will come back; renew our days, as in times long past.”

To be without Jerusalem is to be homeless; to be without the Jerusalem of the heart is to be far from God and turned away from his benefits. If God in his grace will accept us, even if we are deserving of his punishment, then we are on a solid footing again.

This point, abstract as it is, has a huge power and fits so well with the whole tenor of Jesus’s message. We need to have an authentic Jerusalem of the heart, managed as in Calvin’s Geneva, through faith, the holy Law and prayer.

Let us now turn to the epistle we heard earlier. In it, Paul is disparaging about what the Law had become in his own time, but in his own way, he does refer to these three headings of faith, law and prayer:

“not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

² Lamentations 3:24

³ As above, v.26

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¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings”⁴

In this “knowing Christ” is a state arrived at through prayer. It is this which moulds our faith and keeps the Law in perspective, preventing it from becoming a hollow discipline and perhaps a savage one, working against the principles of kindness which should inform all we do.

Now, having got on top of these issues, how are we going to “make disciples of all nations”? How are we going to teach them “to observe all that I (Jesus) has commanded”? When I think about what we and other churches do in Woodley, it feels like a start, but only a start, and it works by teaching through example. We need to find ways of doing much more. In particular, we need to find ways of explaining what the ‘Jerusalem of the heart’ truly is. Those ways will need to be accessible to all those people who have not been brought up in the church or who have abandoned the church because to them it seems like outdated mythology. That means that we cannot reach them through the so-called mythology, as happened in former generations. Instead, we need to rely on parables, perhaps, on the practical outplaying of the love of God in realistic situations. We need to teach through life as it is. By doing that, we shall indeed show that *Jesus shall reign where’re the sun does his successive journeys run*, without getting bogged down in detail or obsessed by any particular location and our wish to control that location.

HYMN StF 569 An upper room

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2lukOxMrBA>

- 1 An Upper Room did our Lord prepare
for those he loved until the end ;
and his disciples still gather there
to celebrate our Risen Friend.
- 2 A lasting gift Jesus gave his own —
to share his bread, his loving cup ;
whatever burdens may bow us down,
he by his cross shall lift us up.
- 3 And after supper he washed their feet,
for service, too, is sacrament ;
in him our joy shall be made complete —
sent out to serve, as he was sent.
- 4 No end there is ! We depart in peace ;
he loves beyond the uttermost ;
in every room in our Father's house
he will be there, as Lord and Host.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

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’.**

⁴ Philippians 3:9-10

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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 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zro80EwVGA>

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*

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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 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4A9taizp_w

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.

HYMN SoF 780 How deep the Father's love for us

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4brqdi_yEx4

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.

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'.

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.

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Prayers for Others

In the Book of Revelation, we read these words:

Here I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Let us pray. We bring to God our prayers of thanksgiving and prayers for others

Lord, we thank you for when you have knocked at the door, and come in, and been with us; that you have sat with us, and travelled with us; have made our bad times bearable, and shown us light in our darkest hours.

We thank you for being our guiding hand, for showing us a route through confusion, a clear path through the tangles of our own minds.

We cannot know what the future holds; uncertainty lies in wait for us, and who knows what pain and sickness, what dilemmas, what distress and inner suffering. As your hand, O God has guided us in the past, so let it hold us, protect us and nourish us in the future, so that we may face whatever comes, and always be yours, always be secure in the knowledge that we are in your care, and that with your help, all will be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.

We pray for all those who suffer; surround them with your love, support them with your strength, console them with your comfort, and give them hope and courage beyond themselves.

And we pray today particularly for (personal intercessions)

And as you light our way, we pray that you will also light the way of others.

We pray for the peace of the world. Move us by your Spirit, break down barriers of fear suspicion and hatred. Heal the human family of its divisions, and unite it in the bonds of justice & peace.

And now we bring our prayers closer to home, and remember those whom we have loved, who are no longer with us in this life, but who rest in your protection. May they have peace.

We pray for our families, for those whom we love. Protect them at home, support them in times of difficulty, that they may grow together in mutual love and understanding, and rest content in one another.

We pray for our country. Enrich our common life, strengthen the forces of truth, goodness and justice. Teach us to share prosperity, that those whose lives are impoverished may pass from need and despair to dignity and joy.

We pray for the church in its stand with the poor, and its stand for justice; in its love for the outcast and ashamed, in its service to the sick and neglected, in its proclamation of the gospel in this land, in this place.

In the life of your church, your kingdom come, O Lord

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord,

Amen

HYMN StF 536 He's got the whole world in his hand

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQgLSZXOa6U>

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | He's got the whole world in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.
He's got the whole wide world in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand. | 4 | He's got the little tiny baby in his hand.
He's got the little tiny baby in his hand.
He's got the little tiny baby in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand. |
| 2 | He's got you and me, brother, in his hand.
He's got you and me, brother, in his hand.
He's got you and me, brother, in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand. | 5 | He's got everybody here in his hand.
He's got everybody here in his hand.
He's got everybody here in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand. |
| 3 | He's got you and me, sister, in his hand.
He's got you and me, sister, in his hand.
He's got you and me, sister, in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand. | 6 | He's got the whole world in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.
He's got the whole wide world in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand. |

African-American traditional song

Closing Responses & Blessing

- Minister Go in peace and serve the Lord.
- All WE WILL SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.
- Minister Glory be to God who made us
 And to Christ who saved us
 And to the Holy Spirit who keeps us in faith.
- All AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW
 AND SHALL BE FOR EVER.
- Minister And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 Keep your hearts and minds this day and always.
- Amen*

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