

Christ Church Woodley 27 September 2020

**Welcome** - Julia Smith

## **Call to Worship**

Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of His name. Come and see what God has done and sing praise to His name.

## **Hymn StF 24 Come now is the time to worship**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1jB0IDWEHI>

Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart.  
Come, just as you are to worship. Come, just as you are before your God, come.  
One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee will bow.  
Still, the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship. Come now is the time to give your heart.  
Come, just as you are to worship. Come, just as you are before your God, come.  
One day every tongue.....  
Come, now is the time to worship.....

Brian Doerksen

## **Prayers of Adoration and Confession**

Father, we praise you that when we are weak, we can rely on your strength.

When we are poor in spirit, you fill us with your joy.

When we are empty, you flood our lives with peace.

When we are hurting, you hold us in your care.

When we are lost or losing our way, you find us and welcome us home.

We know that there is nothing we can do or say that that will mean you will stop loving us.

We ask that your Spirit will guide, protect and empower us and that all we do and say will bring honour to your name, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Lord, we confess your right to exercise your sovereignty over the whole of your creation and over the whole of our lives.

But from the very beginning we have used our free will to please ourselves and not you, to live for our own ends and not for yours, and to spoil our relationship with you and with each other.

We also confess that we have fallen short of living lives that bring you glory. There is no way that, in our own strength, we can put our world or our lives in order again.

Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, forgive us, cleanse and renew all things.

For the glory of your name.

*Amen.*

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day 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 forever more. Amen.

## Young people's talk

Has your mum or dad, teacher or friends, ever asked you to do something?

I wonder how it made you feel.

I guess that it would depend on what you are asked to do. Maybe it could be to tidy your room, or help with the washing up, or even to complete some school work. Maybe a friend might ask you to play a game with them or do some other activity. Sometimes what we are asked to do can make us feel proud because we have been given a special job or task. At other times we may feel cross because we think the job is too difficult, or boring or just plain uninteresting. It just doesn't suit our mood to do it.

Grown ups too, are often asked to do things, either by their children or family, or perhaps their boss at work.

Whatever the circumstances we have to make a decision as to whether we will do what is asked of us, or not.

Sometimes we find it easy to do what we are asked to do because it fits in with what we want to do, or maybe because it is easy for us. Sometimes we are willing because we want to please the person that asked us.

Today, when you are having your own activities the adults will be hearing a story that Jesus told about two sons who were both asked to do something by their father. The one son did not want to do what was asked of him but later on he did do it. The second son said he would do as his father asked but then went off and did something else.

Who do you think was the better son? It was the one who did eventually do as he had been asked. Sometimes we do not do the right thing in the beginning, but later on we do and Jesus said that what we do is more important than what we say we will do. So remember this story next time you are asked to do something and don't be like the second son who said 'yes' and then went away to do what he wanted to do.

## Junior Church Hymn: Be Bold Be Strong

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

## Junior Church Blessing

Lord, we ask your blessing on our young people and their leaders as they go to their own activities. *Amen.*

## Readings

### Psalm 25: 4-10

<sup>4</sup> Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; <sup>5</sup> guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long.

<sup>6</sup> Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old, <sup>7</sup> Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O Lord.

<sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.

<sup>9</sup> He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

<sup>10</sup> All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.

## Matthew 21: 23-32

<sup>23</sup> Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

<sup>24</sup> Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>25</sup> John’s baptism – where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?” They discussed it amongst themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ <sup>26</sup> But if we say, ‘From men’ – we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

<sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

<sup>28</sup> “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ <sup>29</sup> “I will not,’ he answered, but later changed his mind and went.

<sup>30</sup> “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. <sup>31</sup> “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

## Hymn StF 481 The Lord’s my shepherd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYJC8ALPRhQ>

1. The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want:  
he makes me lie in pastures green,  
he leads me by the still, still waters,  
his goodness restores my soul.  
  
*And I will trust in you alone,  
and I will trust in you alone,  
for your endless mercy follows me,  
your goodness will lead me home.*
2. He guides my ways in righteousness,  
and he anoints my head with oil;  
and my cup it – it overflows with joy,  
I feast on his pure delights.
3. And though I walk the darkest path,  
I will not fear the evil one,  
for you are with me, and your rod and staff  
are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend

## Talk

The psalm and the reading from Matthew form a nice balance.

In the psalm we are encouraged to look to God for guidance.

In the Matthew reading we are shown various patterns of behaviour that arise when God’s guidance is not followed immediately, but is in the end. It is also about those who pretend to care for God’s work but in fact do the opposite.

Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves and therefore knows that we are far from perfect. However, he gives us every opportunity and help for us to turn away from our bad ways and towards Him. For this reason Jesus associated with people who were in a “bad” position – like the tax collectors and prostitutes, but we learn that they were prepared to turn away from their former ways and turn instead towards God. Because of this they find salvation.

Let us look for a moment at the well known story of Zacchaeus. Being a tax collector in itself was not a sin, but in Biblical times tax collectors were shunned and considered sinful

for two reasons. Firstly, they were supporting a conquering empire – namely the Romans; and secondly, tax collectors were hurting their own people – the Jews.

Tax collectors were reviled by the Jews of Jesus' day because of their greed and collaboration with the Roman occupiers. The truth of the matter is that Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners.

In Luke chapter 19 we have the full story of Zacchaeus the tax collector. We learn that Zacchaeus was very wealthy; probably his wealth was accumulated by cheating the people. When he heard that Jesus would be passing through Jericho he wanted to see Him for himself. Maybe he had heard of the miracles and teachings of Jesus and wanted to see for himself who this man truly was. Whatever his motives were, he was certainly curious. However, Zacchaeus was unable to see over the crowds who had gathered as he was also small in stature, so he climbed a tree in order to have a better view. Now Jesus knows all about us and the Bible tells us that we cannot hide from God, so Jesus knew Zacchaeus was in the tree and called Zacchaeus down as he was passing by. Then Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house. This was a great honour but it annoyed the people because Zacchaeus was recognised by them to be a sinner. We are not told about the conversation that took place between Jesus and Zacchaeus but Zacchaeus showed he was willing to change. He offered half of his belongings and to pay back four times as much to those he had cheated. This amount was what the Old Testament law demanded as repayment for dishonesty. Jesus then said, "Today salvation has come to this house". Zacchaeus' promise to make restitution shows true penitence. God allows room for repentance and so must we.

On another occasion Jesus was asked by the tax collectors, "Teacher, what are we to do?" His reply was, "Don't collect more than is legal".

In Romans chapter 13 verses 6 and 7 Paul writes, "That is also why you pay taxes, because the authorities are God's servants. Give everyone what you owe him". This enables the tax collector and the person who pays his taxes to fulfil their duties to the authorities.

Let's look now at the parable of the two sons that was read to us, from Matthew's gospel. The first son was asked by his father to go and work in the vineyard, but he said he would not. However, later on, after reflection and perhaps having had time to think about his behaviour, he went and did what his father had asked of him. The second son when asked by his father to go and work in the vineyard, immediately said he would but then went off to do his own thing, thereby not fulfilling his word.

After Jesus told this story he asked the people which of the two sons did what his father wanted. "The first," was their answer. One son proved better than he had promised. His answer was bad but his actions good. The other son promised obedience but failed in his performance.

Jesus goes on to remind the people that John the Baptist had come to show them the way of righteousness but they had not believed him. The publicans and harlots were like the first son in the parable, from whom little of religion was expected. Then Jesus proceeds to tell the people that the tax collectors and prostitutes once shown the right way did believe and would enter the kingdom of God ahead of them. In this parable the father is God and we are the sons. We can choose to be obedient to Him whether it be at first or ultimately or we can choose to go our own way. We can take comfort from this story that our life is not about how we started (for we have all sinned) but how we finish once we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed the Bible tells us that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but we have hope through our own repentance.

We come now to look at the Psalm. It is the song of someone who earnestly seeks God and asks for His help in finding the right way. On the face of it this is a huge task for the psalmist, David and also for us. When we start our journey with the Lord it may seem enormously difficult to turn from our old ways however much we desire to. Therefore, it is good to know that when God's help kicks in we find "all the ways of the Lord are loving and sure" (v10).

David repeatedly asks God to show him the way of the Lord, for his hope is in God all day long (v5). He is earnest for the pardon of his sins as he asks God not to remember the sins of his youth and seeks God's instruction to be kept in His ways. David has a firm belief that God is loving and faithful to those who keep the demands of His covenant. Verses 8-10 are full of God's promises mixed in with David's prayers. The promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for, but they are a present answer to prayer.

God knows that this life brings difficulties and distractions away from Him. Some days we find are easier than others but recently many have found the restrictions of the past weeks and months have taken their toll. For some it has brought out positive qualities in being able to help others in their community and take on tasks that have previously not been required. Unfortunately others have suffered with their mental health by the enforced lockdown and shielding guidelines, and this needs to be recognised by us all.

It should be our desire to come before God each day to ask for His strength and guidance. If we truly trust God He will show us the right way, the way He wants us to live our lives. Sometimes the things that God requires of us are easy because they suit our disposition and willingness to obey, but at other times we find it more difficult to do His will because the task is alien to our nature. We need to remember that all things are possible through Christ who longs to support us and be in communion with us each minute of the day.

May each and every one of us be ready to do His will in all things. Then we will be richly blessed beyond our thinking and imagination. Amen.

## Hymn StF 728 O God you search me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgW8KGEtCI>

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

## Prayers of Intercession

Lord, we pray for the hungry people in our world. We pray for those who have been driven from their homes by civil war and are refugees with no freedom at all; for those whose names we do not know but are known to you; for those who are hungry for love, joy and peace but do not have a voice. May Christ fill their lives.

We pray for our community; for those who are our neighbours, and those with whom we work; for those whom we serve and those with whom we share fellowship. We pray for

those in our community who are lonely or alone; who are empty and long to be filled with joy; for those seeking employment in these troubled times but are locked out of the things we take for granted. May Christ touch broken lives.

We pray for our government, those with genuine concern for our people and have great responsibility for decisions which will affect millions of people; for those in positions of power and leadership who are truly working for peace, reconciliation, justice and freedom for all. May Christ hold tired lives.

We pray for those who are wrecked by addiction or need the healing of a relationship, the health of their body or for peace of heart and mind. May Christ heal broken lives.

We pray for those in need of healing; for those who need to feel the touch of God's grace upon them. Today we think especially of those known to our fellowship.....

We pray for the life of the church and especially this fellowship during these difficult days. Help us to continue our mission and to bear witness to others. We pray for all those who have worked and continue to work for the life of this church, for those who give of their skills and time and everyone who is involved in the discussions and planning to ensure the safety and comfort of those who use our premises. May Christ give us all new life, hope and freedom to worship you.

Help us all to feel a new sense of privilege as we come together in fellowship, may the Holy Spirit empower us to enter into the freedom that Christ has won for us and may it bring glory to God. May Christ make us truly free.

In Christ's name we bring these prayers. Amen.

## **Hymn StF 81 Now thank we all our God**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JR9QD6mgeHM>

1. Now thank we all our God,  
with hearts and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things has done,  
in which this world rejoices;  
who from our mother's arms  
has blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.
2. O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us in his grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
in this world and the next.
3. All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given,  
the Son, and him who reigns  
with them in highest heaven,  
the one eternal God,  
whom earth and heaven adore,  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)

## **Blessing**

Go into the world as God's servants;  
live for Him knowing He is your saviour  
and trust Him in the assurance that He is Lord.  
*Amen.*