



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 1st September 2024

compiled by Vicki Penfound - Lay Assistant

Opening words:

Lord, I come to you this day
May I experience your deep grace
Wrapping me in divine love.
As I worship, meet with me
In your loving kindness.
May my soul sing in the beauty of your presence. Amen

Song: 55 Singing the Faith

1] Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible, hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

2] Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

3] To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish—but naught changeth Thee.

4] Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; oh, help us to see
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908)

Let us pray:

Almighty God,
In your holy presence I worship you.
Creator of all, thank you that you are with me, close to me.
Help me to sense your presence as I open my heart and mind to you.
Teach me your ways, guide my path, that I may glorify you
In all I do and say. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: 354 Singing the Faith

1] Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
For by His power each tree and flower was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;
sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord!

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!

Praise Him with 'Hallelujahs', for Jesus is Lord!

2] Jesus is Lord! Yet from His throne eternal
in flesh He came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From Him all life proceeding,
yet gave His life a ransom thus setting us free.

Jesus is Lord....

3] Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death He rose and all His foes shall own His name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends His Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is Lord....

David John Mansell (b.1936)

Reading: Exodus 30 v 17 - 21

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. Whenever they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting a food offering to the LORD, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come."

Reading: Mark 7 v 1-8, 14-15

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?" He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

"These people honour me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain;

their teachings are merely human rules.'

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions."

Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them."

Reflection:

There was an episode of Antiques Roadshow many years ago when a lady brought a brass jug with a lid. The lid was unusual in that it had a metal rod attached which reached down into the jug. It was a mystery what its purpose was, it had been in the lady's family for over a hundred years. The expert looked at it, chuckled, and informed the lady that the "lid" was in fact a door knob! Generations of the family had almost reverently looked after the jug and its lid, completely unaware that their ancestor simply put a broken door knob in the jug as it was convenient at the time.

We might see ourselves as "traditionally minded" people. Repeating practices that have been handed down from previous generations, with not much idea of why, only that it is the "done thing". In Jesus' day there was an awful lot of pressure on people to keep to tradition. The Law of Moses in the Torah was studied, enlarged upon and enforced in the minutest detail in such a way that the original meaning was lost. We see from the book of Exodus that the washing of hands and feet was very important for the priests who were ministering on behalf of the people. By Jesus' day the practice was for everyone to wash before they ate.

Now we are aware of bacteria and have a sound scientific basis for hand hygiene, but then it was more about spiritual contamination. The market had all sorts of people there, ritual washing was a way to distinguish between the "us" and "them". The Pharisees were keen to enforce rules that separated their community from others, they saw it as obedience to God. They see Jesus' disciples are not complying and are horrified. Jesus is very blunt with them about what causes a person to be unclean before God – and it has nothing to do with ritual washing. God is interested in the heart, our attitude, the love we have for others. Many Pharisees were sincere in trying to do the right thing but what Jesus called them out on was the abuse of power and the hypocrisy of using rules to dominate people. Tradition had lost its purpose to draw people to God and had become a barrier to encountering the love of God. Jesus was turning upside down their notion of holiness. Rituals were not a way to bargain for God's approval, it is all about the heart.

What do our spiritual practices, customs and traditions bring to our lives today? Is there a meaningful encounter with the Divine wrapped up in them? Or do we keep the equivalent of a brass jug and "lid" polished, with no clue as to why? Let us keep our relationship with God fresh, and our traditions filled with life and meaning. That way, how we express our faith will draw others to the light of Christ, rather than be a barrier to them. The writer Gerard Kelly puts it succinctly in his poem "Beyond" from his book "I see a New City"

*Teach me God
To measure love
By action
Not by abstinence alone*

*To wade beyond a shallow 'do no evil'
Into the deeper waters of 'do good'*

Prayers of Intercession:

God of diversity,
You created animals, plants and people in a kaleidoscope of variety,
And yet we often try to make our neighbours comply to our will.
Forgive us for being judgemental of difference.
We pray for those who are victims of prejudice,
May they be free to sing your song of love in the voice you have given.

In this fractured world, we pray for your peace to rule and reign
So that people may dwell in safety and harmony.
Make us instruments of your peace,
That those who we encounter will be drawn closer to you.
In Jesus name. Amen

Hymn: 707 Singing the Faith

1] Make me a channel of Your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love,
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord,
And where there's doubt, true faith in You.

*Oh master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

2] Make me a channel of Your peace,
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope,
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Oh master, grant that I may never seek...

3] Make me a channel of Your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we're born into eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928-1997)

Blessing:

Eternal God,
Bless us with the familiar and the unexpected,
Open our hearts and minds to see you in new ways
Be in our offerings of prayer and action this coming week
That we may be lights of your love to the world. Amen