

## Worship at home Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Welcome to this short act of worship from the Plymouth & Exeter District. We invite you to spend time with God, knowing that other people across the District are sharing this with you. Today's service has been prepared by Kerry Gibson, local preacher with Plymouth and Devonport Circuit.

CCL50389

### Call to Worship (from Psalm 121) StF #830.

I lift up my eyes to the hills;  
from where is my help to come?

My help comes from the Lord,  
the maker of heaven and earth.

He will not suffer your foot to stumble;  
he who watches over you will not sleep.

Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel  
shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord himself watches over you;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,  
So that the sun shall not strike you by day,  
neither the moon by night.

The Lord shall keep you from all evil;  
it is he who shall keep your soul.

The Lord shall keep watch over your going  
out and your coming in,  
from this time forth for evermore.

### *Common Worship*

### Hymn StF 293: All Heaven Declares

All heaven declares  
The glory of the risen Lord;  
Who can compare with  
The beauty of the Lord?

For ever He will be  
The Lamb upon the throne;  
I gladly bow the knee,  
And worship Him alone.

I will proclaim  
The glory of the risen Lord,  
Who once was slain  
To reconcile us to God.

For ever You will be  
The Lamb upon the throne;  
I gladly bow the knee,  
And worship You alone.

*Noel Richards b.1955 & Tricia Richards b.1960*

### Let us Pray

Be still for the presence of the Lord is with  
you.

Be still and know He will meet you where  
you are at.

Be still, let God speak to you.

Be still for the power of the Lord is moving  
in ways you cannot see.

Lord, I come, I wait, I acknowledge my  
need of you today and every day. Please  
fill me afresh and supply my needs,  
whether I know them or not. Lord, I come  
and worship you today, I sit in the silence,  
I sit in your presence, reassured you are  
with me: you see me, you hear me and  
you love me. Amen.

Take a moment to offer up your prayers of  
praise and thanksgiving (what are you  
thankful for?)

This morning, we are looking at following Jesus and walking in His ways. Also touching on returning to the ancient paths mentioned in this morning's Old Testament reading.

**Bible Readings:**

Jeremiah 6: 12-16

Matthew 16: 24-26.

**Hymn StF 272: From Heaven You Came**

1. From Heaven, You came, helpless babe,  
Entered our world, your glory veiled,  
Not to be served but to serve,  
And give Your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow Him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to The Servant King.*

2. There in the garden of tears  
My heavy load he chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn  
"Yet not My will but Yours", He said.

*This is our God, The Servant King ...*

3. Come see His hands and His feet,  
The scars that speak of sacrifice,  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered.

*This is our God, The Servant King ...*

4. So let us learn how to serve  
And in our lives enthrone Him,  
Each other's needs to prefer  
For it is Christ we're serving.

*This is our God, The Servant King ...*

**Graham Kendrick b. 1950**

**Message**

The ancient paths mentioned in Jeremiah refers to the laws and doctrines that the people were meant to follow and abide by but didn't - they went their own way. I can understand that. I, too, like to do things my way! I wonder if this sounds familiar to

you? I know God's way is best for me, but I am stubborn and I rebel!

We need to be in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit daily. This is through prayer, bible reading and trying to be as obedient to Christ as we can be. Being in fellowship with God, through Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit will help us walk the ancient paths: God's way. However, if we are honest, most of us do not find it easy to walk those paths. Following Jesus is often difficult: Life gets hard, messy and painful – and yet, we still find God's sovereign love right there in the middle of it all – this may not change our circumstances, but I have found it can offer hope, reassurance and comfort.

But how easy it is to get distracted! Have you ever sat down with all the good intentions to be alone with the Lord and the minute you start to pray, your mind wanders? You remember your "to do" list, the shopping list and a thousand other things!

A friend of mine recommended using a prayer word to help me focus and thinking about it silently when my mind wanders. (*Suitable words might be: Lord or Jesus or Praise You, etc*). I find saying 'Maranatha' helps me, it means 'Come Lord' or 'the Lord has come' in Aramaic (the language Jesus would have used).

In Matthew, Jesus calls us to follow Him and to deny ourselves. He isn't talking about neglecting ourselves: we are called to look after ourselves appropriately. That means we take care of our bodies and minds, without over-indulging and spoiling ourselves.

The denying Jesus is talking about means to behave in a different way to the world: letting go of our habits and desires that

are contrary to God's ways and behaving in ways that please God and following his will for our lives.

When we say, 'yes' to following Christ, what we are ultimately doing is saying 'over to you, you're the captain now'. In the laying down and denying ourselves, we make more room for the things of God, and we give the Holy Spirit space to clear out the debris which clutters up our lives.

Following Jesus means walking a narrow way, and the Bible warns us only a few find it [Matthew 7:14] but that shouldn't stop us trying. I look at how the disciples left everything, their jobs, families, friends and all that was familiar to them, to follow Him. They left to wander off with Jesus, the One who came to save the world, including you and me.

I look at the disciples and I want that kind of faith, the faith that just says yes to Him, wherever that may lead. This reminds me of the *Sinner's Prayer*, where I can be honest with God about my sins and turn away from them as I state my belief in God's forgiveness, through the power of Jesus' death and resurrection and invite God into my life anew, through a commitment to trusting and following Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. In doing this, we give ourselves over to someone far greater than us.

I want to be able to walk the ancient paths all the days of my life, come what may. I want to get to the end of my life and be like the apostle Paul when he said, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith' [2 Timothy 4:7]

I wonder, if Jesus asked you to leave everything and follow, would you stay or would you go? (*Remember, age is no barrier to God, neither are health issues*). But

following isn't always about going somewhere. Our calling might be to find a way to be a disciple right where we are, in the midst of all our disappointments, lost hopes and forsaken dreams. Are you willing to follow Jesus right to the end?

Jesus came so you and I could have a relationship with Him: walk with Him, talk with Him and walk life's road with Him. And whilst we are doing that, He wants us to share Him with those around us.

Paul went on to talk about "the crown of righteousness" for all who love Jesus. [2 Timothy 4:8] Oh, the joyous moment on reaching our eternal, heavenly home and seeing Jesus face-to-face. Nothing could be or will be better than that!

So, let's keep on keeping on; keep on walking the ancient paths and following Jesus, because it is the only way worth walking - the only life worth living. Amen.

**Reflection:** Take a few minutes to reflect on this message and when you feel ready, please use the following prayer pointers to

**Pray for others:**

- Those affected by wars and natural disasters.
- World leaders and our government.
- Our country, recent violence and sad events.
- Our emergency services (NHS, Police, Fire, Ambulance...)
- Our churches and our circuit.
- Persecuted Christians and all who are persecuted for their faith.
- Dysfunctional families, schools and workplaces.
- Other people, places and situations which are on your heart today.

### **Prayers for ourselves (based on StF 707)**

Lord, make me a channel of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love.

Lord, make me a channel of Your peace.  
Where there is despair in life, let me bring hope.

Lord, make me a channel of Your peace.  
Where there is darkness, let me be Your light.

Lord, make me a channel of Your peace.  
Where there is doubt, let me bring true faith in You.

Lord, make me a channel of Your peace.  
Help me to receive your love and help me to love you with all my soul. Amen.

We finish with the prayer Jesus taught his disciples:

### **Our Father.....**

### **Closing Hymn StF 167: Colours of Day**

1. Colours of day dawn into the mind  
The sun has come up, the night is behind.  
Go down in the city, into the street,  
And let's give the message to the people we meet.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,  
Open the door, let Jesus return.  
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,  
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.*

2. Go through the park, on into the town;  
The sun still shines on, it never goes down.  
The light of the world is risen again;  
The people of darkness are needing a friend.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn...*

3. Open your eyes, look into the sky,  
The darkness has come, the Son came to die.  
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,  
But Jesus is living, His Spirit is near.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn ...*

*Sue McClellan b.1951, John Paculabo (1946-2013) &  
Keith Rycroft b.1949*

### **Blessing:**

May the road rise to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sunshine always warm your face.  
May the rain fall soft upon your fields.  
And, until we meet again, may God hold you  
in the palm of His hand. Amen

### **Lectionary Readings:**

Proverbs 31: 10-31

Psalm 1

James 3: 13 - 4:3,7-8a

Mark 9: 30-37