

Sunday 25th January 2026

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use if you are unable to attend Church. As you use this, be aware that you are spending moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing in this act of worship with you.

Opening prayer

Father God, we have not come to escape from the world or to hide from the darkness and despair that is around us.

We are here to praise you, the Lord of glory and the sovereign at the heart of creation.

In your presence we glimpse something of your light and hope for you alone are the stronghold of our lives.

As I join others in this worship, may it be a blessing to all. Amen

Hymn Singing the Faith 20

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found-
we stand on holy ground.

Be still,
For the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One is here.

Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,

with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight-
our radiant King of light!
Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him.
Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.
David J. Evans (b 1957)

Prayer of praise.

Father God, we praise you for the person you are. You created all that is, and the seasons change each day, but you Lord are the One who is unchangeable, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

As we come to worship you today, we come as we are as people who need to come to you as often as we are able.

A few weeks ago we celebrated the birth of Jesus, and what you give us is sometimes beyond our understanding. You bless and love us far beyond our deserving, and so we come to praise and love you today.

So, Lord please accept what we bring you now, in Christ's name. Amen

As we praise you, so we would give you thanks. We thank you that you have not only brought light and more love and hope into our lives, but you have done so that we may be channels of grace to our neighbour.

We thank you, that in Jesus we have made it crystal clear that your word of grace will always be your final statement of hope and his living presence the sign of peace for everyone. Thank you, Father.

Hymn Singing the Faith 78

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One:
give thanks because he has given
Jesus Christ, his Son.

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One:
give thanks because he has given
Jesus Christ, his Son.

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And now let the weak say, "I am strong",
let the poor say, "I am rich",
because of what the Lord has done for us;
And now let the weak say, "I am strong",
let the poor say, "I am rich",
because of what the Lord has done for us;

Give thanks.

Henry Smith (b 1952)

Lectionary readings.

Isaiah 9: 1-4, Psalm 27: 1, 4-9,
1 Corinthians 1: 10-18, Matthew 4:12-23.

Gospel reading.

Matthew 4: 12-23

Jesus began to preach.

12. When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee.

13. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali.

14. to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

15. "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-

16. the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

17. From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is here".

The calling of the first disciples

18. As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

19. "Come, follow me", Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

20. at once they left their nets and followed him.

21. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John. They were in a boat with their father, preparing their nets. Jesus called them,

22. and immediately they left their boat and father and followed him.

Reflection.

Those few verses are split into two parts and it is worth taking a look at both of them.

We could call verses 12-17 "the Son of God goes forth", because Jesus had realised the time had come when he must go forward to start the task God had given him and there are some things that we need to notice.

1

He left Nazareth and took up residence in Capernaum and there is a kind of symbolic finality in that move. In that moment Jesus left his home never again to return to live in it. It is as if he shut the door that lay behind him before he opened another door that was in front of him that was to change his life for ever. It was a clean cut between the old and the new, one chapter had ended and another had begun.

In people's lives, there must come such a moment of decision. It is nearly always better to decide immediately rather than think about it for too long.

When Jesus went into Galilee he began his earthly mission and his ministry. Small as it was, Galilee was densely populated and its people were people of a certain kind, it was open to new plans, new ideas.

Josephus said of the Galileans, "They were ever fond of innovations, and by nature disposed to changes and delighted in seditions" (speech, writing or behaviour intended to encourage rebellion or rebellion against the government). That sounds a bit like some countries today.

They were every ready to follow a new

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leader and they were never afraid to do or try something different. And what Jesus would bring them WAS something very different, something they had seen or heard of before. The inborn characteristics of the Galileans were such as to make them most fertile ground for a new gospel to be given and preached to them, and Jesus did this to the nth degree.

It was Matthew's habit to find in the Old Testament something he could use as a prophecy about events in the life of Jesus.

He finds such a prophecy in ISAIAH 9: 1/2

"Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned".

Matthew says that Jesus began to preach.

The word in Greek is *kerussein*, which is the king. *Kerux* is the Greek word for herald and the herald was the man who messages from the king, so we can see here the real significance why Jesus went into Galilee and the way that he "preached" there.

1 He preached with certainty. There was no doubt about the message he brought to the people of Galilee, and there is no doubt in the same message he brings to Christians today. The word of truth, of wisdom, of hope. There can be no doubt, no uncertainty in the mind of Christians who Jesus is, The Son of our God.

2 this herald had in his voice the note of real authority. He was speaking for the King his Father. He was laying down the gauntlet and announcing the King's law, the Kings commands, the King's decision on all sorts of things.

3 His message came from a source far *beyond himself*, it came from the King of heaven and earth GOD HIMSELF.

It is not the expression of one man's personal opinion, it is the voice of God that is transmitted through one man to people of every age, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The message of Jesus was a continuation of John the Baptist's; "REPENT!"

That is still one of the things that Jesus is saying to people today, "Come to me AND I WILL give you rest".

Prayers for others.

We pray for;

- The hungry people in the world.
- The workers in the NHS and care homes.
- The patients in these places.
- The countries where there is war.
- The leaders of nations.
- Our government.

- Friends and relations.
- Ourselves

Now say the Lord's Prayer

Hymn Singing the Faith 250

Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult
of our life's wild restless sea,
day by day his sweet voice is sounding.
Saying: 'Christian, follow me'.

As of old apostles heard it
by the Galilean lake,
turned from home and toil and kindred,
leaving all for his dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship

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from each idol that would keep us,
saying. "Christian, love me more than".

In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures;

Jesus calls us! By your mercies.
Saviour, may we hear your call,
give our hearts to your obedience,
serve and love you best of all.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)

Closing prayer.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us ever more. Amen.

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