

Worship Together

Sunday 29/3/20

Psalm 145: 1-3 A hymn of Praise

I will proclaim your greatness, my God and king;

I will thank you forever and ever.

²Every day I will thank you;

I will praise you forever and ever.

³The LORD is great and is to be highly praised;

his greatness is beyond understanding.

Good morning! Today we're coming together to worship *GOD*.

John and I have brought some songs, reflections and prayers which I hope will help us to focus on the LORD who loves us and completely understands the difficulties we may be experiencing right now, trying to adapt to the changes that are happening in our lives.

Our prayer is that *GOD* will bless and encourage us in our worship today and give us grace and strength for the days ahead.

The writer of Psalm 121 reminds us who we can look to when we need help.

Psalm 121 There's a power point of this psalm attached, if you'd like to read it.

'I will worship' a song by David Ruis (Sorry about the adverts!!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJsN358apt8>

A reflection on the current lockdown from John

The Bible has many verses which address fear and uncertainty (and they are frequently shared in the church).

But it is worth remembering Jesus came at a time of upheaval, uncertainty & fear. He lived with his disciples when these experiences

were very real, and the disciples faced more uncertainty when Jesus ascended.

The Gospel message is not isolated from the fear and uncertainty which we face and are adjusting to at present.

There have been tremendous acts of kindness and love and experiences of solidarity, standing to applaud NHS staff and lighting candles in our windows to show Prayer, Thanks & Hope. The thousands of people volunteering to help.

As a church we need to pray & demonstrate the act of standing alongside and helping to give expression to this by small actions as well as large ones.

A quote from a recent article in the New York Times by a Theological Professor

But part of the Christian message is that God comes to us in ways that defy our expectations. The all-powerful empties himself of power to become a child. Jesus as king does not conquer his enemies through violence, he converts them to his cause by meeting violence with sacrificial love.

The church's absence, its literal emptying, can function as a symbol of its trust in God's ability to meet us regardless of the location. The church remains the church whether gathered or scattered. It might also indirectly remind us of the gift of gathering that we too often take for granted.

Dr Esau McCaulley

Assistant Professor at Wheaton College.

When loving your neighbor means keeping your distance

Anne Broad suggested this song a few weeks ago to use in our worship, so let's listen to it now!

'Run to the Father' a song by Cody Carnes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcpeLDp0Foo>

Let's pray together. Children and adults can use their hands to pray these prayers!



To aid our focus whilst praying, we will make and hold physical positions with our hands. We do this to engage our bodies within our prayers, allowing our minds to focus more freely on what we are praying about.

Praying Hands

First place your palms and fingers flat together, with your hands pointing upwards; in the position traditionally adopted to pray.

We come to be still before God

Our hands together, stopping us doing any physical work.

We take up the work of prayer, bringing our thoughts, feelings and concerns to our Heavenly Father

Answer me when I pray, O God, my defender!

When I was in trouble You helped me

Be kind to me now and hear my prayer. [Psalm 4.1 GNB]

Fists

Separate your hands, and clench them together to form fists. Hold them as tightly as you can, so that your focus is on your fists.

We pray for those parts of the world where there is war.

We remember those in violent relationships.

Where talking has been replaced by fighting.

Where peace has been replaced by aggression and unrest

Wounded hand

Open both your fists. Hold your left hand so your palm faces towards you. Take the index finger on your right hand and push it hard into the centre of your left palm.

Jesus' hands were pierced as he was crucified

He was wounded to restore our relationship with God

He suffered to bring reconciliation and justice to the world.

We focus on situations and places where that reconciliation is needed, both in our own lives, our community and the wider world.

Open hands

Open both of your hands, hold them open in front of you with your palms facing upwards.

We recognise that every human being needs to receive good things.

God provides for each of us physically, emotionally and spiritually

We ask God for the things we need, and the things needed by others

Holding hands

Turn over your left hand, with your right hand gently take hold of your left as if holding someone else's hand.

Jesus embodied God's compassion

He met with the sick and the dying

He promised comfort to those who mourn

We pray for those who are sick, suffering or mourning

We pray that they will know God's healing, comfort, compassion and love

Praying hands

We return our hands to the first position we held. Palms and fingers flat together, hands pointing upwards; the position traditionally adopted for prayer.

We remember God's promise to hear our prayers

Praying to the Father, in the name of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

A Prayer for the Global Church

Dear God,

You say that if Your people humble themselves, turn away from wickedness, and call on Your name, that You will answer them and heal their land.

So we're asking for forgiveness. Forgive us for the times we've chosen not to love the people You put in front of us.

Allow this season to strengthen Your Church and to remind us of how much You love this hurting world.

Please heal our land and use us to meet the needs of hurting people. Grow our faith as You grow Your global Church.

Come Lord Jesus, and do what only You can do.
In Jesus' Name, Amen.

YouVersion

Psalm 23

Have a look at this well known psalm and the following meditation by Sue DUBY from the godspace msa blog

I'm not a great auditory learner. Give me a pencil and some paper, notes to take, equations to solve or some journal-type writing to clarify my thoughts... THEN information may well stick in my mind and memory.

I know the truth . . .that we are all uniquely and wonderfully made. Even so, I do feel badly when in the middle of a great sermon I find myself wandering off to the grocery list, a friend in need or the next sleepover with the grandkids. Saturday night was no exception, (we love Saturday night services, but are tempted to create a T-shirt for our Sunday morning hikes that reads "I went to church last night!").

The pastor read through Psalm 23 reminding us of God's great affection as our Shepherd. I know that Psalm, can quote it and have studied it multiple times over the years. Not a good set up for me, the "drifter". Familiarity leads me to "tune out" even more quickly than normal.

Amazingly, in the midst, I suddenly heard these words: “What if you turned all your ‘What ifs’ into ‘Even Thoughts’?” Just as the Psalmist does in not placing focus on “What if you walk through the valley of the shadow of death”, but rather “Even though you...”. My whole body felt alert and I knew that Holy Spirit nudge was saying, “This one is for you!”.

I’ve spent much of my life battling fear. Gratefully, its hold has lessened over the years and the wrestling is now more of acknowledgement when it crops up and then letting it go. Still, it’s ready to grab hold at the least expected moments.

Fear is “an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat” or “anxious concern”. My own list tends to centre around health, family and future. For each one, instead of saying to myself, “I’m afraid of _____”, I’m really thinking, “What if _____?”.

What if my aching back never feels better? What if something happens to Chuck? What if our kids get in an accident? What if my memory really starts fading (more than it already is!)?

Just the words, “What If” make my heart stir, knowing any way I finish that sentence will be scary! No matter the focus of the “What If”, it leads me to feeling alone in my fear, pensive, unsure and anticipating bad things. “What If” leaves me dangling... full well knowing that something may happen or not, so I’m stuck feeling very insecure and unsettled.

In His grace, God offers a better way. Psalm 23:4 gives us a roadmap. **“Even though** I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” NIV

Not “what if” I take such a difficult journey, as we all will at some point... or many times in our life. But rather “even though” I take such a journey. Just attaching those two words to one of my fears... “Even though my back may never feel better...”, somehow physically feels like a weight rolling off my shoulders, a fresh breath of air and a letting go.

The Psalmist gives clear reason for being able to speak “even though” in confidence. “You are with me”, “Your rod and your staff, they comfort me”. There is the Shepherd. Present. Protecting. Tending, Caring. Encouraging. Directing. Leading.

I’m choosing to daily embrace a better way of thinking, a new way to battle fear. When a fear pops up, no matter how silly or overwhelming, my heart now says “Even though...”. I can feel myself falling back into

the Shepherd's embrace and letting Him carry the weight, knowing He knows and that His presence is enough.

May you purpose to grab hold of every "What If" when it hits and acknowledge the good Shepherd's presence with a simple whisper back to Him, "Even though...".

'I Shall Not Want' a song by Audrey Assad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8Td9cZajyE>

Today and in the weeks ahead our hope is in Jesus Christ. His love for us will never fail.

'In Christ Alone' a song by Stuart Townend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCeSOY5tisI>

2 Corinthians 5: 17-19 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come, the old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

'All things New' a song by Travis Greene

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsLp0FDo2Ic>

Wherever we are today let's thank *GOD* for everything He's doing in our lives at this time and pray for one another.

May the *LORD* bless you and keep you, may the *LORD* make His face shine on you and be gracious to you, may the *LORD* turn His face towards you and give you peace.

AMEN