

Worship Together - 31st January 2021

Welcome to our worship this morning.

I hope you are continuing to know God's care and encouragement during these difficult and uncertain times. We are going to spend time worshipping God together, and Steve Latham will talk to us from the book of Hebrews.

But first, a notice to take notice of:

1. Monday 1/2/21 will be the next Leaders meeting @7.15PM. Please pray that the leaders will know God's guidance and encouragement as they meet via Zoom.

When I last prepared the worship resource at the beginning of the month we had a talk from Rick Bowman who talked a bit about worshipping with our bodies. So I have been thinking that as we sing our songs today perhaps we could stand up, boogie a bit, and/or use our creativity to make signs for some of the words, for example a heart shape for 'love'.

Our first song is based on Psalm 95 and invites us to worship our God who is King of all the earth. He is king over Presidents and Prime Ministers worldwide, and over Covid-19. I think it has several words that could be shown in actions so you might even want to read the words and prepare a few signs or actions to use before you sing the song.

[Song: Come let's sing](#)

Our second song is Great is He who's the King of kings.

If you are interested in the making signs for some of words idea [this link to an online BSL sign language dictionary](#) might be useful.

[Song: Great is He](#)

Take a moment to thank God for any answers to prayer or encouragements this week.

Steve's text today is Hebrews 4:12-13

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

This brings me to think about my thoughts and attitudes and reminds me that God knows them. Even though I know his love and grace, I still find that scary because I know he isn't going to like all of them and I have to repent. So, if you would like to, spend a moment in confession, and then let's sing our next song, which is based on Psalm 139.

[Song: Lord you have searched me](#)

Those verses from Hebrews also bring me to think about the power of God's word, and also the comfort of knowing the truth of his word. So I invite you join in this prayer by Sam Hargreaves:

For this prayer, hold a Bible or a device with the Bible in it, or if you don't have one you can make the gestures with your hands.

[Hold the Bible in your open palms.]

Generous God, the Bible is your gift to us. We choose to receive your story with thanks.

[Hold the Bible in front of your mouth.]

Providing God, your word is daily bread for us. Help us to remember those who hunger for your truth.

[Hold the Bible over your heart.]

Challenging God, your word is living and active. Open us up to receive your truth in our hearts.

[Hold the Bible behind one ear.]

Comforting God, your word sings out your everlasting love. Tune our ears to the frequency of your song.

[Hold the Bible out in front of you, pointing the way.]

Guiding God, your word is a light to our path. May we reflect on your ways, and then walk in them.

Amen.

And let's sing Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, which is based on verses from Psalm 119

[Song: Thy word](#)

In the Church Meeting the other week we talked about how we don't have a regular opportunity to give financially as we can't take up an offering like we would do if we were meeting face to face. We agreed we wanted to include the chance to consider giving in our online services.

Some ideas that were mentioned included:

- If you usually give cash into the offering bag you may want to consider putting some away in a jar each week and then bring it in when we next meet in person.
- Some people give by direct debit – talk to Hilary if you want to set that up.

You may have other thoughts about how you might do this too, but for now please take a moment now to think about how God is directing you to give today, and to offer him your thanks for his faithful provision.

Thank you to Anne who has prepared our Prayers for the world:

Hello everyone, I hope this finds you well and at peace in the waiting. We all have experienced difficulties and sorrow in the past year or so but none so much as the people that we will bring before the Lord God Almighty today.

'He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' (Micah 6:8 NIV)
'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.' (Proverbs 31:8-9 NIV)

All over the world, ordinary people with extraordinary passion are speaking out for freedom, justice and equality in their everyday lives but they are in great danger from those who want to silence them.

Authorities worldwide are targeting human rights defenders and their organisations through restrictions on funding, the freezing of assets, travel bans, reprisals against their families, surveillance and smear campaigns.

In 2017 alone, more than 300 human rights defenders (HRDs) were killed. More specifically, **women human rights defenders** (WHRDs) face gender-based violence in addition to the attacks other HRDs might face, including sexual violence, and threats, harassment and defamation campaigns linked to their status as women.

Iran

Monireh, Yasaman and Mojgan handed out flowers to female passengers on a metro train in Tehran. The unveiled women were filmed sharing their hopes for a future where all women in Iran would have the freedom to choose what to wear.

Days after the video went viral on social media, they were charged with sham offences including 'inciting prostitution' for choosing not to wear veils and are now serving 30+ years in prison between them.



Saudi Arabia

Loujain al-Hathloul, Nouf Abdulaziz, Maya'a al-Zahrani and Samar Badawi are among a group of 13 women's human rights activists who are on trial in Saudi Arabia. Following the arrest of these women, Saudi media ran a chilling smear campaign, sharing pictures of the activists with the word 'traitor' stamped in red across their faces. A number of women had been repeatedly tortured by electric shocks and flogging. They may now face up to 20 years in jail for their work on dismantling the decades-old driving ban.

We have all been made aware of Nazanin Zaghari Radcliffe and her situation and there are many others facing similar issues.

Iran

Ahmadreza Djalali, a Swedish-Iranian medical doctor and academic, was on a business trip to Iran when he was arrested on 26 April 2016. He was subjected to torture in order to force him to 'confess' to being a spy. His interrogators threatened to kill or harm him and his children. In December 2020, his wife was told that he was being transferred to



another prison for execution. Currently his execution has not been carried out and has recently been delayed by a month but time is running out.

These are just a few, there are many more that are not widely broadcasted

(Information resourced from Amnesty International UK)

Let us pray:

God of peace and mercy hear our prayers for justice, compassion, peace and mercy.

God of peace and mercy breathe peace into their inner being of those who were accused and falsely imprisoned but now are free, for this we praise and thank you.

God of peace and mercy, breathe on this fractured world, heal the divisions that grow daily wider.

Breathe your spirit on all leaders, that their hearts will no longer be hardened, that they may be filled with compassion and understanding of the rights of all human beings to live with justice and peace.

Breathe your spirit on those who are filled with hate, opening the hand clenched in a fist, that instead it might embrace and release those who are captive, to heal and not harm.

Breathe your spirit on the influential, that their power might be used to bring justice and freedom for the common good of all.

Breathe your spirit on each individual, that they may fear you and obey you, we pray that all will know freedom from conflict, and a life free from reprisals.

Breathe your spirit on us so that we may show compassion and mercy and speak out to defend the rights of others who cannot speak.

God of peace and mercy breathe on this fractured world.

In your holy name we pray

AMEN

As we prepare to listen to this morning's message take a moment to read today's text again - Hebrews 4 verses 12-13

12 *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* **13** *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

You can also listen to the whole of [Hebrews Chapter 4 here](#).

And let's sing this song/prayer

[Song: Your word O Lord](#)

Steve Latham brings us [today's message: 'The Challenging Word'](#)

Take a few moments to reflect on what has been said today. Is there something that you need to consider or do? Please do get in touch with the leaders if you want to discuss or pray about something with them.

As we finish let's remember God's mercy and the power of his Spirit and offer ourselves to him as we go into the coming week.

Song: In the light of your mercy

And let's say these words together for each other, and for those we will be in contact with.

**A new week coming and God is with us
In loving, in caring, in hoping and expecting,
God is with us and never lets us go
God live in us, God live with us, God live through us**

**God keep us faithful through the days that lie ahead
God keep us caring as we see the pain that fills your world
God keep us serving as we seek to do your will
God live in us, God live with us, God live through us**

**God keep us loving toward neighbours near and far
God keep us trusting through the uncertainties of life
God keep us sharing from your generous abundance
God live in us, God live with us, God live through us**

Amen.