

Worship at Home – 6 February 2022

Call to worship: Psalm 95:1-3 says

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

² Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.

³ For the Lord is the great God,

Let's use the inspiration of that psalm as we use the words of a familiar hymn.

1 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise
to thee.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

2 Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore
thee,
casting down their golden crowns
around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down
before thee,
which wert and art and evermore shalt
be.

3 Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness
hide thee,
though the eye of sinful man thy glory
may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside
thee,
perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

4 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in
earth, and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

An opening prayer: Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for this new day and your promise to us to make all things new, both here and in eternity. Though we may be on our own, we join with those around the world who today will worship you; some in large gatherings, others on their own or in small numbers; some in comfort and others in prison or house arrest because of their faith. We remember, Lord, that we are a worldwide family, seeking to honour and worship you. And as part of that family, we find that when we are in the presence of your light, we need to seek your forgiveness ... Though the darkness hide Thee, though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see ... yet because of the forgiveness we find in Jesus, we are able to see you and approach you with confidence. Thank you, Lord. Amen

Please use the words of **The Lord's Prayer** at this point.

A Psalm to read: The psalm for last Sunday in the lectionary was Psalm 71:1-6. Please read it now and find one or two verses or phrases that speak to you in some way. You

could try reading it in more than one version as well as a traditional version. Try reading it in the New Living Translation or the Message, if you have either of these.

Picking up the theme of the Lord, our rock, our refuge, our safe place, let's use the words of "the Lord's my shepherd" – the more modern version.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and
staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Today's reading is Jeremiah 1:4-10 – the call of Jeremiah

Meditation: I remember at 9 or 10 being asked what I wanted to do when I grew up; not knowing about too many jobs, I said I wanted to teach – my parents had said, whatever I did don't be an engineer – my father's profession! Little did I realise that about 12 years later I would fulfil that "ambition" – but that, of course, was not a calling. When I was young – up to say the age of 15, I was in a church choir and, I have to say, that was a dire experience of church; I can only remember one sermon that resonated with me and afterwards I remember thinking prayerfully that I couldn't ever speak for the Lord but – I could sing for him! (You wouldn't want me to sing for you now!) Most of us don't have a clear call like Jeremiah did but our Christian service 'evolves' over time.

Does Jeremiah's call remind you of anyone else in the Bible? I think there are elements of Isaiah's call – where the angel took a coal from the altar and put it on Isaiah's lips to purify them to speak for God and it also reminds me of Moses who said he couldn't speak; he wasn't fluent enough.

A few facts about the time when Jeremiah lived?

- He prophesied for 40 years from 626 to 586BC – the longest of any prophet
- Israel (10 northern tribes) had been taken into captivity by Assyria in around 720 when Samaria was captured – Assyria had a resettlement policy where the tribes were taken to live in other areas and did not return – the 10 lost tribes.
- Jeremiah started through the reign of Josiah; he was one of the good kings, but Jeremiah ended in the time of Zedekiah, one of the baddies.
- Prior to Josiah was his father, Manasseh – a real baddy! He encouraged the practice of idolatry, black magic, necromancy (fortune telling).

- During Josiah/Jeremiah's time the Mosaic law was rediscovered in the temple, and it shaped their message and reforms. Imagine how far Judea had fallen – the fact that they had lost the law of Moses. Josiah and Jeremiah presented the last chance for the tribes of Judea and Benjamin to repent.
- They began with demolishing altars and removing heretical priests.
- The period of Jeremiah was a stormy period, and he was very unpopular for his message and reforms.

Jeremiah's Call

Jeremiah was the son of a priest from Anathoth in the tribe of Benjamin. The Lord said: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart". I knew means I acknowledged, or I chose you. It's a reminder that God knows us and has known us always This is exactly the same as we read of Isaiah (chapter 43): But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel ...

It's easy for us to forget that the Lord has always known us and has plans for us.

Jeremiah went on to say: "I do not know how to speak; I am too young."

In Israel's culture, wisdom came with age, but God isn't constrained by custom. In the west we may choose to work the other way around, focusing on young people and giving them opportunities (we lose much by neglecting the wisdom of age). But God could just as easily choose someone who is "past it" as his chosen messenger! But Jeremiah's greatest attributes were that he had no ambition for this own role, no sense of self-importance or self-confidence.

Jeremiah's message

In verses 7-10 we see Jeremiah's message; he was to "go to everyone I command you to and say whatever I command you to" – without fear! And his commission came in 6 verbs – 4 of demolition and 2 of renewal: uproot, tear down, destroy, overthrow and build, plant. Essentially, any building that was to be done in the nation could not happen until the rubbish had been disposed of; the weeds.

Back to today; how we need prophets at this time; we have seen some secular prophets like Marcus Rashford (and others). And there are Christian men and women with a voice who are perhaps not as well heard as we would wish. We all have a calling; Jesus said: "Follow me"; in some places that is prefaced by "Take up your cross", implying a costliness in following. And many of us may have a godly vision for our society. It is hard to think of a time in my lifetime when we as a nation have been in greater need of a prophetic voice, a call to holiness. It may require us to commit to just 2 or 3 things; firstly, to pray about it, secondly to voice it – maybe talk to friends or family about it, perhaps to write to the paper – Tavistock Times or a national daily and thirdly (if it is appropriate), write to our MP about it.

So, what about a message? As I was thinking about this, I wrote these words:

"You cannot know the blessing of God as a nation until there is honesty, integrity and compassion throughout the leadership of the country – repent, therefore ..." and that

was before the furore of earlier this week. Let us discern the voice of the Lord for today ... and speak. Amen

Prayers for others.

As I write this there are so many needs in our world. Below are some key headings of things/places/people to pray for; please use them as a focus for your prayers but do include other things that come to mind.

On the global stage: for peace in Ukraine/Russia, for freedom and democracy to be restored in Myanmar, for safety and aid distribution in Afghanistan, for relief for those suffering in Yemen, for the worldwide distribution of Covid-19 vaccines.

On the national stage: for stability in government with honesty, integrity and care for the most vulnerable in our society, for trust and justice in our courts and police forces, for wisdom, energy and investment in our health and care sector, for good choices in the way that Covid-19 is tackled.

Locally: for the local councils (Tavistock, West Devon) as they seek to provide for the community with limited resources, for local police, ambulance, health and education services, for local churches as they work together to share the love of God in the community.

Let's use the words of the following hymn to finish:

1 For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord;
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords;
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word,
help us rise and pledge our word.

2 Lead us forward into freedom;
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and
goodness
fear will die and hope increase,
fear will die and hope increase.

3 All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned;
pride of status, race, or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow life's brief span,
may we hallow life's brief span.

4 You, Creator God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind,
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find,
earth its destiny may find.

A closing prayer: Lord, the very fact that another day has been added to my life is due to your undeserved mercy and active presence. As I age another day, let me grow in the knowledge that I am completely accepted and fully loved, despite my flaws and failures, in Christ. And may I live these days for you. Amen

(Based on Tim Keller, "The Songs of Jesus" – from reading for January 27)

