

Call to worship: Psalm 19: 1 - 6

*'The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.
It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth'.*

Hymn - (StF 83)

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore his praises sing.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise the everlasting King!

2 Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress.
Praise him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Glorious in his faithfulness!

3 Fatherlike he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Widely yet his mercy flows!

4 Angels, help us to adore him;
you behold him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

Opening Prayer

Creator, God of time and giver of life, thank you for the gift of feelings and emotions that enable us to enjoy your beautiful creation and know that we are part of it.

Almighty Father, we turn to you, for you alone and our God, the fount of everlasting wisdom, the light of our lives, the soul of our souls, with whom faithful people of every age have found love and life and friendship.

Father God, who burst through human time and space, gave our humanity a new meaning in Jesus of Nazareth, help us to discover every day the newness of life in community, in joyful service and solidarity with others.

Father God, who, through the Holy Spirit continues to renew our time, teach us to walk each day, aware of our human frailty but with the wonder of eternity with you.

Today we offer to you our worship and lift our hearts to you in praise and adoration: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Followed by **The Lord's Prayer**

Scripture reading - 'Concerning Spiritual gifts'

1 Corinthians Ch 12 vs 1 - 11

12 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. **2** You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. **3** Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. **7** Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. **8** To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, **10** to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. **11** All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Worship Song (words by Christopher Idle)

*Music note : For anyone who might like to sing it
- it fits to the traditional melody "Blow the wind
southerly!"*

Spirit of holiness, wisdom and faithfulness,
wind of the Lord, blowing strongly and free:
strength of our serving and joy of our
worshipping
Spirit of God, bring your fulness to me!

1 You came to interpret and teach us effectively
all that the Saviour has spoken and done;
to glorify Jesus is all your activity
promise and gift of the Father and Son:
Spirit of holiness...

2 You came with your gifts to supply all our poverty,
pouring your love on the church in her need;
you came with your fruit for our growth to maturity,
richly refreshing the souls that you feed:
Spirit of holiness...

3 You came to the world in its pride and futility,
warning of dangers, directing us home;
now with us and in us, we welcome your company;
Spirit of Christ, in his name you have come:
Spirit of holiness...

Reflection for today

In my chosen scripture St Paul is writing to the church in Corinth. Chapter 12 offers much for our 'spiritual nourishment' and understanding of the Holy Spirit. It is often overshadowed by the more regularly read Chapter 13 - all about the indispensability of love. Love is of course the first mentioned 'fruit of the Spirit' in his Letter to the Galatians (ch 5). But since the Spirit is 'the source' it probably should come first, so to speak.

In a few weeks time the Christian church worldwide will celebrate Pentecost - the day the Holy Spirit came upon the first apostles. Let us look forward to those celebrations and sermons and special days. For now, in our worship thought today, I encourage you to celebrate (and then indeed put to work) the gifts of the Spirit that are (and have been) in abundance in community, and thereby bring honour and glory to the Lord.

You have just read the scripture in Corinthians Ch 12. Maybe it is a little confusing or even frightening to think that such things are at work among us. But they are. Now is not the time to dissect the passage phrase by phrase. However it is a good time to be informed. (Note that St Paul in the first verse writes 'I don't want you to be uninformed'!)

I ask no more study at this time than you read the few notes that follow here:

Bible footnotes -

Vs 2. At one time the Corinthians has been led by various influences to worship mute idols, but now they are to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Vs 4-6. These verses show the diversity and unity of spiritual gifts. Gifts of grace produced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But they all point in the same direction and serve the same Lord.

Vs 7. Every member of the Body of Christ has been given some spiritual gift that is an evidence of the Spirit's working in their lives. All the gifts are intended to build up the Christian community - they are not to be used for selfish advantage.

Vs 8-10. Note the breadth of the gifts and the way in which a Christian community can together be a mutual blessing.

Vs 11. The Holy Spirit sovereignly determines which gift of gifts each believer should have.

As we sit at home or otherwise use this service for our private devotion and worship, we would do well to appreciate that faith is a living thing, a constantly regenerated and stimulated thing, a dynamic representation of the presence of God in the lives of followers of Jesus Christ.

In today's call to worship Psalm 19 - we read '*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands*'. I believe this to be true but I also believe that we are called to give expression to what we hear, see and understand about our relationship with our creator God. Christopher Idle was not true to his surname - but he was true to his Lord, and shared his thoughts poetically.

The work of the Holy Spirit in us all, if only we would recognise it.

The scriptures remind us :

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

The Servant King song 'includes the line' - *For it is Christ we are serving.*

How may we all be more fruitful this coming week? A few year's ago our house-group followed a very encouraging study course called 'Fruitfulness on the front line'. (Author - Mark Greene). Highly recommended by me. In a key chapter called Ministering Grace and Love he emphasises the principle of Christian outreach in terms of actions that are beyond what we have to do.

That is to say - Grace doesn't have to, but Grace does. Grace is on the lookout for opportunities. Love doesn't have to. But love does. Love is alert to possibilities. I hope you get the sense of being prepared to go the extra mile (and even more).

May we, in the days and weeks ahead, seek to use our gifting and to encourage those around about us to use theirs, in the service of our Lord. So that we might even join with the heavenly realms in offering praise and worship to God. Amen

Prayers for others and ourselves

Sovereign God of compassion and care, wholeness and healing, forgiveness and love, restoration and hope, we pray now on behalf of a world, a local community, that continues to be fragmented and fractured by greed and selfishness, hatred and violence. Things that are dark in contrast to the Light of Christ that has come into the world. Lord have mercy.

Where and when we have walked in ways that bring no positive witness to the Church or glory to you name. Lord have mercy.

Where world leaders mis-use or abuse their positions of authority, where dishonesty infiltrates regimes, Lord have mercy. We pray for justice, honesty, accountability, transparency and fairness for all.

Where individuals and families are hurting, hungry, afraid of what the future holds, raise up your people to get alongside and encourage, offering the peace of Christ in all situations.

By your grace alone, grant your Church a fresh infusion of your Spirit's power in order that it may be inspired to bring about transformation and reconciliation in every sector of our society around the world.

We bring to mind those people or places for which we have a personal concern at this time, naming them in the silence of our minds before God, confident that he hears and answers our prayers.

May the peoples of your world know and experience your glorious grace Father. May we, by your mercy, be instrumental in bringing that about in this corner of the vineyard where you have placed us and set us to work.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Dedication hymn (StF 664 - words by Marjorie Dobson)

1 Lord, you call us to your service, each in our own way.
Some to caring, loving, healing ; some to preach, or pray ;
some to work with quiet learning, truth discerning,
day by day.

2 Life for us is always changing in the work we share.
Christian love adds new dimensions to the way we care.
For we know that you could lead us, as you need us,
anywhere.

3 Seeing life from your perspective makes your challenge plain,
as your heart is grieving over those who live in pain.
Teach us how, by our compassion, you may fashion
hope again.

4 Lord, we set our human limits on the work we do.
Send us your directing Spirit, pour your power through,
that we may be free in living and in giving
all for you.

Blessing

May God the creator bless you. May God the Son walk with you. May God the Spirit lead your lives with love. **Amen**