

18 October 2020



ST. PETER'S CHURCH

Bayhall Road, Tunbridge Wells

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"

Revelation 5:12

You have called us out of darkest night
Into Your glorious light
That we may sing the wonders of
The risen Christ

May our every breath retell the grace
That broke into our strife
With boundless love and deepest joy
With endless life

May the peoples praise You
Let the nations be glad
All Your blessing comes
That we may praise
May praise the Name of Jesus

All the earth is Yours and all within
Each harvest is Your own
And from Your hand we give to You
To make Christ known

May the seeds of mercy grow in us
For those who have not heard
May songs of praise build lives of grace
To spread Your Word
May the peoples praise You....

This our holy privilege to declare
Your praises and Your name
To every nation, tribe and tongue,
Your church proclaims
 May the peoples praise You....

Holy, holy is the Lord Almighty
Worthy, worthy is the Lamb Who was slain
Holy, holy is the Lord Almighty
All creation praise Your glorious Name
 May the peoples praise You....

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CONFESSION & ASSURANCE

Lord, we have sinned, without considering how much you love us.
You see our sins more clearly than we can ourselves.

Lord, you know when we are indifferent to your Word, the Bible;
how often we forget to pray; the times we come unwillingly to worship;
and yet we turn to you when we are in trouble.

Lord, you know when we are untruthful and when we think evil of others.
You see our anger and unfairness to our friends.
You know how hard it is for us to forgive.

Forgive us and make us clean, so that we can obey your call
to take up your cross and follow you.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

O great God of highest heaven
Occupy my lowly heart
Own it all and reign supreme
Conquer every rebel power
Let no vice or sin remain
That resists Your holy war
You have loved and purchased me
Make me Yours forevermore

I was blinded by my sin
Had no ears to hear Your voice
Did not know Your love within
Had no taste for heaven's joys
Then Your Spirit gave me life
Opened up Your Word to me
Through the gospel of Your Son
Gave me endless hope and peace

Help me now to live a life
That's dependent on Your grace
Keep my heart and guard my soul
From the evils that I face
You are worthy to be praised
With my every thought and deed
O great God of highest heaven
Glorify Your Name through me

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READING: Luke 11 verses 1 - 13

STATEMENT OF FAITH

God remembered his promise to reconcile the world to himself; he has come among us in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh. He is the long-awaited Saviour, fully human and fully divine, conceived by the Spirit of God and born of the virgin Mary. Being both God and man, Jesus is the only Mediator between God and his people. He alone paid the debt of our sin; there is no other Saviour! In him the Father chose those whom he would save. His electing love sustains our hope: God's grace is free to save sinners who offer nothing but their need for mercy.

I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon the sons of men,
or why, as shepherd, he should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary,
when Bethlehem's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the saviour, saviour of the world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three-and-thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted,
and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
and lifts the burden from the heavy-laden,
for yet the saviour, saviour of the world, is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour,
when he the saviour, saviour of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when, at his bidding, every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when all the hearts of men with love are filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
and myriad, myriad human voices sing,
and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, will answer:
'At last the saviour, saviour of the world, is king!'

William Y. Fullerton.

READING: Luke 18 verses 1 - 8

SERMON NOTES FROM PHIL:

One of the stories Lucy and I enjoy reading to our children is 'The Great Granny Gang' by Judith Kerr OBE. It's a humorous tale of fearless grannies like Maureen the mechanic, Madge the lion tamer and Maud with her pneumatic drill who come to the rescue whatever the crisis. When granny Mavis Jones spots a robbery from her hot air balloon, she cries 'Granny alert!' to get the gang together. The culprits are young 'hoodies' stealing cakes from the local bakery. They laugh when Mavis challenges them until the rest of her gang arrives accompanied by tools, lions and crocodiles! The youths quickly surrender as the grannies restore order.

The determination and resilience of these grannies are matched by the persistent widow in Jesus' parable. The judge's fear that she might attack him (literally 'give him a black eye,' verse 5!) is probably exaggeration but she clearly wasn't going to back down until she got justice. She didn't have a gang or a lion. In fact, as a widow in Jesus' day she would have been helpless and vulnerable without family to fight her cause. All she had in her favour were justice (which didn't count for much before an unjust judge) and persistence. But she kept coming and coming until the judge eventually decided to seek justice for her out of self-preservation. He didn't care about God or people; he just wanted peace.

Jesus tells us to listen to what the unjust judge says (verse 6). It was because she kept on bothering him and wouldn't give up that he gave her what she wanted. The message about persistence is clear and Jesus helpfully states the point of his parable so that we don't miss it: we should always pray and not give up (verse 1). The way in which we pray should be like the way in which the widow kept pleading her cause before the judge. However, to feel the real weight and worth of the parable we need to take on board the contrasts Jesus makes between the unjust judge and God because God is nothing like that judge.

The judge didn't fear God or care for people. He just loved himself and

acted out of self-interest. By contrast, God is love and couldn't love us more. The widow meant nothing to the judge whereas God has chosen us as "his elect" (verse 7). The judge was unjust. He refused justice (verse 4) and didn't think he owed it to God or anyone whereas God is the just Judge and he goes to great lengths to uphold justice at great cost to himself (cf. Romans 3:21-26). So then, if a rotten judge like that can be persuaded to act justly, how much more can we rely on God to bring about justice for us? If this widow can persevere in pleading her cause before an unjust judge, how much more can we persevere in prayer as those who know the just God. We have direct access to our perfect Father who loves to give good gifts - the best gifts - to his children (Luke 11:13). We have very good reasons to keep praying and not lose heart. If we desire justice, as those marked by weak resolve and mixed motives, we can be sure that God desires it more and wants to give it to us.

What do you pray about when it comes to justice? What cause do you plead before God? It could be that you have been wronged by somebody or that you pray about the suffering of others. Perhaps you have been praying for the salvation of a loved one for years or for reconciliation with an old friend. Whatever it is, we all face the temptation to keep quiet and give up (otherwise Jesus wouldn't see the need to share a parable about persistent prayer!). It's very hard to keep praying when we don't see an answer, or at least not the answer we want when we want it. This year, of all years, it's tempting to tire of prayer and tire of life itself. That's why we need to hear Jesus' message to us today: keep praying and don't give up. In those moments when we wonder whether he's listening, let's remember that our prayers don't depend on us (who we are or how we ask) but on God our Father who gives generously.

Jesus concludes with a sharp twist (verse 8): "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" The question is not whether God can or will give but whether Jesus will find faith when he returns. The faith he will look for is expressed in prayerful dependence on the Father. Rather than worrying about whether God will answer (he will,

according to his will), we should get on and ask and keep asking. Prayerlessness is faithlessness but God's chosen ones keep coming to him again and again and long for the Day when he will come to us as Judge to bring about full and final justice once and for all. So keep praying and don't give up.

PRAYERS

Thank God for the privilege of prayer - that we have access to him as our perfect heavenly Father who loves to give good gifts, not least the Holy Spirit.

Ask God to help you keeping praying and not lost heart. Bring your concerns and requests to him and pray that he would give you faith to persevere until Jesus returns.

Ask God to provide for the financial needs of the church as we face a sizeable deficit this year due to the corona virus. Pray for generous and cheerful giving to clear the deficit and maintain support for our mission partners.

Faithful Lord, whose steadfast love never ceases and whose mercies never come to an end: grant us the grace to trust you and to receive the gifts of your love, new every morning, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

J.M.Scriven

PRAYER

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Romans 15:13