

Sunday 10th Aug '25

(prepared from Roots)

Call to worship

Based on Psalm 33

Happy are the people whose God is the Lord,
the people he has chosen.

As God's chosen and beloved people,
let us come to him in worship
and receive from God whatever God
wishes to bless us with this day.

Hymn StF 645 Will your anchor hold

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift, or firm remain.

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!*

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?
While the surges rave, and the wild winds blow,
shall the angry waves then your barque o'erflow?

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,
when the waters cold chill your latest breath?
On the rising tide you can never fail,
while your anchor holds within in veil:

Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will your anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past for evermore?

Priscilla Jane Owens (1829-1907)

Prayers

Loving God,
we lay our lives before you and come to worship today
in hope that is heart-shaped.
We come with faith that is Christ-shaped.
We come in trust that is kingdom-shaped.
We come to be shaped, empowered and enabled by
you, and to share our hope, faith and trust with
others, to your glory.

We are sorry, gracious God, for the fragility of our
faith, which waivers when things get tough,
wobbles when confidence gets low,
gives up when the road gets steep,
loses sight of how far you have brought us
and forgets that you are there by our side.
Please forgive us, bolster us, empower us and use us
to build up the faith of others.

Eternal God, your faith in us doesn't waiver,
your love for us doesn't wane;
your trust never flickers;
your grace never fails.
And so, with thankful hearts, we receive your
forgiveness and go forward in faith, in your strength
and with your blessing.

The Lord's Prayer

Reading Hebrews 11 1-3, 8-16

Thought for the week from Roots

Hebrews was written for people who were in danger of starting to lose interest in Jesus. It is possible that some were becoming disillusioned with faith because of personal issues. Most of the previous chapters deliberately remind people of how wonderful Jesus is – in particular, that he is the real high priest (compared with the shadows and copies on this earth; Hebrews 4:14-15).

Chapter 11 is an encouragement to keep on believing and to keep on going in faith. Abraham and Sarah are held up as exemplars of people who kept going in faith when the odds seemed to be stacked against them. The writer draws on Genesis 15:1-6 and the promise of an heir for Abram and Sarai (as they were then called), from whom descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky will come.

It is an inspiring story and has been an encouragement to many who have struggled, not least with the acute pain of childlessness, to keep on going in faith. There are many people who can testify to the joy of having their prayers answered against the odds, often having walked very painful pathways. Michelle Obama in her book *Becoming* tells of the struggles she and Barack had in conceiving and the pain they went through before their two daughters were born – daughters that brought them untold joy.

Such stories should be rightly celebrated but, alongside that, there is an ever-present need to be sensitive to and supportive of those whose stories do not have the hoped-for ending. Sheridan Voysey's book *Resurrection Year* helpfully shares how he and his wife Merryn coped with this. The writer to the Hebrews is refreshingly honest about this. In verse 13, he speaks of those who 'died in faith without having received the promises'.

Why some prayers are apparently answered and others are not will always be a mystery on this earth. But, as the writer of Hebrews reminds us, this earth is not the only reality, for there is also a better place – a heavenly one; a place where every tear will be wiped away and all will be made whole. This vision is offered as an encouragement to keep on going both to those who struggle and to those who don't. One day all things will be made new but in the meantime the need for a better country, a heavenly one, here on earth is all too apparent. We keep on going in faith not just for our own blessing and benefit but on behalf of others who long for peace, for justice (think of *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*), for freedom; on behalf of those clinging on to their faith and needing to know that God has not abandoned them.

Every week we pray for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. Where might that prayer be particularly

urgent today? How might we be part of the answer to that prayer?

Prayers for others

Lord, at the start of this new week, we pause to thank you for the treasure we have in our lives: family members... friends... places... activities... favourite food... all of which bring colour, beauty and joy to our lives. We thank you for all these people, places and things which you have given us.

Lord of the treasure store:

help us to seek for your treasure.

We thank you for the treasure of our bodies and all we can do with them: eyes to see your beauty, ears to listen to music and words, the ability to play, make, feel and do. Help us to use our bodies for your glory this week: perhaps by being creative or helping others in some way...

Lord of the treasure store:

help us to seek for your treasure.

Lord God, we thank you for this season of holidays. We thank you for the beauty of the world around us and, for many, the opportunity to stop and stand and stare for a while. We ask that, whether we are going on holiday or not, this may be a week when we can take the opportunity to be still and know that you are God. We pray for all the Christian camps, house parties and missions that happen over the summer, asking that young people will respond to the treasure of who you are. We pray for all those whose holidays are being spoilt by train strikes, airport delays and long queues of traffic. Whatever our circumstances this week:

Lord of the treasure store:

help us to seek for your treasure.

Lord God, we know that not everyone in the world is experiencing times of treasure right now. We lift to you those who have had to flee their homes due to war or natural disasters. We remember those who live in refugee camps or take their lives into their hands by trying to cross the Channel to the UK. We pray for all who are ill, particularly those known to us... and we lift to you those who are sad and sorrowful at this time.

Lord, in the midst of their pain, difficulty and despair, may they somehow find the treasure that is you. Help us to be treasure-bringers to those who need your comfort.

Lord of the treasure store:

help us to seek for your treasure.

Lord, we are aware that, for so many of us, earthly treasure seems in short supply right now. We pray for those who are struggling to make ends meet as the cost of living soars. We remember children who may go hungry during the school holidays. We thank you for our foodbanks and all they can do to help, even though we wish that we had no need for them. Help

us to keep our eyes and ears open to those who need our love and support at this time.

Lord of the treasure store:

help us to seek for your treasure.

Heavenly Father, we offer the week ahead to you now. We know that your treasure doesn't come to us, we need to seek it out. Give us vision and wisdom this week to look for your treasure and set our hearts there. Help us to be treasure seekers and treasure bringers this week, as we share what we have found with those around us.

We ask all these things in the name of our great Treasure, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Hymn StF 476 One more step

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go;
from the old things to the new
keep me travelling along with you:
and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn;
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me.

As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go
you'll be telling me the way, I know:

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you:

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you:

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

Closing prayer

As you go, may the God of Abraham and Sarah go with you.

May you be ready to meet Jesus whenever he comes to you, and may you know yourself held within the love of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.