

Sunday 16th August '26

(prepared from Roots)

Call to worship

Come let's worship God from the very heart of our being. Let us be open and respond to him, with all we are, and all we hope to be.

Hymn StF 251 Jesus Christ is waiting

Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets;
no one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too:
make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait with you.

Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets,
where injustice spirals and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too:
in the Kingdom's causes let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets,
curing those who suffer, touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too:
let my care be active, healing, just like you.

Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets,
where each sign of hatred he, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too:
where good conquers evil let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets,
'Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet.'
Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few:
walk one step before me; I will follow you.
John L Bell (b1949) and Graham Maule (b1958)

Prayers

Loving Lord, we come to you today with open hands and hearts, minds and ears, to receive all you have for us. We come in love, we come just as we are, we come in anticipation. Meet with us, we pray.

Father God of all Mercy, in your generosity you gave your Son Jesus to unlock our hearts and bestow the promise of everlasting life. Jesus, you blessed us by your loving grace, filling us with your healing love. Holy Spirit, you continue to bless and anoint us, drawing us into closer harmony, in adoring worship.
Merciful God, Glorious Saviour, Anointing Holy Spirit
We love and adore you.

Father, life is far from easy at times. We can experience pain in various forms - through humiliation, rejection, or prejudice. Words can be like arrows piercing the heart. Actions can inflict wounds that can fester. Father, you offer everyone forgiveness. Please help us to forgive others.
It can feel hard to forgive those who hurt us, but you

can lead us in the process. Help us also to forgive ourselves, when we have been the ones inflicting pain.
Forgive us. Cleanse us. Draw us closer. Give us healthy hearts and minds that reflect you in all we say and do.

Jesus, you came in love, showering us with goodness despite our wrongdoing. You shed your blood to atone for our sins and reconciled us to the Father.
Through your loving grace and mercy, you freely bless us with forgiveness.

The Lord's Prayer

Reading Genesis 45: 1-15

Thought for the week from Roots

Reconciled without revenge

Picture the scene: Joseph is now an important person in Egypt who has helped prepare the country to survive the famine. He now stands, looking at his brothers who have come from the neighbouring land to buy grain. Joseph, whose life had changed at their hands, looks at them again as they ask him for help. How will he respond to the people who forced him from his home by selling him into slavery?

Joseph, no longer able to keep his brothers at arm's length, weeps. His emotional response comes from his heart and his love for his brothers and family. It comes from the core of who he is; a man who draws his strength from God.

His response is perhaps unexpected compared with the actions and attitudes we see around us today. In Joseph's shoes, would most seek revenge for what had happened? Joseph could have reminded the brothers of his dreams, where they bowed down to him, but instead, he gives glory to God.

He attributes his success to God, who has guided him throughout the ups and downs of his life, leading him to Pharaoh and successfully preparing for and managing the famine years in Egypt. His trust and belief in God's guidance reassure his brothers that Joseph has forgiven them and is looking for reconciliation.

As Joseph weeps, a reaction showing his deep emotions at reuniting with them, he invites them to come closer to him, to close the gap physically and in reconciliation.

Joseph acts with generosity that comes from who he is, shown in his steps of reconciliation and his offer to provide for them and the family through the remaining years of famine.

What about us? How do we respond to people or situations that have impacted our lives? All around us, we see people locally and globally engage in 'revenge culture', which can encourage us to see this as an

expected reaction. Is reconciliation a faraway dream impossible to achieve? Where might we see opportunities to take a step towards someone, to say 'sorry', to offer hope that reconciliation and restoration are possible? For some people generosity, forgiveness and reconciliation with people who have caused trauma and damage seems far away. Forgiveness is often a process – it's not always something we're ready or able to do, but asking God to help us with the next step, whatever the next step is, is a start, knowing that the first step may be to ask God to be willing to consider any steps.

Joseph's response to his brothers suggests that deep within us we too can be people responding and acting with love and generosity, characteristics that come from God, whom we hold in our hearts. Our challenge may be to find opportunities to act 'above and beyond' what is expected of us and to continue to develop an attitude of generosity that comes from the heart of who we are.

Prayers for others

Father, we pause to think of all those in our lives who bring your love to us. We thank you for those who first taught us of you; for any who, over the years, have encouraged us. We bring them to mind now and thank you for the part they played in making us who we are now. We pray for those we live with or spend time with regularly. Thank you for the ways they make us better people. And we think of all those for whom we have care and responsibility. We remember those who are sick, sorrowful or sad at this time. Help us all to share the joys and the pains of being human by respecting each other and seeing everyone through your eyes. Father, help us to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves:

enlarge our hearts to see others as you see them.

Father, we pray for all those in our society who cannot stand up for themselves or feel they do not have a voice. We pray for young children, particularly those in care. We think of those who live on the streets of our cities, or those moved from hotel room to hotel room, never able to get a foot on the ladder. . We pray for the elderly, trapped in isolation and loneliness. We think of refugees and all those trapped in a cycle of human exploitation. For prisoners. For all who live in abusive relationships. For those who have had to flee their homes because of war or natural disasters.

Father, the list seems endless. Father, show us how and where we can begin to be the answer to some of these really pressing needs.

Father, help us to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves:

enlarge our hearts to see others as you see them.

Father, we pray for this church community. Help us to be a place of welcome, not just on Sundays but

always, even if we cannot have the building open. Help us to be prepared to leave our comfort zones and speak to new people, unfamiliar people, those who don't seem to be like us. Make us to be a truly inclusive body, a family of the people of God. Show us how to be your hands, feet, ears and eyes in our communities, bringing the refreshment of your all-embracing love to everyone we meet.

Father, help us to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves:

enlarge our hearts to see others as you see them.

Father, as we go forward into a new week, go ahead of us, we pray. We offer you our relationships, our familiar places, our unfamiliar situations, our fears, our joys. We offer you all that we are, knowing that you will never turn us away. We are always welcome in your presence, so remind us to come freely and frequently to spend time with you. We commit our ways to you in the week ahead, offering you our time and our gifts and asking that you would use them for the good of others and for your glory.

Father, help us to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves: **enlarge our hearts to see others as you see them. Engage our minds to remember that we are your children. Encourage us in all our relationships, to bring your love to others. Amen.**

Hymn StF 489 All I once held dear

All I once held dear, built my life upon,
all this world revers, and wars to own,
all I once thought gain I have counted loss:
spent and worthless now, compared to this.
*Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire is to know you more,
to be found in you and known as yours.
To possess by faith what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift of righteousness.

Oh, to know the power of your risen life,
and to know you in your sufferings.
To become like you in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b1950)

Closing prayer

Let us continue to hold before God the things we care about deeply, asking for his Spirit's wisdom and guidance as we act and respond with generosity and love

Amen.