

Sunday 3rd Aug '25

(prepared from Roots)

Call to worship

Downhearted or inspired,
fed-up or joyful,
eager or reluctant,
we come just as we are,
to be with God just as God is.
Let us worship God together.

Hymn StF 28 Jesus calls us

Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fall or fail.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

John L Bell (b1949) and Graham Maule (b1958)

Prayers

Lord God,
we come with our love seeking your love afresh.
We come with our questions seeking your guidance.
We come with our certainties seeking your challenge.
We come with our sinfulness seeking your forgiveness.
So come, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and be
whatever you need to be to us today.

Living God, we lay down now all that weighs heavily
on our minds and ask to be clothed in hope. We bring
all our mistakes and ask to be clothed in
understanding. We bring all that limits our vision and
diminishes our love and ask to be clothed with a new
focus and a fresh start.

God of all, forgive us when we put others down
and make them feel small,
acting as if we are great.
Forgive us when we put on airs and graces,
acting as if we are more precious than others.
Forgive us, clothe us in humility, integrity and
generosity,
and give us a fresh perspective on ourselves and those
we meet.
We ask this in Jesus' name.

Creator God, though the sky is vast, each star can
shine.
Though the ocean is mighty, each wave can dance.
Though the world is noisy, each silent cry is heard.
Though we are so small, your grace lifts us up
and we can trust that we are forgiven, cherished
and forever clothed in your life-giving love.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Reading Colossians 3 1-11

Thought for the week from Roots

The character of Kate in the 2019 film *Last Christmas* would certainly have been able to identify with our reading today from *Ecclesiastes*. Life for her was rubbish. The earthly things listed in *Colossians 5* were pretty much all part of her experience and disaffection, and she really did hate her toil as one of Santa's helpers in an all-year-round Christmas shop.

And then came Tom, who encouraged and helped her to 'look up' and get a new focus on life. There is something very Christ-like about the character of Tom. He is kind and, just like Jesus in the Gospels, he does not exploit a vulnerable woman but restores in her a sense of dignity and worth. He helps Kate to look beyond herself, introducing her to a homeless charity where she learns to love volunteering. Tom helps Kate be reconciled to herself, which enables her to be reconciled to her family. And why does this all happen? Spoiler alert! Because just as in the Wham! song *Last Christmas*, it transpires that Tom had given Kate his heart – literally – as Tom had died in a road accident and his heart has been transplanted into Kate and thereby saved her life.

In *Colossians* chapter 3, Paul encourages us, indeed urges us to change our focus, to look up and 'seek the things that are above' (*Colossians 3:1*). There is a particular value in doing this when life feels like *Ecclesiastes 1*. When Christ becomes 'all and in all', then all things are possible.

One person who can testify to that is Trudy Makepeace. In her stunning book *Abused Addicted Free*, she courageously tells the story of the depths she plumbed through a series of dangerous addictions and abusive relationships. Jesus saved and healed her. He gave her a new focus in life. Trudy writes:

'Since I came to know Jesus, my heart has always been to make him known to anyone and everyone. However, I have always been particularly drawn to the most down-trodden

and broken, perhaps because of my own story. I have seen the evidence and power of how the word of God worked out in my life. If he can do it for me and countless others, he can do it for you. There is no one beyond the reach of his mercy, love, forgiveness and healing.

My life is evidence of the fact that God will take the good, the bad and the ugly, and if you trust him, he will make something beautiful out of it all. As we allow God to work in us and heal us, he takes our brokenness and turns it into a blessing by using those things in our lives to bless and help others.'

(Trudy Makepeace, *Abused Addicted Free*, Sarah Grace Publishing, 2021, p226)

What is noteworthy in both the fictitious Kate and the real-life Trudy is how their change of focus resulted in the desire and drive to help others to leave places of Ecclesiastes-like despair and find wholeness and freedom. May it be so for us too.

Prayers for others

Lord our God, your abundance, your love, your provision, your blessing amazes us day by day. With such knowledge we bring our prayers for others in need this day.

We pray for those in need of food on the table when the cupboard is bare or when the crops have failed. No one should need overseas aid and yet they do. No one should need to use Foodbanks and yet they do. No one should go hungry and yet they do. Help us to do all we can to help feed the hungry.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer.

For those who are hungry for love, hungry for care, hungry for compassion, hungry for purpose, may they find what they need and what they seek from the abundance of your richness to the world.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer.

For those who don't seek abundance, but simply seek for a shelter to surround them, a roof to protect them, a place to call home, a place to belong, a place to be the best they can be.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer.

For the fearful and the frightened, the bewildered and bemused as the pace of life overtakes them, for those who feel they no longer belong where they used to, they no longer understand what they used to.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer.

For the NHS and Social Care and Social Workers who strive to see people as a whole and to meet their needs when all around them there are pressures and cutbacks and shortages and complaints.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer.

For governments across the world as they readjust to life's changing needs and demands, may they have

open eyes to see the real needs, open ears to hear the cries of the needy, open hands to reach out in compassion and are and open minds to change their ways when needed.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer.

For those participating and organising the Commonwealth games, that they may be a games of friendship, hospitality and fairness. That all who share may feel respected and appreciated, safe and secure.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer.

For those known to us who need our prayers today...in the silence of this moment we bring their names and offer them to God.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer.

For ourselves that we may live fruitful, helpful lives, treating others with respect, dignity, fairness and worth. That we loved as we are loved and as Jesus commanded.

God of abundance:

hear our prayer. Amen.

Hymn StF 548 Blessed assurance

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine:
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love:

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest –
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love:

Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Cosby) (1820-1915)

Closing prayer

As we go, Lord, please help us to look up,
seeking the things that honour and please you,
letting go of the things that damage us and others,
clothed with Christ-likeness,
to live and work to your praise and glory.

Amen.