

Waterloo United Free Church
Sunday Worship 15th Nov 2020,
John Smith

Welcome to worship with Waterloo United Free Church. Though we are again separated in time and place, we are united in praising and serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Call to worship: Psalm 90; 1-12.

Hear the words of the psalmist.

O Lord, you have always been our home.
Before you created the hills
or brought the world into being,
you were eternally God,
and will be God forever.
You tell us to return to what we were;
you change us back to dust.
A thousand years to you are like one day;
they are like yesterday, already gone,
like a short hour in the night.
You carry us away like a flood;
we last no longer than a dream.
We are like weeds that sprout in the morning,
that grow and burst into bloom,
then dry up and die in the evening.
We are destroyed by your anger;
we are terrified by your fury.
You place our sins before you,
our secret sins where you can see them.
Our life is cut short by your anger;
it fades away like a whisper.
Seventy years is all we have—
eighty years, if we are strong;
yet all they bring us is trouble and sorrow;
life is soon over, and we are gone.
Who has felt the full power of your anger?
Who knows what fear your fury can bring?
Teach us how short our life is,
so that we may become wise.

A prayer of praise

God made the whole universe, the earth, the sun,
the moon, the stars in their galaxies.
God made the land, the sea, day and night,
summer and winter, springtime and autumn, a
rhythm of nature that endures.
God made plants, animals, fish in the sea, God
made us, to enjoy his creation. Let us take time

to appreciate all that God has made; let us see it
with fresh eyes each day.

Let us praise the Lord --- **Hallelujah**

God has cared for his people throughout all of
history - first for the Hebrew people, whom he
rescued from slavery - then God sent his only son,
Jesus, to live among us and to die for us so that
we all might be free from guilt and sin. We thank
God for His forgiveness, for His willingness to
forgive us however many times we fail Him.

Let us praise the Lord --- **Hallelujah**

God sent his Holy Spirit, to stay with us, to
comfort and strengthen us, to enable us to
continue His work here on earth. Let us see the
needs around us, especially of those who do not
know God. He is with us when times are good and
when times are difficult. Let us be ready to tell of
His goodness to us.

Let us praise the Lord --- **Hallelujah**

Accept our praises, Lord, bless our worship now.

Amen

Hymn

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven;
To His feet thy tribute bring!
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like me His praise should sing?
Praise Him! praise Him!
Praise Him! praise Him!
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise Him for His grace and favour
To our fathers in distress!
Praise Him still the same for ever,
Slow to chide, and swift to bless!
Praise Him! praise Him!
Praise Him! praise Him!
Glorious in His faithfulness.

Fatherlike He tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame He knows.
In His hands He gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Praise Him! praise Him!
Praise Him! praise Him!
Widely as His mercy flows!

Angels in the height adore Him;
Ye behold Him face to face:
Sun and moon, bow down before Him,
Dwellers all in time and space.
Praise Him! praise Him!
Praise Him! praise Him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

Prayers of Intercession

So much of life is still governed by the response to the coronavirus pandemic. We pray for healing for those who are suffering from the virus; we pray for comfort for those who are separated from those they love; we pray for encouragement and peace for those who are confined to their home and feel that life is on hold; we pray for wise decisions as the government tries to keep infection under control. We pray that people will work together to behave responsibly.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We recognize that while things around us change, so much stays the same. We recognise that we are still comfortable compared to those in so much of the world. We remember particularly the orphanage of the Home of Hope in Mchinji, and pray for the continuing need of the children there, for shelter, for food, for education. We pray that Your love will uphold them to meet their needs beyond any help we are able to give.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the Church, in Waterloo and throughout the world, as we meet separately, but together in Your Spirit. We know that God hears us and looks after us wherever we are when we pray, and however we are able to praise Him. We trust in our God, who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, who loves us and cares for us whatever our situation. We pray for those who have gone out to other countries to take the love of God to those who do not know Him. We pray that while they may feel far from those they love, that they may also know the peace of God in their hearts.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord's Prayer We join with Christians across the world in the prayer our Lord taught us:

**Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen**

Reading: Matthew 25; 14-30

The Parable of the Three Servants

“At that time the Kingdom of heaven will be like this. Once there was a man who was about to leave home on a trip; he called his servants and put them in charge of his property. He gave to each one according to his ability: to one he gave five thousand gold coins, to another he gave two thousand, and to another he gave one thousand. Then he left on his trip. The servant who had received five thousand coins went at once and invested his money and earned another five thousand. In the same way the servant who had received two thousand coins earned another two thousand. But the servant who had received one thousand coins went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.

“After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The servant who had received five thousand coins came in and handed over the other five thousand. ‘You gave me five thousand coins, sir,’ he said. ‘Look! Here are another five thousand that I have earned.’

‘Well done, you good and faithful servant!’ said his master. ‘You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large amounts. Come on in and share my happiness!’ Then the servant who had been given two thousand coins came in and said, ‘You gave me two thousand coins, sir. Look! Here are another two thousand that I have earned.’

‘Well done, you good and faithful servant!’ said his master. ‘You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large

amounts. Come on in and share my happiness! Then the servant who had received one thousand coins came in and said, 'Sir, I know you are a hard man; you reap harvests where you did not plant, and you gather crops where you did not scatter seed. I was afraid, so I went off and hid your money in the ground. Look! Here is what belongs to you.'

'You bad and lazy servant!' his master said. 'You knew, did you, that I reap harvests where I did not plant, and gather crops where I did not scatter seed? Well, then, you should have deposited my money in the bank, and I would have received it all back with interest when I returned. Now, take the money away from him and give it to the one who has ten thousand coins. For to every person who has something, even more will be given, and he will have more than enough; but the person who has nothing, even the little that he has will be taken away from him. As for this useless servant—throw him outside in the darkness; there he will cry and gnash his teeth.'"

Sermon

"to every person who has something, even more will be given"

So many of Jesus' stories make sense when we see them in the light of our latest lockdown. Here we have a master with servants. They are used, we assume to doing as they are told; that is their comfort zone. Suddenly everything in their world changes, they are given their master's property and put in charge. We are told that two of them invested the money, and they seem to have achieved 100% interest, albeit after 'a long time'. Apart from wondering how they achieved this, we can see from the master's comment to the third servant that he could at least 'have put the money in the bank to receive interest', that the other two servants, the good and faithful ones, have put some thought and effort into their management of their master's resources. I wonder how we react to this story. Clearly, it is meant as a description of the way that the Kingdom of Heaven works on earth. So, do we identify ourselves with the good and faithful servants, and believe that we have used our talents wisely for our master, or do we feel that

we have been given so little that we can't make a difference? Or, more likely, do we feel that we could do more if we had started with more. Lockdown has had different effects on different people, in terms of health, economically, mentally. Some people have seen their livelihoods destroyed, others have benefitted from the new emphasis on online activity.

Just for a moment, consider who are the heroes of the pandemic. Some, we identify at once as workers in the NHS. They are doing their usual jobs, but doing them in difficult circumstances with more than the usual number of patients, and needing to take special care over not allowing the virus to spread, while being in close contact with those who are infected. Then, there are so-called key workers who need to keep the fabric of society intact. Some, working in care homes, are seen to be close to the centre of action of the virus. Others may be essentially unseen, but we still expect a consistent supply of water, of gas and electricity, of waste disposal, and so on, whatever else is going on. Supermarkets should be open, and shelves stacked. Many of these 'key workers' do some of the least regarded jobs for low wages, and hardly appear on our usual list of heroes.

We should also remember, at this stage, Captain Tom. If you were to think of a (then) 99 year old, just recovering from an operation, you would not see a great future ahead, or a life of great significance. What does the psalm say? "Seventy years is all we have- eighty years, if we are strong; yet all they bring us is trouble and sorrow; life is soon over, and we are gone." You would say that everything he achieved in his life was in the past. If you look at what he did, it was really just the exercise that was needed as part of his recovery programme. His family organised a small online donation site so that he could make a contribution to the hospital that had cared for him. What made this different was that he committed to the task. This commitment resonated with the nation, who were inspired not just with what Tom was doing, but with what they could do also. There was so little that he could do, but he did it, and did so with good grace and humility. Many others have made

similar commitments. It is part of what it means to be in the kingdom of heaven, and it is what distinguishes the 'good and faithful' servants from the 'bad and useless'.

Jesus says: "to every person who has something, even more will be given", and you will notice in the story that everyone has something. We have a commission to spread the gospel, and often the opportunities seem few and unlikely, especially now, and we don't feel up to the task. All we are asked to do is to remain committed, to do what we can do, and not to fret about what we can't. Then, even more will be given.

Hymn

Come set Your rule and reign
In our hearts again
Increase in us we pray
Unveil why we're made
Come set our hearts ablaze with hope
Like wildfire in our very souls
Holy Spirit, come invade us now
We are Your Church
And we need Your power In us.

We seek Your kingdom first
We hunger and we thirst
Refuse to waste our lives
For You're our joy and prize
To see the captive hearts released
The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace
We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause
We are Your church
And we pray revive this earth.

*Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here we pray.*

Unleash Your kingdom's power
Reaching the near and far
No force of hell can stop
Your beauty changing hearts
You made us for much more than this

Awake the kingdom seed in us
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ
We are Your church
Oh, and we are the hope on earth.¹

Blessing

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen

Let us share the Grace together:

The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.

Offering

The offering for the Lord's work is gratefully received. Please send by cheque (to Sue W), or direct payment.

Homegroup/Bible Study

We are meeting for small group Bible study at 8pm on Tuesday evenings via video meeting. You can join if you have online access, or by telephone. Contact Sue or Linda for joining information.

Christmas Angels

Please keep knitting Christmas angels so that we can spread some joy around our community this Advent. Speak to Linda if you require the pattern or wool.

Harvest Appeal

Thank you for your giving, our Harvest appeal raised £1,280 which will go to the work of Home of Hope orphanage, Malawi.

¹ Copyright © 2011 Thankyou Music, Rend Collective. License number 414523