

Whitstable Baptist Church – Sunday March 29th, 2020

Welcome to the second of our shared times of worship as a dispersed community.

*This gathering together in prayer and worship of God, our loving Father, in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Spirit is a prophetic act for the world. **Whenever we declare that Jesus is Lord, darkness is disempowered, fear is stripped of its strength, and anxiety is soothed by the balm of God-given peace.** Every act of worship is an outworking of our salvation. However much we may tremble in the face of the global pandemic, our gathering through this act of worship, is a sign of our faith, our trust and our hope in the one who said 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'*

So, find somewhere comfortable to sit; have a Bible to hand; take a moment to quieten your mind and heart; and in the company of each other, let's be fully attentive to God, who is with us and will help us.

Let's say together:

Psalm 121

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains –
where does my help come from?
- ² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot slip –
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The LORD watches over you –
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm –
he will watch over your life;
- ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and for evermore.

Song: Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>

Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Our Loving God,

we praise you for your love

which enfolds us through every moment of life.

We praise you for your faithfulness

which we can trust at all times and in all places.

We praise you for your compassion

which consoles us through challenging times.

We praise you for your hope

made powerfully real in Jesus,

through whose life, death and resurrection

we have new life, a new future,

eternal in scope

immediate in power.

Our God,

our hearts are filled with thankfulness

for all the ways in which you lift us,

hold us, strengthen us, provide for us.

Lord, you are beyond measure!

And your love for us beyond language!

But we are so grateful that we belong to you.

so grateful that you call us your own,

so humbled by the gift of salvation,

so moved by the depth of your love.

For a few moments, think about the past week, and give God thanks for God's gifts which have been a particular provision for you. Name them before God.

Thank you Lord, for all these touches of grace.

And we know that we have continued need

of that grace, mercy and forgiveness.

We know that we fallen short of your purposes for us.

We are sorry, and ask for your forgiveness again.

For a few moments, let's name before God the ways in which we have fallen short of God's purposes for us.

We offer you our confession Lord,
asking for your mercy,
and for your love which makes us new again.

pause

We thank you for your forgiveness
and that it reveals your immense love
and your deep desire to sort us out.
So fill us again with your love
and help us to hear again your calling on our lives.

Thanks be to God!

Song: I will sing the wondrous story
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDPCFbAysBc>

Prayer for the World

Loving God,
we lift a bewildered and frightened world to you.

This pandemic has stripped bare the illusion
that we are in control of everything.
It has shocked us into realising again
that all the things in which we put our security
are, in the end, things that turn to rust and dust.
We know this.

We know that these three remain,
faith, hope and love,
and that the greatest of these is love.

So trusting in your gracious love for us and all people,
we ask for your help

in stemming the life of this virus,
in protecting the vulnerable, old and young,
in healing the sick and consoling the bereaved,
in being with the alarmed, the panicked and confused,

in enabling all medical and care staff,
in inspiring all scientists and researchers
looking for a vaccine, a cure, a salve,
in helping all those keeping the world going,

in strengthening all in the chain of food
from field to fork
in easing the way of all producing
and transporting medical supplies
to where they are most needed.

And dear Lord, we cry out to you, asking
that you will use this crisis, this stopping time,
this necessary sabbatical,
to bring the world to its senses,
to soften hearts hardened to your love,
to reconfigure the way the world works,
that your way of justice, peace and love
would increase
and the ways of hostility, hatred and division
would wither away.

Lord God,
In your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Prayer for the Church

Dear God,

we pray for the church in the world.

Help and lead her

in her witness to Jesus,
in her practice and proclamation,
in her ministry to the suffering,
in her mission to the seeking and the not-bothereds,
in her welcome of the outsider,
in her care of the stranger,
in her love of brother and sister.

And help your church throughout the world today
to be a hopeful, healing presence,
faithful in her calling to be the body of Christ
wherever she is.

Prayer for Ourselves

Lord,

you know our deepest thoughts,
our greatest hopes
our gravest fears,

**please come and soothe us
with your peace and presence;
reassure us with your word of promise,**
help us to know more fully
the immensity of your saving grace.

Today, right now,
the pandemic is set to worsen,
and we are overwhelmed by its reach.

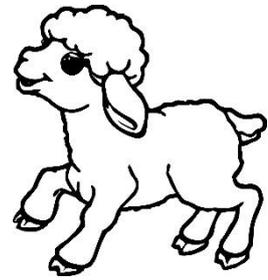
Today, right now,
hold us closely to your heart
and help us to know the love
that conquers death,
that makes a way out of no way,
that offers new and eternal life.

**Today, right now,
Help us to live hopefully,
creatively, generously, graciously,
and ready us for what lies ahead
filled with faith, hope and love.**

We ask all these things
In the name of Jesus,
our strength and our song
who has become our salvation.
Amen.

Song: Lord, I come before your throne of grace
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fo1UV9pfrs>

In response to the popularity of the Quiz last week, we now include another below:



SHEEP QUIZ

(A Spring related quiz - we presume there are still lambs in the fields now, even if we can't get out to see them)

Use your Bibles to check the answers –

1. In the parable, how many sheep did **not** get lost? (Matthew 18 v12)
2. What did shepherds see when they were looking after their sheep one special night? (Luke 2 v15)
3. Who said: 'Look, the Lamb of God'?
4. Who is 'the Lamb of God'? (John 1 v29 for 3&4)
5. In another parable, what are the sheep separated from? (Matthew 25 v32)
6. In the psalm, who is 'my Shepherd'? (Psalm 23 v1)
7. What valley* does this shepherd bring his sheep through? (Psalm 23 v4)
8. Which of the Bible characters below did **not** have to look after sheep:
 - a) Moses (Exodus 3 v1)
 - b) Joseph (Genesis 37 v2)
 - c) Cain (Genesis 4 v2)
 - d) David (1Samuel 17 v34)
9. Who did Jesus tell to 'Take care of my sheep'? (John 21 v16)
10. What does 'the good shepherd' do for his sheep? (John 10 v11)

(some Bible versions don't have the word 'valley' but mention a condition)*

If you would like more, see Psalm 23 WORDSEARCH attachment

Song: You never let go [can you spot the quote from Psalm 23?]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nm14VZVu0og>

Bible Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5 vs 1-11 (Read by David Suchet)

Click [here](#) to hear David Suchet Read this passage

Song: Lord, Heal our Land

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTm_rA54EGw

TALK by Rev Paul Wilson

“I am missing you all so much” – St Paul’s feelings as he wrote this letter express my feelings precisely today as I think about you all in our church family circle.

These Christians in Thessalonica meant so much to Paul & he felt wrenched away from them by circumstances outside of his control. He has such fond memories of & loves them dearly.

He is thus understandably anxious about them.

Relieved by Timothy’s report following a recent visit to the Thessalonians, he is also still concerned in certain respects for they are in danger of giving way to fear in their present circumstances & confusion about what tomorrow holds. Their peace is being threatened & their confidence in God is being undermined by false teachers. Some of these, it seems, might be soothing them with simple platitudes whilst are others coaxing them to indulge in fanciful predictions about the future. Paul cannot rush over & help them in person, but he can point them to glorious truths that will answer their fears & focus their thoughts on God!

1Thessalonians 5

V1&2 Christians have always been called ‘to read the times & the seasons’ they are living in & to respond accordingly & appropriately; to see the implications & the opportunities for trust in God & for sharing the good news of the Gospel; to perceive in some way or other the presence of God & His overarching sovereignty.

V3 Our vulnerability & mortality have always been there just below the surface BUT just now they are all too clear to everyone. A reminder of our utter dependence upon God!

Vs4-8 A call to Christians to live distinctively & positively. We belong to the Kingdom of light & love: 'we belong to the day' as Paul puts it. All of that has big consequences for us & for those around us. As we put our confidence in God we will exhibit FAITH & LOVE. And these constitute a necessary breastplate to guard our heart & our emotions. As we anchor our souls in God, we will also display HOPE which is an indispensable helmet to protect our minds in every circumstance of life.

V9 SALVATION is God's central purpose throughout history & we receive this only in Jesus Christ. The earth is still full of His unfailing love &, just as we now witness nature bursting into life all around us, so God's grace will burst forth in the darkest of days!

V10 He took the punishment that we deserve; He died in our place. SO THAT WE MIGHT LIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM! SUCH GLORIOUS TRUTHS & UNASSAILABLE CERTAINTY BEING EXPRESSED HERE!

V11 Note Implications of all this: MUTUAL ENCOURAGEMENT – a very timely & inspiring word for us today as hand-in-hand we face each day ahead in loving fellowship with each other & under the care of our loving Heavenly Father. We are now living through unprecedented experiences but we also have incredible opportunities! Opportunities to share the riches of God's Word in a timely & reassuring manner & to embody what trust in God looks like in the gloomiest of moments.

Let's pray that we might rise to the challenges of these extraordinary times in the strength of the Lord & display a radiant faith, love & hope that brings encouragement not just to each other but to all we are in contact with in our family circles & beyond.

Song: These are the days of Elijah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca9LnzJnpjQ>

A BLESSING FOR US TODAY –

From Numbers 6:24-26:

“The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”

Let's say The Grace together as we close our service

[ATTACHMENTS: Bible Reading 1Thessalonians 5 vs1-11 + Psalm 23 Wordsearch]