

SERVICE AT HOME FOR SUNDAY 7TH MARCH 2021

(Prepared by Rev Trish Davis)

Call to Worship: *'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies declare the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.'* Psalm 19:1-2

Hymn: Let all the world in every corner sing (STF 57)

(By George Herbert 1593-1633)

Let all the world in every corner sing: my God and King!
The heavens are not too high, his praise may hither fly;
the earth is not too low, his praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing: my God and King!

Let all the world in every corner sing: my God and King!
The Church with psalms must shout, no door can keep them out;
but above all, the heart must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing: my God and King!

Introduction:

Today I want to use the Lectionary Psalm 19 to lift us, comfort us and challenge us, alongside the Gospel reading in the Lectionary today which is John 2:13-22.

Prayer:

Holy God, as we put time aside to worship you today,
we ask that you renew our love for you.
Open our eyes to see fresh things, open our ears to hear with more clarity,
open our minds to recognise new ideas – that we may be willing to grow
and change and to become more like your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Psalm 19

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. ³ They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. ⁴ Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. ⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring for ever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from wilful sins; may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

John 2:13-22

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!' ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'
¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, 'What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?' ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' ²⁰ They replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?'
²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Reflection:

The Psalmist expresses the wonder of the world that God has created – has spoken into existence. We are reminded that the sun rising daily and giving us warmth is all God's doing. We are more aware than ever, as climate change is much in our thoughts, that we are reliant on the sun, just as in our Christian lives we are reliant on the Son, Jesus, the Word of God.

The Psalm moves from celebrating the creation to highlighting the wonder of God's law (verses 7-10).

⁷ *The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.* – What a thought – God's instructions to us lifting us up out of any slump we might be in and bringing us refreshment. You can take a deep breath or two here... and feel the release that dwelling in God's Word can give you.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. – We can trust in God's Word; we can know that God's promises are going to be fulfilled, even if we do not see that for ourselves in this earthly lifetime. We can expect to grow in wisdom and understanding as we mature in our faith.

⁸ *The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.* – I love this – because we can trust in God's Word and know that whatever else may be whirling around us in life (which is often chaotic) – God's laws are right and just, and because of that we can find our hearts rejoicing, even when outwardly things may not appear to be going so well.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. – When we grasp what God is saying to us through the Word; when we get that breakthrough in our understanding – it is like a light being switched on and our eyes can shine with brightness as we both absorb and reflect the wonder of God. We can be like beacons in the world where we know there is so much darkness.

⁹ *The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring for ever.* – This is not fear in the 'I'm afraid' sense, it would be better thought of as 'awe'. When we come before God and are lifted out of our own worries and into a place of God-centred worship there is a purity in that which has an everlasting quality; we can get a sense of eternity and see the immense security in that.

The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ *They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.* – I think this verse helps us understand the usefulness of meditating on God's Word - taking a Bible text and spending time reading it; re-reading it; seeing where it leads us in thought and prayer; discovering what it opens up for us in our walk with Jesus. And when we get blessed doing that there is a real 'sweetness' about the blessing.

Jesus, like all Jews at that time, was drawn to the temple. He wanted to experience the closeness, wonder, and blessing of God which that location inspired – but that was now how it worked out. The temple courts were heaving with activity, but none of it was God-centred. Jesus was angry and shouted: 'Stop turning my Father's house into a market.' How do we react to this?

The Psalmist knows what it is like to err, and cries out: *'...who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. ¹³ Keep your servant also from wilful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.'* What about us? Do we know where we are going wrong as individuals and in our churches? Can we be reminded that our primary focus, the centre of our lives, needs to be our God? *(pause for a few moments to speak to God about your own failings...)*

Jesus' followers and other Jews did not understand Jesus when he spoke of the temple being destroyed and then raised again in three days, although his followers realised after the resurrection. We are fortunate – we know what this was about! But does it make enough difference in our own lives? From John we hear that it took the disciples time to make the connections between their Jewish Scriptures, their memory of Jesus, and their response to his resurrection. We have a head start in this – but we will not make the most of it unless we too dwell on the Scriptures.

The Psalm ends like this: *¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.'* This Lent is such a good opportunity to focus on God through our Bibles and through the natural world coming into Spring-life around us. Just like Jesus' followers we don't understand everything spiritual; we don't make all the connections we might make. We need to allow God's wisdom to guide us since we are not yet fully formed... But hopefully we are all growing into the knowledge of God.

Take heart – even the disciples had to work at it over time, with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is when we recognise that we are not fully formed; that we are 'under construction'; - that we can begin to rely on God rather than on ourselves – and what a great God we have – who came to live amongst us, who died on our behalf, and rose again to give us eternal life. Hallelujah! Amen.

Song: I will sing unto the Lord

(By Donya Brockway © 1972 BMG Gospel Music Inc./ Song Solutions)

I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live,
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being,
My meditation of him shall be sweet.
I will be glad, I will be glad in the Lord.
Bless thou the Lord, O my soul, praise ye the Lord...x4

Prayers:

Confession:

Lord God, our ancestors turned the Temple into a marketplace; where are the marketplaces in our lives, O Lord?
We confess that we are driven by the need to possess. In our greed, we plunder the earth of resources and fail to share the good things you have provided for our needs. We are obsessed with the work of human hands, making idols of our houses – and yours.
Forgive us, and help us to see that your Church is eternally under construction – in us. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness:

It's hard, O Lord, when the message hits home;
when we see, in the sins of our forebears, our own;
when getting real has toppled our self-styled crowns
and the weight of guilt drags us down.
But you, dear Lord, always forgive,
when in the Holy Spirit we choose to live.
And so, we lift our heads bare and humbled,
casting aside thinking that was dark and jumbled.
In your forgiveness we find the light
to walk again in the path that is right. Amen.

Intercessions:

In the name of the one who came to cleanse the Temple,
we pray for the institutions by which we organise our society:
for churches and chapels and house groups;
for educational establishments;
for places of healing, law and order, commerce and recreation.

**May they serve the greater good,
and adapt to the changing needs of the time.**

In the name of the one who came to redeem the world,
we pray for those institutions by which we regulate global
relations:

for governments and rulers, democracies,
monarchies and dictatorships;
for bodies that regulate trade, diplomacy
and the balance of peace;
for environmental, development and welfare organisations.

**May they serve the greater good,
and adapt to the changing needs of the time.**

In the name of the one who came to save us from ourselves,
we pray for those institutions we have in our lives:
for our friends, families and colleagues;
for our local communities;
for the church communities to which we belong.

**May they serve the greater good,
and adapt to the changing needs of the time. Amen.**

Let us draw our prayers together with the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer:

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.

Hymn: God has spoken (157 STF, by George Wallace Briggs 1875-1959)
(The tune is 'Hyfrydol' which we often sing for the hymn 'Love Divine')

God has spoken – by his prophets, spoken his unchanging word;
each from age to age proclaiming God the one, the righteous Lord.
'Mid the world's despair and turmoil one firm anchor holding fast:
God eternal reigns forever, God the first, and God the last.

God has spoken – by Christ Jesus, Christ the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory, with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate, God from God, ere time was born;
Light from Light, to earth descending, Christ, revealing God to all.

God is speaking – by the Spirit, speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long word expounding God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations one sure faith is standing fast;
God still speaks, the Word unchanging, God the first, and God the last.

Blessing:

May our words and thoughts be always acceptable to you,
may our deeds and actions be always worthy of you,
and may our lives show forth your love in the world. Amen.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all, now,
and forever more. Amen.

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