

**When the going gets tough, the tough start moaning!**

**A Service for 21<sup>st</sup> June 2020- Arthur Cowburn**

**StF 470 Lord, for the years**

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved as, pardoned and provided,  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the Word of life which fires is,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,  
Lord of the word, receive your peoples praise.

Lord, for our land, in this our generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;  
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt him,  
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;  
past put behind us, for the future take us,  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Timothy Dudley-Smith (1926-)

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**Let us pray**

Loving God, you are present in all aspects of our lives and we praise you.  
You create the world around us in all its beauty.  
You give us each other to love and to receive love.  
You guide us by your Holy Spirit.  
Yet we moan when things aren't the way we want  
And we often fail to give praise to you when they are.  
Forgive us for the times when we fail you  
and help us to know that by the love of Jesus Christ we are forgiven.  
May we know the presence of your Spirit  
And offer our praise and glory to you.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Jeremiah 20: 7-13**

<sup>7</sup>You deceived <sup>[a]</sup> me, LORD, and I was deceived <sup>[a]</sup>;  
you overpowered me and prevailed.

I am ridiculed all day long;  
everyone mocks me.

<sup>8</sup>Whenever I speak, I cry out  
proclaiming violence and destruction.  
So the word of the LORD has brought me  
insult and reproach all day long.

<sup>9</sup>But if I say, "I will not mention his word  
or speak anymore in his name,"  
his word is in my heart like a fire,  
a fire shut up in my bones.

I am weary of holding it in;  
indeed, I cannot.

<sup>10</sup>I hear many whispering,  
"Terror on every side!  
Denounce him! Let's denounce him!"

All my friends  
are waiting for me to slip, saying,  
"Perhaps he will be deceived;  
then we will prevail over him  
and take our revenge on him."

<sup>11</sup> But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior;  
so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail.  
They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced;  
their dishonor will never be forgotten.

<sup>12</sup> LORD Almighty, you who examine the righteous  
and probe the heart and mind,  
let me see your vengeance on them,  
for to you I have committed my cause.

<sup>13</sup> Sing to the LORD!  
Give praise to the LORD!  
He rescues the life of the needy  
from the hands of the wicked.

#### **Matthew 10: 24-39**

<sup>24</sup> “The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. <sup>25</sup> It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

<sup>26</sup> “So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. <sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. <sup>28</sup> Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. <sup>[a]</sup> <sup>30</sup> And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup> “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup> “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,  
a daughter against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

<sup>36</sup> a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ <sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>37</sup> “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

#### **StF 467 I need thee every hour**

I need thee every hour,  
most gracious Lord;  
no tender voice like thine  
can peace afford:

*I need thee, O I need thee,  
Every hour I need thee;  
O bless me now, my saviour;  
I come to thee.*

I need thee every hour;  
stay thou nearby;  
temptations lose their power  
when thou art nigh:

*I need thee, O I need thee...*

I need thee every hour,  
In joy or pain;  
come quickly and abide,  
or life is vain:

*I need thee, O I need thee...*

I need thee every hour;  
teach me thy will,  
and thy rich promises  
in me fulfil:

*I need thee, O I need thee...*

Annie Sherwood Hawks (1835-1918)

## Sermon

In Jesus Christ Superstar, Mary Magdalene sings, “Could we start again please?” I suspect that she is not the only follower of God or Jesus Christ who has spoken those words because to be a disciple is not an easy road and we find that in the two bible passages above.

Jeremiah is often portrayed as a miserable so and so, always complaining. But I have a great deal of sympathy with him, as I do most of the Old Testament prophets. Most of them didn’t want the job and many of them came up with excuses why they shouldn’t have it, in Jeremiah’s case that he was too young and didn’t know how to speak. They are largely given a message to proclaim that isn’t exactly popular and often find themselves in difficulty as a result. Is it any wonder that they grumble?

In the passage from St. Matthew’s Gospel we find Jesus sending out the first disciples and preparing them for what is to lie ahead. As he does so he tells them, “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” (10:35) which is not the typical message we think of as coming from Jesus. I think the use is only metaphorical because he then goes on to explain how families will be split apart because of him.

In our modern culture, family identity is often a thing of the past. I was asked to do a survey at the end of an online transaction the other day and was surprised to find, after all the usual questions about age, ethnicity and so on, a question that asked whether I related more to friends rather than family. As society has become more mobile, we have lost the closeness of family bonds. In Cornwall, I was always warned that to upset one person in a church was to upset everybody because they were all related even if they didn’t know how, but that is now the exception rather than the rule.

Jesus is speaking at a time when family was the cultural unit. They had to stay close for security and to make sure everyone was provided for. It’s interesting how we see that working within a lot of cultures who have come to Britain and who are amazed that many within this country don’t see that same need to support the family’s more vulnerable members. To break that family apart is a dangerous thing to do, but that is what Jesus says will happen. We can probably imagine the scene when some of Jesus’s early followers told their family what

they were doing. It would be the equivalent today of somebody going off to join a cult. But if the message was going to be spread, that was what had to happen. Nothing and nobody could get in the way.

There’s more to it than that though. Jesus tells them not to be afraid of death but rather those who can kill both body and soul. Sparrows were about the cheapest thing you could buy but Jesus tells them that God is concerned about sparrows. I used to love the old children’s hymn with the line, “he sees the meanest sparrow fall unnoticed in the street.” (MHB 852) To be a disciple is difficult and possibly dangerous, but we will never fall outside God’s love for we are worth more than many sparrows.

So, Jesus tells the disciples and, I believe, us to be bold in proclaiming the Gospel. To shout from the rooftops that which is whispered in the dark. And yet, we find difficulty in doing it because we are often afraid of what other people will think of us. If, as Jesus tells the disciples, death is nothing to be afraid of, what have we to fear? We may complain to God from time to time and I often do. Perhaps many of us are complaining at the moment that we can’t do all the things we want to do. But we are still called to take up our cross and follow.

And if times are good or times are difficult, may we still find the opportunity as Jeremiah does in the middle of his moan to say, “Sing Praise to the Lord! Give Praise to the Lord!” for the message we are called to proclaim is ultimately good news. Even if people don’t recognise it!

## Let us pray

Lord, we are your disciples:  
Make us one in you.

We pray for those who you have called to service far from their homes - doctors  
nurses, teachers, engineers, and many more ...

Lord, we are your disciples:  
Make us one in you.

We pray for those who usually serve you in the church but are unable to do so at  
present -those who clean, make tea, wash up, offer a welcome, and many more ...

Lord, we are your disciples:  
Make us one in you.

We pray for those who serve you by telling your story - those who teach, preach  
the gospel and many more ....

Lord, we are your disciples:  
Make us one in you.

We pray for those engaged in the ministry of pastoral care - Class leaders,  
pastoral carers, good neighbours and many more ...

Lord, we are your disciples:  
Make us one in you.

We pray for our own discipleship, that we may face our challenges with courage

Lord, we are your disciples:  
Make us one in you.

May our discipleship further your work and help to establish your Kingdom.  
In your name, we pray. Amen.

## The Lord's Prayer

### StF 418 We have a Gospel to Proclaim

We have a gospel to proclaim,  
good news for all throughout the earth;  
the gospel of a Saviour's name:  
We sing his glory, tell his worth.

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem -  
not in a royal house or hall,  
but in a stable dark and dim,  
the word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of his death at Calvary:  
hated by those he came to save,  
in lonely suffering on the cross,  
for all he loved his life he gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:  
empty the tomb, for he was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell  
that we might share his victory.

Tell of his reign at God's right hand,  
by all creation glorified.  
He sends his spirit on his church  
To live for him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name him King:  
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.  
This gospel message we proclaim:  
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Edward Joseph Burns (1938-)  
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