

Sunday 14th June 2020

If you can listen to this hymn as we begin this short time of worship. If not then use the words of this hymn as a prayer as we consider what God's house might be like as we move into a post Covid 19 world.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3Pb77ylz_Q

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
A place where Saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions;

*All are welcome, all are welcome,
All are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,
Where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness and a symbol of God's grace;
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat:
A banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
Let us bring an end to fear and danger:

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard
And loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace,
Let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

Opening Prayer

God our Generous Host, we recognise as we pray that we have received so much from your hand:

you have given us breath to live and praise your name,
you have given us food to strengthen us and water to refresh us,
you have given us Jesus to be our friend, companion and Saviour,
we are glad to be your guests today.

God our Gracious Guest, we recognise as we pray that you come to us in so many ways:

you whisper to us deep within our spirits when we feel alone,
you show your love for us in the kindness of friends and strangers,
you sit with us in our homes and walk with us on our streets,
we are glad to welcome you today.

God, you are both the ground of our being and the gift of life within us:

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thank you for your gift of love which has surrounded us all our lives,
thank you for your gift of grace which accepts us as we are, right now,
thank you for your gift of hope which holds us now and for eternity.
So triune God, as we gather in your name this day, we ask for your forgiveness.
We acknowledge all within us that is less than it could or should be.
This day through your grace, may we know we are truly forgiven. Amen.

Reading - Matthew 9:35-10:8

The Harvest Is Great, the Labourers Few

³⁵ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

The Twelve Apostles

10 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

The Mission of the Twelve

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

Reflection

"Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news...When he looked out over the crowds, his heart was broken..."What a huge harvest!" he said to his disciples. "How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!" The Prayer was no sooner prayed than it was answered. Jesus called twelve of his followers and sent them into the ripe fields...Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighbourhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here..."

These selected when read from The Message, help us to really focus in on Jesus' words and actions. He shared words of love and grace where people gathered, wherever he met them. He went to them. He talked of the creator, of how it might be, of how it could be.

Jesus was full of compassion as he looked out amongst the people. The task was huge, yet he had hope. He saw the need, so he prayed and then responded.

He didn't stay on his knees. He didn't call a meeting, to arrange to pray some more, although constant prayer was a vital component to his life on earth. He

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called his followers. They gathered, they prayed and they set about meeting the needs. They didn't wait for a complete plan with all the "t's" crossed and the "I's" dotted, they went and sat, they went and listened, they went and trusted, they went and ministered to those in need.

As we look around us today, as we watch the news, like Jesus we need to have compassion. Today's harvest is huge. But how will we respond?

Like the disciples in our reading Jesus is calling us near, calling us to pray. But how will you respond?

Let us now hear a few verses from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah and this might give us some help in answering that question.

Reading: Isaiah 40: 28-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹ but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Here we see that our God can and will give us all the resources that we need to be his kingdom workers. God is everlasting. He has been, He is and He will be. He is the Creator of all things, He is beyond our understanding. He is all powerful and he wants to share his power with us his people so that we will not grow weary and faint in the work that he wants us to do. Whatever our age, however, fit or otherwise we might be, if we call or wait on the Lord he can renew and strengthen us. God is able to give to each one of us his strength and his power in whatever form we need it so that we will be able to go out into the harvest field. We are not all going to be called to go out as missionaries, or become ministers or youth workers. But perhaps God is calling you to be that encouraging voice at the end of a telephone for someone who is feeling lonely, or the one who can put pen to paper and offer words of support or simple prayers to someone who feels fearful in these days. God's power has no limits and he wants to give that power to us. Just imagine what we could do if we were ready to accept his power.

Let us pray

Holy God, you are our refuge and our hope. You live in heaven, on earth, and in our hearts.

Your majesty surrounds us in all your creation.

In Christ you are revealed as One who pitches a tent and lives among us.

You take sanctuary in us and make your home in the core of our being.

Holy is your name. Holy are your ways.

We bless you for the honour you give us by making us all in your image, by calling us all to share in your mission.

We thank you for Jesus Christ, in Him You have given the whole world new patterns of living, loving, learning, serving and suffering, and the promise of the fullness of life, wholesome life on earth, and life that is not extinguished by death.

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We bless you for giving us the gift of your Holy Spirit,
the breath of life, the strength to live by each day.
We hold before you all those who are struggling today, and those who bring
care, help and support.
Those who are taking their last breaths, and those who watch and wait and pray
with them;
those who have died, and all who are bereaved.
Grant to all your sanctuary and strength, and bring us all where you want us to
be. In the Name of Christ. Amen.

I'm going to close by playing a new worship song which can be accessed from
the link below. If you click on the arrow against the MP3 stream you will hear it
sung. The words speak of our bounteous God. If you are only able to read these
words then please use them as a personal prayer of thanksgiving.

<https://weareworship.com/uk/songs/view/everlasting-arms-7765/4835/chords-lyrics>

Everlasting Arms

He lavishes grace as our burdens
grow greater
He sends us more strength as our
labours increase
To added afflictions He offers more
mercy
To multiplied trials He multiplies
peace

When we have exhausted our store
of endurance
When our strength has failed and the
day is half done
When we've reached the end of our
earthly resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun
Our Father's full giving is only begun

So lean hard
Lean hard
Lean on the everlasting arms
Lean hard
Lean hard
Lean on the everlasting arms
Lean on the everlasting arms

His love has no limits, His grace has
no measure
His power has no boundary that's
known unto men
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth
again
He giveth and giveth and giveth
again

You lead me beside still waters
Your goodness restores my soul
I know that you'll never leave me
I know that you won't let go
You lead me beside still waters
Your goodness restores my soul
I know that you'll never leave me
I know that you won't let go

Your mercy flows like a river
Your mercy flows like a river
Your mercy flows like a river on us

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Blessing

As we continue with our day, as we face this coming week, as we move from this
focused moment into a lifetime of worship, show us how to love one another
dear Lord, as you have loved us.
Through the power of your Holy spirit we pray. Amen