

Sunday 24th May 2020

If you know this song perhaps you would like to sing it. If not then just use these words as a prayer as you come to worship God today.

Jesus calls us here to meet him

Jesus calls us here to meet him, as through word and song and prayer,
We affirm God's promised presence, where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise; Praise the son who calls us friends;
Praise the Spirit who, among us, to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him, word of life and Lord of all,
Sharer of our flesh and frailness, saving all who fail or fall.
Tells his holy human story; Tell his tales that all may hear;
Tell the world that Christ in glory came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to Each other vastly different though we are;
Creed and colour, class and gender neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger; Join the hands of age and youth;
Join the faithful and the doubter In their common search for truth.

Words and music: John L Bell and Graham Mule.

Prayers

Living God, I want to follow you. Gracious God, I want to be a better disciple of you, and learn more about your call on my life.

Loving God, I want to love you more and show your love to this world.

This day, show me how I can be a part of your Kingdom.

This day, move me by your Spirit.

Amen.

Readings: Micah 6:6-8

⁶ "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Acts 2:42-47

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

⁴³ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the

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proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Reflections on the readings

Over time, systems often get more complicated. Additional layers are added and bureaucracy increases, often becoming more anonymous. In the early days of automated billing, and before online banking, people would get reminders if they had not paid their bill saying something like 'please pay £20.60'. When a cheque was received for £20.60p the automated reminders stopped. If a cheque was not received, there would be more reminders, each slightly more fierce than the previous one, ending with a letter saying 'if you do not pay your bill for £20.60p your supply will be cut off'. One person received a bill for no pounds and no pence. He ignored the letter because there was nothing to pay. However, he got a reminder saying he had an outstanding bill of no pounds and pence. Eventually he had a final notice saying that if he did not pay his bill for no pounds and no pence, his power supply would be cut off. It was only solved by him sending a cheque for no pounds and no pence! That's what the system needed!

Religion is not immune to this problem. The text from Micah, and other passages in the Bible, suggests that that people can easily get caught up in the activities, ceremonies and rituals of religion and lose sight of what is at the heart of the faith. The prophet cuts through this, as he states in three simple phrases what God requires:

to act justly; to show mercy; and to walk humbly with God.

This, Micah declares, is more vital than animal sacrifices; more important than the money you give, more significant than even costly personal sacrifices. The heart of the faith is to do with justice, love and humility. If you live in this way, you are walking with God.

Micah makes faith simple and memorable. Anyone can learn to recite this threefold summary.

For Christians, it is important, sometimes, to go back to the core of our faith and remind ourselves what faith in everyday actions looks like. The passage from Acts 2 provides a picture. It sets out how the first Christians lived out what they believed. They attended to the Apostles teaching, shared regularly in holy communion and prayed; they made sure that those in need were supported materially; they went to worship in the temple, they met in each other's' houses, ate food together and nurtured glad and generous hearts. They praised God and won the good will of the people.

All this, it seems, encouraged others to join the church. In other words, the way they lived carried the message of God's saving love and people were attracted.

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Ask yourself the question, 'Does the way you live portray the message of God's saving love and attract others to Him?'

Prayer of intercession

Our heavenly Father, as we bring to you our prayers, we remember that on this day, your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, returned to the heavenly glory that you prepared for him in love, as he prayed that we, his followers, will one day join him in your presence, to share in this glory and majesty. Lord of resurrection and ascension to you we bring our prayers.

We pray for all of your people throughout the world. Those who work hard to build a better and cleaner society Lord, strengthen them. Those who are at the forefront of the fight against poverty, injustice and exploitation Lord, grant them strength and wisdom.

For our leaders, we pray that you will work amongst them so they will uphold the peace and prosperity of the world. Grant them Lord the courage to deal with the difficult issues we face at this time.

Lord of resurrection and ascension to you we bring our prayers.

Ascending God, for our needs and others, we look to you for support. Comfort us in times of need, reassure us in times of fear and in times of challenge, inspire us to look to you.

Our unspoken need we bring to you now in silence. *[Take a few moments to bring your own prayers to God]*

Lord of resurrection and ascension to you we bring our prayers.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers. Amen.

I came across this beautiful song earlier this week. I'd never heard it before but I feel it has such a great message for us in these times. I do hope you are able to listen to it.

Beyond these walls

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n20VBGs6M-U>

Blessing

God of all grace,
Fill me with your love as I seek to follow you and support others as we build communities of togetherness, amongst so much isolation. May I be a part of your Kingdom here on earth, Amen