

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home

Sunday 14th June 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. With thanks to Danny Sitton, Vicci Davidson, Mark Gilks and the Connexional team.

Call to Worship

The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few.
As we labour in God's fields
We do feel that there are not a lot of us.
Few and getting fewer is the cry from street to street,
From meeting to meeting,
From Conference to Conference.
Yet here we are,
Facing yet another new thing
Facing yet another group of people who want to know
the meaning
Who seek justice and peace
And righteousness like a never-ending stream
And we are the workers in the field.
So fellow labourers
Are we too few for this harvest?
Or will we gather up our tools
And join God's people in the vineyards
And the fields
And the streets of town
And see the harvest to which we are called gathered
in?

Hymn: Singing the Faith 87 Praise to the living God

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it
here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0u6diH2jVII>

Praise to the living God!
All praised be his name,
who was, and is, and is to be,
for e'er the same!
The one eternal God
ere aught that now appears:
the First, the Last, beyond all thought
his timeless years!

Formless, all lovely forms
declare his loveliness;
holy, no holiness of earth
can his express.
Lo, he is Lord of all!
Creation speaks his praise,
and everywhere, above, below,
his will obeys.

His Spirit flowing free,

high surging where it will:
in prophet's word he spoke of old,
is speaking still.
Established is his law,
and changeless it shall stand,
deep writ upon the human heart,
on sea, on land.

Eternal life has he
implanted in the soul;
his love shall be our strength and stay,
while ages roll.
Praise to the living God!
All praised be his name,
who was, and is, and is to be,
for e'er the same.

*Mediaeval Jewish Doxology
translated by Max Landsberg (1845-1928) and Newton Mann (1836-1926)*

Let us pray together

Living Lord, we gather together across time and space
to worship you; united by the words we read; united
by our love for you. We celebrate your awesome
majesty, your holiness, and your amazing love. We
acknowledge you as Lord of our lives. We sing your
praise and we bless your name. Living Lord, we give
thanks for all that you have done in our lives and pray
that we will continue to be open to your work in us in
Jesus' name. Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading: Mt 9:35 – 10:8

Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9

An Antidote to Chaos for the Christian - Five Practical
Instructions!

Many of Paul's letters were written to address a
specific problem or correct a theological issue - this
does not seem to apply to his letter to the church at
Philippi. This particular letter is written out of deep
affection and devotion for this group of believers. I
recommend reading the whole epistle in one sitting,
but if there is a short passage that jumps out as being
applicable for the crazy times we are living in, it's
Philippians 4:4-9.

This small section is littered with imperatives, a list of practical and achievable instructions that come from a heartfelt pastoral care. Let's unpack these instructions:

Instruction number One

'Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!' (Philippians 4:4 NIV)

Rejoicing is a strong theme of this epistle, arguably the main theme (see also 1:18, 2:17-18 and 3:1).

It's important to bear in mind that this is Paul's departing advice; one this is one of his last letters written from prison shortly before his death. Paul recognises the importance of rejoicing, whatever the circumstances.

A friend of mine became a follower of Christ a couple of years ago and a major turning point for him came at a funeral - in fact, he had been to three funerals in quick succession. Two of them were miserable affairs with a horrible atmosphere, not just of sadness but also hopelessness and despair. However, the third of these was a Christian lady in her 50's who had died of cancer. He was blown away by the relatively 'positive' atmosphere. He heard how she had approached her own death with real hope (almost anticipation) and was now safe with Jesus in glory. Her family, although bereaved and missing her desperately, could and did rejoice. It was a completely different experience from the previous two funerals. He had never seen a rejoicing of this kind.

Can you and I rejoice in life's unpredictable circumstances?

This attitude of rejoicing can be especially difficult in a culture that seems defined by resentment and division. The Philippians were encouraged maintain a heavenly perspective at all times and the same would be wise for us:

'But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.' (Philippians 3:20-21 NIV)

Paul tells the church at Corinth:

'For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is

unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.' (2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NIV)

Paul was well acquitted with serious hardship, yet he frames this within the context of eternity with all the amazing promises for those who follow Christ. A real reason for rejoicing!

Instruction number Two

'Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.' (Philippians 4:5 NIV)

Other Bibles translate the word 'gentleness' as patience, softness, modesty or forbearance.

And we are to show these qualities to everyone, not just some! Again, this is in stark contrast to our culture when people are often very selective about who they are gentle with - often only those who share common views, beliefs or identities.

Above all, this notion of gentleness describes the heart of a person who will let the Lord fight their battles; a person who is really free to let go of grievances. The Lord will settle every wrong in this world - we do not have to fret about injustice, unfairness and 'bad luck'! We have a different perspective to life.

As I look at our culture, people seem scared, anxious and tense - it's so easy to add 'hysteria' to the equation, which is not gentle. The Christian can demonstrate a calm and gentle attitude, something which will truly stand out. Our hopes are not tied to this world - we have a different perspective. When times are hard, people start asking the serious questions of life and are likely to notice those who have a deep belief that is backed up with action - we can be ready to direct people to the Lord Jesus!

Instruction number 3

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.' (Philippians 4:6 NIV)

There are actually two commands in this verse. We seem to live in a permanent state of anxiety and tension nowadays - I challenge you to switch on the news and find it a relaxing experience!

There are two primary chemicals that the human body produces to deal with difficult situations: the 'stress' hormones adrenaline and cortisol. Adrenaline is released in a 'fight or flight' situation and provides a huge surge of energy. It's like having a car engine massively revved up to make a quick escape from

danger. The problem is that adrenaline will deplete quickly and leave you exhausted - it's designed for survival situations only.

Cortisol on the other hand is triggered after a little longer and released with a less immediate perception of stress. It initiates a high level of alertness and causes the body to divert its focus towards dealing with a threat. It's like a car engine that is idling a little too high. Again, useful in certain circumstances but damaging if always activated. This is because it suppresses other vital functions such as metabolism, immunity and other normal operations occurring in the body.

Anxiety causes a release of cortisol. This is one of the reasons God says 'do not be anxious about anything' - it's bad for your health!

Furthermore, I think this verse is talking specifically about a 'not trusting God' type of anxiety. When we allow this to take root, it gives us permission to do godless things, to act as the world would. Again, we have a perspective that is different. We are to display the trusting and intimate relationship with our God which can be done by a minute-by-minute dialogue with him. God waits for and delights in our participation - that's what makes prayer so amazing. With heartfelt prayer that comes out of a deep desire to connect with God, events in the heavenly realm will change (for a great example, read Daniel 10). We are not commanded to understand this fully - we are simply commanded to participate in the action!

Instruction number 4

'Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.' (Philippians 4:8 NIV)

I love this command. This is not a licence not to act - it highlights out that if we think about such things, we will act in the right way naturally and these attributes will become instinctive.

If we fill our bodies with junk food, it will affect our physical health. If we fill our mind with junk, it will affect our mental health. The same is true with our spiritual health - we can control what we allow ourselves to be exposed to and should try to jealously guard ourselves from anything that harms our relationship with Christ.

Paul tells the Colossian church:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:1-2 NIV)

To the Roman's, Paul puts it like this:

'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.' (Romans 12:2 NIV)

Philippians 4:8 contains a list of 8 attributes - if we can proactively integrate this into our everyday thinking, they will manifest themselves in our action, causing us to be more powerful ambassadors for Jesus.

Instruction number 5

'Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.' (Philippians 4:9 NIV)

And Paul now links this control of our minds to practice, using his own conduct as an example.

And what are the results of obeying these commands? The answer lies partly back in v7:

'And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:7 NIV)

'Peace' in the Bible and 'peace' in our culture are not the same thing. You can be in the most tranquil, pristine environment and have no peace at all. You can also be in the most conflict-ridden and chaotic environment and yet have complete peace.

Our culture is desperately searching for peace but real peace can only be found through Jesus Christ. Moments before his own crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples:

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.' (John 14:27 NIV)

In these chaotic times, let's renew our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ - not only our Saviour, but also our perfect role-model in dealing with the increasing uncertainty of life.

God bless you all..

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Our Father in heaven we lift our world to you today, knowing that you have called us to do so and knowing that you care about even the smallest detail of that world.

We lift to you all who suffer today at the hands of others, through war, greed, the abuse of power, or the abuse of words. May they find you standing with them, giving them strength. May they find your people upholding them and giving them a voice, that your love may be seen and known. We think today of the people of Mayotte, in the Indian Ocean. We ask your blessing on them and the leadership of that predominantly Islamic country where there is a wonderful example of religious freedom.

We lift to you all those who find themselves in positions of authority today, whether it be by choice, or because their skills have been recognized and needed, or because there is no one else available. May they seek wisdom in the right places and have the humility to know when they need help.

We lift to you all who suffer today as a result of this pandemic; through sickness, through the loss of loved ones, or through the exhausting workload of caring for others. May they know comfort, healing, reassurance and hope.

And we lift to you all those known to us personally who are in need today ... (*name them*) ...we especially think of Hampton Court House School and the work of everyone there at this difficult time. We also hold the ministry of the congregation at East Molesey before you and ask for your blessing upon them. May they all find grace, healing, and blessing.

We bring all these prayers in the name of Jesus who taught us when we pray to say ...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: STF 407 Hear the call of the kingdom

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDfuGb89x_8

Hear the call of the kingdom,
lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you
as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy,
came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven,
the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him,
loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion
in the wonder of the cross,
bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in him.

King of heaven, we will answer the call ...

Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

A prayer of blessing

May the One who makes all things new fill us with grace, hope, peace and joy that together we may live and work to God's praise and glory in our world.
Amen.

