

Sunday Morning Worship for 27 September 2020

## Opening Words

### Prayer of Approach

Father God

We gather to worship today  
here in this place,  
and in homes, and on the internet  
and in other churches around the world.

As we gather,  
we join as one family  
with our brothers and sisters in faith,  
recognising that we are part of one worshipping  
community  
and all part of the one body of Christ.

We come knowing that we have done much  
which is in need of forgiveness.

We have sinned in thought, word and deed,  
there are those sins which we are aware of,  
and those in which the part we have played  
has gone unnoticed.

There are very personal sins,  
and sins that we share in common  
with the rest of humanity.  
Forgive us, Father, for all that we have done  
to hurt each other, to hurt our world,  
and ultimately to hurt you.

As we gather today to hear your Word  
we ask that you speak into our lives,  
and utter words of encouragement and challenge,  
so that we may tune our lives with your purpose,  
and live in ways that testify to the values of your  
kingdom.

Be with us today,  
bless us with a sense of your presence,  
grant us healing,  
hear our prayers,  
and accept our offering of praise and thanksgiving.

In Jesus name we pray,

AMEN

### Intro to theme - following instructions

Part of what we will be exploring today in our readings  
is how do we be people who do what we say. Because  
Christians get a lot of blame in the press for not living  
their lives like Christians. As soon as a Bishop or

someone who is the public face of the church, does  
something that is not Christian, it tends to make  
headline news. Whether it is running off with the  
organist (?), or cheating in a marriage, or speaking  
wrongly about someone, then it makes news. People  
expect Christians to live as they believe.

But it is hard. Because we are not perfect. And we do  
tend to not be as faithful to our beliefs as we would like.

So today, our readings encourage us to be people who  
do what we say we do. On Sundays we sing hymns, or  
say prayers, or even read confessions of faith. And yet  
sometimes it is hard to live this out in our daily lives.

So today, as we reflect on the readings that we will hear  
in a minute, I want us to just consider ourselves, and  
the things that we do, and to take this opportunity to  
re-set ourselves, to realign ourselves with the values of  
God's kingdom, so that we may say and do those things  
throughout the week that we speak of in church today.

### SONG based on Words from Philippians 2:1-13

### Prayer of Confession

Readings; Exodus 17:1-7

Matthew 21: 23-32

### Sermon:

Those who heard me preach last week will know that  
the people of Israel liked to grumble! In the previous  
chapter they grumbled to Moses – why have you  
brought us to this place, in order to let us starve. We  
should have died in Egypt, at least there was meat to  
eat. And God heard their complaint and sent them  
Manna and Quail to feed them in the wilderness. In the  
reading today from Exodus the people complained that  
they were thirsty. They had already complained that  
they were hungry and God provided bread for them.  
And now they complain they are thirsty with those  
similar words “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to  
make us and our children and livestock, die of thirst?”.

So Moses in his desperation cries out to the Lord “What  
shall I do with this people? They are already to stone  
me” And it is this alongside our Gospel passage that I  
want for us to reflect on today.

Let me begin by saying that in this world there are two  
types of people: There are those who know God as the  
source of all their needs, and those who don't.

Moses desperation with the people might also be a desperation we all recognise when we consider those in the world around us. As Christians we are witnesses to the way that God provides for everything we need. We in our lives recognise and see that along the way as we all travel together. It is God who has provided the goodness and the bounty of his creation from which we all benefit. However, there are plenty who fail to recognise this. We live in a society where religion has been marginalised and most people can't even be bothered to decide whether they believe in a God or not, yet alone whether God is the source of the food they are eating. People on the whole fail to recognise God as their provider and sustainers.

And that's OK. But, like the Israelites in our passage today, it seems people are still crying out because they are thirsty. They still long for something, they are still seeking that one thing that will fill their lives. People are still searching to satisfy this thirst that no amount of material possessions, or power, or status can satisfy.

And like Moses we say to the people : "Look , why can't you see that it is God you are thirsty for. That which you seek can be found in God, he has provided all you have needed in the past, and he is the one to satisfy you now. If only you could see it. "

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So In this world there are two types of people, those who know God as the source of all their needs, and those who don't. And there are also those who say one thing and do another, and those who do what they say they do.

The people of Israel were ones who had said that they were followers of God, they were God's people, but their actions betrayed them. They were all too pleased to be known as God's people, but when it came to living this out in action then it was a different matter.

The whole story in Exodus is of a people who have been saved by God from slavery but fail to recognise him. Of a God who has listened to the people and provided for their needs in the wilderness, but the people still cannot remain faithful to him.

They are the type of people who say one thing but do another.

And Jesus teaches about these two types of people. He is questioned by the chief priests and elders about what authority Jesus was doing these things. What things are they? Well earlier in the passage Jesus has driven the money changers from the Temple and declared it a house of prayer, the lame and the blind have come and been healed, and he has caused the temple to be full of the shouts of children praising the Son of David. And the religious leaders question him and ask, "By what authority do you do these things?"

Jesus answers the religious leaders with a parable of two sons. One son who acknowledges the authority of the father but disobeys, and the other who does not acknowledge his father's authority, but does it anyway. And I guess Jesus is trying to say to them - "Look, you religious leaders, you say you are doing the will of God, that you obey God, and yet I see nothing that you are doing to bring that about.... And yet those who you disregard, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, they do not acknowledge God's authority in their lives, but I see they are all too willing to carry out God's will in their lives."

Now I must point out here, that both of the sons in the parable say one thing but do another. The point is that it is better to do the will of God and not acknowledge him, than acknowledge God and fail to do his will.

Which of these are you? Do you come to church on a Sunday and sing and pray that Jesus is Lord of your life, but then fail to live in obedience to him from Monday to Saturday? Are you glad that God has saved you, but fail to live your lives in continuing dependence on Him? What we need to strive for is not to be people who come to church, say all the right things, and then live lives that bear no resemblance to what the kingdom is like. And we can't be people who do all the right things, and yet give no time to stop and give to God the thanks and commitment that he deserves. We need to strive to be people who do what we say. People who practice what is preached. People who worship God with words on a Sunday, and worship God by our actions the rest of the week.

Ronseal had a great advertising campaign that stated the simplicity that it does exactly what it says on the tin. Let us be a people who do exactly what it says on the outside. As a church let us acknowledge God as our creator and sustainer and live that out in gratefulness. Let us acknowledge Jesus as the Christ who ushers in the Kingdom and let us live as citizens of that Kingdom. Let us be the type of people who do what we say we do.

Earlier in the service we did some gentle exercise to the words of Paul and Timothy in the letter to the people of Philippi. Words that have been echoed throughout the Christian church for 2000 years. And as we listen to these words again, let us affirm them today, so that we may go from this place and live them out in our daily lives:

***If then there is any encouragement in Christ,  
any consolation from love,  
any sharing in the Spirit,  
any compassion and sympathy,  
make my joy complete:  
be of the same mind, having the same love, being in  
full accord and of one mind.  
Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in  
humility regard others as better than yourselves.  
Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to  
the interests of others.  
Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard  
equality with God as something to be exploited, but  
emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born  
in human likeness. And being found in human form, he  
humbled himself and became obedient to the point of  
death, even death on a cross.***

***Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him  
the name that is above every name, so that at the  
name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and  
on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should  
confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the  
Father.***

And this is the bit that is most relevant I think for us today:

***Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always  
obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more  
now in my absence, work out your own salvation with  
fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you,  
enabling you both to will and to work for his good  
pleasure.***

Just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, not only when we are gathered in God's house on a Sunday, not only when we are with others from the church but much more so in his absence. Obeying God during the week when we are queueing at Morrisons for our weekly shop, obeying God during the week when our neighbours are putting their bins in the wrong place and we have to move them, during the week when that other driver cuts us up, during the

week when we can't get through on the phone, or our appointment is cancelled.

In all these things we are to be obedient to God, much more so when we are gathered together in his presence. So that we might be people who both will and work for his good pleasure.

So that we might be people who know God is with us, and provides for us, and never stop giving thanks to him for that.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Father God,  
We pray for all those around the world who are thirsty. For all those who walk great distances to fetch their water, whose water is unclean and often infested, and whose journeys to collect water prevent them from being schooled, or put them in danger of being assaulted on the way. Strike the rock Lord and may fresh water spring up in their lives. Strengthen the work of charities and organisations that continue to provide wells and safe, clean water in communities around the world.

Father God,  
We pray for all those in our communities today who are thirsty. For all those who have gone great distances to find refreshment. For those who believe that more money, more power, more popularity can bring them that which they seek, and yet whose thirst is not quenched. For those who thirst for righteousness and justice, but continue to face oppression and abuse in their domestic lives. Strike the rock Lord and may fresh water spring up in their lives. May we preach Lord the values of your Kingdom, values of Justice, Peace and Love, not just in our words, but our actions too, so that their thirst may be quenched.

Father God,  
We pray for all those among our family and friends who are thirsty. We pray for those who are suffering with health issues, or waiting the result of hospital test, for those with

depression or  
anxiety issues, for those who have lost loved one and  
struggle  
with bereavement.  
Strike the rock Lord and may your healing waters flow  
into their lives, bringing your healing and comfort.  
May we support those around us, so that the fellowship

we are part of today, may be shared with others we

meet this week.

We offer all our prayers in the name of Jesus,  
who taught us to say together...

**The Lord's Prayer**

**BLESSING**