

## Worship at Home service Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2023 with Deacon Richard Beckett

### Call to worship:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven proclaiming, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah..." (Rev 12:10)

We listen today for the voices which declare Gods saving power and might. Give us the ears to hear; wisdom to discern; open hearts and minds to respond to God's offer of grace for all people. Amen

### StF 565 – Only by Grace can we enter

[Only by grace can we enter - YouTube](#)

Only by grace can we enter,  
only by grace can we stand;  
not by our human endeavour  
but by the blood of the Lamb.  
Into your presence you call us,  
you call us to come,  
into your presence you draw us  
and now by your grace we come,  
now by your grace we come.

*Lord if you mark our transgressions  
who will stand?*

*Thanks to your grace we are cleansed  
by the blood of the Lamb.*

### A church family prayer

*A modern paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer*  
Heavenly Dad,  
we respect your name and everything you stand for,  
and we want others to respect you too.  
Please take control of the earth:  
so that people learn to live life your way, the way of heaven.  
Please bring us all that we need today:  
we'll worry about tomorrow when it comes.  
Please forgive what we've done wrong,  
in the same way we forgive what others have done to us.  
Please protect us from evil, whether we're tempted by it or attacked by it.  
Because you're the King, the ruler of everything;  
you and you alone deserve all the credit.  
Forever, and ever, and ever, and ever,  
let it be true. Amen

(Adapted from Roots Resources)

### Bible reading

#### Revelation Chapter 12:1-17

### Time to reflect: (Linking to Bible Month)

I really struggle with the battle terminology in Revelation: War in heaven; fighting back; defeat; conquering; victory.... all terms which are associated with war. Isn't there enough of this already in the world without thinking about it when we read the Bible too?

But such imagery is not used by John in Revelation to *support* war and conflict. John uses the language to emphasise that a mighty battle between good and evil has already been fought and won.

Though much of Revelation seems to suggest these are things which will happen at the 'end of all things', John makes it very clear that good has *already* defeated evil – and that should bring us HOPE.

And Jesus act of salvation is not just for an elite group but for all people – "Every tribe and language and people and nations" (as Revelation Ch 5 reminds us)

It brings us hope because it means that we need no longer be trapped by evil. We need not be afraid of the 'dragons' in our lives. Those things which draw us away from God. The dragon's anger is not a sign of his power (Verse 12:12) but of the fact that he is already defeated!

The dragon does make a reappearance in a slightly different form (in Chapter 13) – more like a sea creature and like many stories, the 'beast returns' in an even more evil form but then finally disappears from the scene at the end of the chapter.

So we can be filled with hope – but we are also greatly challenged because we look out into our world and we see wars and conflicts.

There was a story recently which may have gone unnoticed about Russia's most famous religious icon (Andrei Rublev's "Trinity") The Icon was made in the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century and is perhaps the most valuable of all Russia's icons.

Extremely fragile and vulnerable this icon was transferred at great risk from a museum to a Moscow Cathedral by order of President Putin.

Said Regina Elsner, a theologian and researcher of the Russian Orthodox Church, "Putin has an interest in keeping the Church on his side in this war, to show he respects the Church,"

How easy it becomes to use faith as a 'weapon' and justify killing and maiming, bombing and destruction.

We didn't read as far as Revelation Chapter 13 but if we had we would have discovered a call for the saints to persevere and to endure in the face of attacks by the beast. This is not a call to endure in *any* circumstances because there can be times when you feel less safe and then you know that the best thing to do is find a person or group you can trust for support.

The 'followers of the Lamb' (As John describes Jesus' followers) maintained their witness and following of Jesus even to the point of death because of what they believed. But not only because of their own perseverance but because their victory is dependent on Jesus' victory.

As a result of all this what should our responses be?

- To 'wait' - in faith, prayer and exploration of The Bible and to do this with others who seek the same.
- To challenge injustice – because of our faith, but not using our faith as a weapon.
- To help build the church – Not the building or the fabric but the people called church, as a safe but dynamic community welcoming every tribe, every language and every nation.

### **A prayer of intercession for Father's Day**

Lord God, it's not easy being a father today, and so we pray:

for fathers in a society that is constantly redefining their role;

for fathers who stay at home and look after children;

for fathers who have been forced out of their families or away from their children;

for fathers with adult children who must relearn what it means to be a parent.

We pray also for families with fathers who are inadequate, violent, lazy or unkind; for families where there is no father present at home; for families in which there seems to be a succession of different 'fathers', making it hard for the children to build lasting relationships or know their true identities.

For those mourning the loss of their fathers.

Whatever their circumstances, may every family and person find wholeness and help as they look to God, the loving Father of us all.

**Amen.** (Adapted from Roots Resources)

### **StF 634 – Fight the Good Fight**

[Fight the Good Fight With All Thy Might](#)

Fight the good fight with all your might,  
Christ is your strength and Christ your right.  
Lay hold on life, and it shall be  
your joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race through God's good grace;  
lift up your eyes, and seek his face.  
Life with its way before us lies;  
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.

Cast care aside, lean on your guide;  
his boundless mercy will provide.  
Lean, and the trusting soul shall prove  
Christ is its life and Christ its love.

Faint not, nor fear, his arms are near;  
he changes not, and you are dear.  
Only believe, and you will see  
that Christ is Lord eternally.

### **Closing Prayer**

We go - to journey on with God.  
We go - guided by the Holy Spirit.  
We go - knowing God overcomes all evil.  
We go - to challenge injustice and conflict.  
We go - together, to build God's church.  
We go - following Jesus our Saviour.  
Amen.