

Worship@home with Rev Francis M'itiiri for the 25th June 2023

Let us pray together

As we draw together in silence before God in our scattered spaces, into our worship, Merciful Saviour, hear our prayers and blend our distant voices into one song of adoration, confessions, intercessions, and thanksgiving. O Lord, we are poor and needy. Hear, O Lord, to my prayer. Amen.

StF 706 - Longing for light

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MT-p828ugOQ&pp=ygVUT25Mb25naW5nIGZvciBsaWdodCwgd2Ugd2FpdCBpbiBkYXJrImVzcyAoU3RGIHdW5nIiSBieSBncmFjZSBjYW4gd2UgZW50ZXIqKFN0RjA1NjUp>

1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ be our light!

Shine in your church gathered today.

2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us.

Make us your living voice. **Refrain**

3 Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed. **Refrain**

4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stones. **Refrain**

5 Many the gifts, many the people,

many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,

making your kingdom come. **Refrain**

Reading from Genesis 21: 8-21

Ministry of the Word: Life and Times:

Life and times for a person can be categorised into phases.

Every phase is formed by an historical account that in many ways are transforming and worth reflecting, sharing, and celebrating. While moments that bring about negativity ought to be discarded and disconnected. The experience in the life and times of Abram and Sarai were characterised by an intriguing angelic visitation that was a transforming moment in many ways. The idea for Abram to have a son of the covenant, promises and invites many sociological and bioethics questions. One is afraid to ask a question of where God might have been all that time, just to appear in the eleventh hour to Abram and Sarah. It must have been an experience with mixed feelings for the couple.

In this narrative, Sarah had placed too much pressure on Abram to make Hagar into a co-wife, an experience that Sarai later regretted as it turned into a conspiracy plot. The introduction of the biblical character of Hagar and her son Ismael into this narrative, might appear distracting to readers from the central theme of Genesis 21. Now that Isaac was born, Sarai realised that she did not require Ismael around anymore. Ethically Sarai safeguarded the life of her own son while endangering the life of another. A serious moral integrity issue.

If you are wondering why God allowed and affirmed such a scheme, it is advisable not to be too harsh to pronounce a condemnation to God as he had other plans for Hagger and her son Ismael. On carrying the covenant promises. Genesis 21:2 Abram's plan was to adopt Ismael to save the boy from Sarah's plot. The wilderness was not the portion for Hagger and her son. As an employer dealing with many employees, think twice when sending a single mum away from work. I find once more a similar question recurring. Why is the story of Hagger and Ismael included in the times and lives of Sarai and Abram? It is because we often forget too soon in Genesis 12, that God had made terms of reference with Abram and Sarai as the carriers of a divine patriarchal blessing into humanity. Friends you might not be coming from a tribe of the privileged, as it was to Lot,

Hagger, Ismael, Esau, and several others. Yet God has been always present to everyone. Before I go any further, I want to stop and acknowledge that Abraham struggled with this painful plot of his wife Sarai. The scripture plainly says in Genesis 21:6...that Sarah's demand caused Abraham great pain. Abram was so emotionally attached to Hagar and Ishmael. I wonder. If you were in Sarai or Abram shoes, what do you think should have happened? In such incidences what should one do?

Let us acknowledge it is difficult to understand the mysteries of God's grace in dealing with humanity. The best we can do is surrender to his program in achieving his determined will. Abram is really a good example in tolerating some experiences of conflicting interest that we encounter in this life. May our lives and times in this life be filled with divine encounters as covenant children of God.

StF 565 - Only by Grace we enter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv72Q23llp0&pp=ygUmb25seSBieSBncmFjZSBjYW4gd2UgZW50ZXlmd2l0aCBseXJpY3M%3D>

1 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.

2. Lord, if you mark our transgressions, who would stand?

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

Lord, if you mark our transgressions, who would stand?

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

Prayers of intercessions

Suprise us each day with Your generous love, we pray O Lord, and give us hope that evil will truly be overcome by good within your Kingdom. Open our eyes to see how you are doing this in our world, even now, and equip

us for the battles that lie ahead. We praise you for your vision and your provision O Lord.

Loving and compassionate God we bring to your attention those who are coming from foreign countries and end up working for employers who subject them to deep pain, like Hagar, was mistreated by Sarah, fleeing into the wilderness that was marked by an emptiness of provision, despair, sorrow, and a fear of death. But you are the one '*El Roi*' God who sees what everyone is going through now.

God provide food to those who cannot afford, sanctuary to asylum seekers in our midst, that the home office will shorten the period of waiting on those detained to be set free, and courage to those who find themselves in the hardest places of this life.

May those who arrive in our borders say: "*God sees me. God knows my pain, God is providing for my needs, and is offering me a place of sanctuary.*" As we mark Sanctuary Sunday today, we want to consider the scriptures and ask how we can be the hands and the feet of God and offer sanctuary to refugees and asylum seekers in our midst.

Thank you, Lord, to those who have welcomed strangers from around the world into their homes and into workplaces. Offering little assistance to integrate them. Language lessons, assisted driving, home schooling of their children, running for groceries.

May the Lord meet the needs of his creation. And may the Lord abound in you with his generous love, learn to overcome evil by doing good, equipping us for the battles that lie ahead. **Amen. Lord's Prayer**

Blessing and sharing of the grace.

To him that can keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and forever.

Amen