

Worship at Home for July 9th, 2023, with Local Preacher Mary Winchcombe

Call to Worship:

Jesus, you call us to accept your yoke that is easy, and your burden that is light.

Show us your ways and keep us from burdening ourselves or others with things that are not from you. **Amen.**

STF 161 Speak O Lord (Chet Valley video)

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You,
To receive the food of your holy word.

Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in your likeness,
That the light of Christ might be seen today,
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us all your purposes, for your glory.

Teach us Lord full obedience, Holy reverence, true humility. Test our thoughts and our attitudes,

In the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see,
Your majestic love and authority.

Words of power that can never fail;
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.

Truths unchanged from the dawn of time,
That will echo down through eternity.

And by grace we'll stand on your promises;
And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.

Speak, O Lord, till Your Church is built,
And the earth is filled with your glory.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, as we come to worship, give us a sense of awe and wonder, an awareness of the privilege we have in knowing you, receiving your Spirit and being called your people.

Grant us a glimpse of your glory that brings home to us your greatness and goodness, care and compassion, purpose and pardon – a foretaste that fills us with joy and causes us to be amazed and thankful.

Teach us never to become casual in our devotion, but to come with reverence and humility, eager to offer to you, through word and deed the adoration you deserve. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

Reading: Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

In our reading from Matthew, we see him take a closer look at people's responses to Jesus; and we find Jesus frustrated, puzzled and questioning 'To what can I compare this generation? What you might call a 'bit of tearing your hair' out moment! It is God's greatest desire that every man, woman and child should be saved from sin, should be reconciled with Him, and He's left no stone unturned in trying to achieve this.

The Old Testament of our Bibles is a catalogue of promises and covenants continually broken, new covenants being made, only to be broken too. God was frequently angry and often dealt with individuals and nations harshly with flood, death, plagues, destruction, the dreadful threat of the law intended to work on their fear. When all else has failed he sends his most precious gift of all, his only son, Jesus, to show the world what He, God, is truly like and the majority fail to recognise him! "I send my finest and still you do not see!!"

John the Baptist came neither eating or drinking, and they said he was a demon.

Jesus came eating and drinking, enjoying being with ordinary people, celebrating the Kingdom of Heaven with all and sundry, speaking of God's lavish generous love and forgiveness and that was not right with them either!! They accused Him of being a rebellious Son leading Israel astray, a false prophet, a glutton and a drunkard!

He was not what they expected as their Messiah. They were waiting for a Messiah who would come and set them free from the Romans, who would rule like a king, and look after them.

Jesus's message was challenging. It required them to change; he was telling them about a new way of living and trusting in him.

He was showing them that God's love is breaking into the world in a new way, a different way, like a fresh breeze blowing through a garden and shaking the old blossom off the trees. There will always be people who don't like their lifestyle, their beliefs, their way of doing things being challenged. Change can be risky.

Verses 16-19 end with the words "Wisdom is proved right by her actions". In the Message version of the Bible, it says "The proof of the pudding is in the eating!"

You can know all there is to know about the Bible, be the most learned scholar in Greek and Hebrew, be able to quote chapter and verse at the drop of a hat, but unless you have taken the step of faith, the step that your heart not your mind tells you to take, you don't fully experience the Holy Spirit within you and the excitement of the walk with Christ.

In worldly terms that step of faith is a risk, but one with eternal rewards. Our Christian life is a journey, it can be exciting, a bit scary at times, but whatever God calls us to do, he will equip us for the task and we don't have to do it alone for He is there with us.

In verses 25-30 we see Jesus turn from despair to thankfulness. According to Jewish tradition, the Torah contains 613 commandments, which Jews were required to follow. It was thought that only those who devoted themselves to following the law would ultimately know God. For the average Jew of the day this put wisdom as far out of reach as being a heart surgeon or rocket science would today.

Jesus sliced through that: NO! he said you just need to be like a small child. Earlier he had accused the people in the marketplace of being childish. Jesus says be childlike – small children see things through innocent eyes. How often have we been struggling to do something, and a child says "Why don't you do...?" and our reaction is "Why didn't I think of that?!!

It was the ordinary people of his day – the poor, the sinners, for whom Jesus was a window into the Living God. And Jesus offered them one of the most welcome invitations "Come to me and I will give you rest." The welcome is for all who take the step of faith and commit to journey with him. Do we make our faith too complicated? Do we try to reason and apply logic to our faith?

Do we do things in our own strength, or do we lift our eyes to God and offer Him our burdens? The burdens may not go away, but we don't bear them alone; and the strength and wisdom we need to bear them, and hopefully overcome them will be given to us by God. **Amen**

Prayers for others:

Gracious God we bring to you our broken world, so full of injustice and exploitation, suffering and sorrow, hatred and division.

We pray for all who work for change; all who strive to bring help and healing, hope and wholeness. Loving God bring healing and renewal, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lord's Prayer

StF 531 What a friend we have in Jesus

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God
in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the
Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share? Jesus
knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Precious
Saviour, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer!

Do your friends despise, forsake you?

Take it to the Lord in prayer;

In his arms he'll take and shield you;

you will find a solace there.

Blessing: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Amen**