

Worship at Home Service, 14th May 2023 with Revd Alan Sharp

A prayer of approach:

Eternal God, source of all blessing,
Help us to worship you with all our heart and mind and strength;
for you alone are God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
For ever and ever. **Amen.**

StF 134 – Christ whose glory fill the skies

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjB_bKGhkM4

Christ, whose glory fills the skies. Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise, Triumph o'er the shades of night;
Day-spring from on high, be near, Day-star, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn. Unaccompanied by thee;
Joyless is the day's return, Till thy mercy's beams I see,
Till thou inward light impart, Glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine, Pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
Fill me, radiancy divine, Scatter all my unbelief;
More and more thyself display, Shining to the perfect day.

Prayers of praise & confession

Great, O Lord, is your Kingdom, Your power and your glory:
Great are your works, Your wonders and your praise;
Great also is your wisdom, Your goodness, your justice and your mercy;
For all these we praise you And we magnify your holy name
For ever and ever. **Amen**

Almighty God, I confess to you,
my neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments, my wrong-doing,
thinking, and speaking; the hurts I have done to others,
and the good I have left undone.
Father, forgive me for my sins,
and raise me to newness of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible readings

Genesis 32:22-31. NIV

Time to reflect:

Well, if ever there was a falling out in a family the story of Jacob and Esau takes the biscuit. There had been rivalry between these two throughout their lives. This came to a head with Jacob deceiving his half-blind father Isaac and was given a blessing that was really Esau's. Esau then vows to kill Jacob. The mother learns of this and urges Jacob to leave home and travel to the home of his uncle Laban.

Sadly, Laban is just as deceitful as Jacob. Jacob ended up marrying the wrong sister and had to work another seven years to get Rachel as his wife. Jacob and his uncle match wits until eventually Jacob flees taking with him both of Laban's daughters and most of his wealth.

And in this story from Genesis 32 he's on his way home. He learns that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men. So, Jacob sends gifts ahead, hoping to bribe his way back to his brother's good books.

And today's reading finds Jacob left alone by a dark river, and fearful of what lies ahead. There is darkness around him and darkness inside his mind. And then we read that a man wrestled with him, all night long. This is a very strange story because Jacob comes to believe that he is wrestling with God. There's a lot about this that we can't explain - how did God appear, and how did the wrestling go.

This bizarre tale was a favourite passage for Charles Wesley and he even wrote a hymn about it, 461 in "Singing the Faith". But we're not using that today - there are 12 verses!

In his struggle with himself and God, Jacob was made to look at himself. God calls us all to do that. We have to let God into our lives, into our darkest secrets and our deceit. But when we allow God into all that he gives us a new start, just as Jacob was given a new name, Israel. The next morning Jacob and his family meet Esau and the 400 men. The wrestling had left him lame, but he limped up to Esau and did something that could not have been easy. He bowed to the ground before his brother. And then, 20 years after he'd been hurt so badly,

Esau threw his arms around his brother and kissed him.

Someone celebrating his 50th birthday received a card which included a list of things which change when you hit 50. One item was that you stop speaking about your left leg and your right leg and start speaking about your good leg and your bad leg!

When someone has a bad leg or a bad hip like Jacob, they all have something in common. They may lean. They lean on a stick or a walker or a spouse or a friend. They lean.

When things go wrong for us perhaps that's when God is teaching us to lean. To hold onto him each day and say, like Jacob, "God, I will not let you go unless you bless me". And whether God's answer at the time is yes or no, we learn that when we are weak, then we are truly strong in Jesus. And he will not let us go.

Prayer of Intercession

Let us pray:

For our families, that they may support and care for each other.

And where families are divided let there be opportunities for reconciliation;

For all who find faith a struggle, that in their struggle they may receive your grace,

and be enabled to trust in your guidance;

For our world, remembering those affected by flooding in China, the warfare in Ukraine, and those who face terror and constraint every day of their lives;

For our congregations, for the activities of our churches and all who have leadership within them;

For Rev. Francis and his family, as they move to their new Circuit in north London;

For our own concerns and needs at this time.

Lord, in your mercy, hear all our prayers through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come,

thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the
glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

StF 637 Soldiers of Christ arise

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hlov_jAo2uo

Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armour on, strong in the strength
which God supplies. Through his eternal Son; strong in the Lord of hosts
and in his mighty power, who in the strength of Jesus trusts is more than
conqueror.

Stand then in his great might, with all His strength endued, and take, to
aid you in the fight, the panoply of God.
From strength to strength go on, wrestle and fight and pray; tread all the
powers of darkness down and win the well-fought day.

Leave no unguarded place, no weakness of the soul;
take every virtue, every grace, and fortify the whole.
That, having all things done and all your conflicts past,
ye may o'ercome through Christ alone and stand complete at last.

From strength to strength go on, wrestle and fight and pray,
tread all the powers of darkness down and win the well-fought day.
Still let the Spirit cry in all his soldiers, "Come!"
till Christ the Lord, descends from high and takes the conquerors home.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you for your promise
of the Spirit of truth to guide and lead us.
Send us out with hearts ready to welcome your gift, eyes open to see and
ears eager to hear,
that we may live and reveal your truth and love in every moment, day by
day.
Amen.