

Worship@Home 3rd September 2023 with Revd David Speirs

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, you call us to turn away from our own selfish interests, to take up our cross, and to follow you. As we come before you today give us open hearts and open hands. Make us eager to hear your voice and seek your guidance.

Open our minds to your ever-present Spirit that is always moving within and around us. Open our spirits to your nudging and open our lives to your love. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Adapted from 'The Minor Keys' on RE:Worship

<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2019/01/opening-prayer-take-up-our-cross.html>

StF 343 – All my days I will sing this song of gladness.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YccZWGt8so0>

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
Give my praise to the Fountain of delights;
For in my helplessness you heard my cry,
And waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails;
Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
Of death defeated and life without end.

*Beautiful Saviour, Wonderful Counsellor,
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
You're the Risen One, heaven's Champion
And You reign, you reign over all.*

I long to be where the praise is never-ending,
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades;
Where countless worshippers will share one song, and cries of 'worthy' will
honour the Lamb!

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CCLI Song Number: 2492216

Please read:

Matthew 16:21-28

<https://bible.oremus.org/?ql=270017643>

Time to Reflect

When I attend events in our circuit, where refreshments are being provided, I am frequently impressed by the standard of cakes that are on offer. It is obvious that people have spent quite a lot of time and effort preparing something delicious that can be enjoyed by others. Of course, that does not necessarily have to be the case; it's quite possible to make a reasonably good cake using a cake mixture box, where all you have to do is just add egg and water and bake. Alternatively, you can just go to a supermarket and buy a cake from right off the shelf. However, I have yet to see anyone try this on the Great British Bake Off! There is something to be said for making something with love and care for others, even if it requires a lot of time and effort to do so.

In the reading that we have this Sunday Jesus is telling his disciples that he will be arrested, killed, and on the third day rise from the dead. Simon Peter, after hearing this, interjects by taking Jesus aside trying to rebuke him and suggest that this should not happen. Then Jesus rebukes Simon, telling him that 'you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' In saying this perhaps Jesus is alluding to what the prophet Isaiah once said about humanity when he declared that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and God's ways not our ways (Isaiah 55:8). We might think it quite reasonable that Peter does not want Jesus to die and suffer. Yet Jesus' point is that Peter is trying to replace the divine will with his own will.

Human beings have a tendency to be self-interested and to take the easy choice, the path of least resistance. They also have a tendency to pursue their own agenda's and ignore what God is saying. While Jesus had told his disciples earlier that "my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matthew 11:30) he now makes it clear to them that his path is still a costly one. Jesus teaches his followers that the path of discipleship involves self-denial (Matthew 16:24) putting behind our self-centredness and instead placing love at the centre of our lives.

Taking up the cross means following the path of love that God invites us to go down.

That rather than simply being concerned about ourselves we have to have a loving concern for others and be focused on the Kingdom of God.

For Jesus the path he is treading is one that will lead to his death and then his resurrection. Yet it is through his self-giving love that humanity will find forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life with God. God in Christ does everything for us through the cross and the resurrection so we might be liberated by love and free to be the people God always intended us to be. The life of a Christian is one that is marked by God's love and grace poured out on us and not our selfishness. Yet the grace we receive comes at a cost. paid by God in Christ, through the cross. The 20th Century theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who lost his life resisting the evil of Nazism, one wrote that:

“cheap grace is the grace that we bestow on ourselves...Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field...it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciples leaves his nets and follows him.”

(Bonhoeffer, D. *The Cost of Discipleship*, 2001 edition, SCM Press; London. p.4)

This year we continue, as a church and circuit, to consider and explore how we might deepen our discipleship. In so doing it is important for us to remember that our calling in Christ is not about meeting self-centred or self-serving desires. Instead, we endeavour to leave those behind us as we follow Jesus and share God's love with the world. Just as we might choose to put time and effort in to make and bake a cake, we too must be prepared to commit to Jesus so that his gospel might be shared and that new people in new places might come know his life love. So let us commit ourselves to this life of discipleship and the grace that God calls and invites us to as we seek to follow his Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of Intercession

You are invited to pray silently for:

The needs of the world...

The Church and its calling...

Loved ones going through difficult times...

For peace, justice, and reconciliation...

In Jesus name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven...

StF 287 When I survey the wondrous cross

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyHkkmL-KWo>

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ my God;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands,
his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down;
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His dying crimson, like a robe,
spreads o'er his body on the tree;
then am I dead to all the globe,
and all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Issac Watts (1674 - 1748)

Final Prayer

Gracious God, help us to look beyond ourselves to the cross and to your resurrection power that brings us new life and transformation. May we depend on your guiding Spirit to be formed into the likeness of Jesus your son. That in being formed in Christ's likeness we might more fully love you and our neighbour. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus, our friend, Lord, and Saviour. Amen.

