

Worship@Home 24th October 2023 With Revd David Speirs

Opening Prayer:

“Love the Lord, your God
with all your heart
with all your soul
and with all your mind.
And love your neighbour as yourself.”

Lord, let this be. Show us how.
Let your love be the lens that lets us see,
the search that takes us where we go,
the power that enlivens our lives,
the light that points to the path,
and the very grace that saves us.
O God, kindly fill us with your love. Amen.

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Website of Saint Louis University
<http://liturgy.slu.edu/32OrdA111217/prayerpathmain.html> &
<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2020/10/prayer-matthew-22-34-40.html> Used with permission.

STF 436 – What shall I do my God to love, my loving God to praise?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EwLu8qu-ew>

What shall I do my God to love,
My loving God to praise?
The length, and breadth, and height to prove,
And depth of sovereign grace?

Your sovereign grace to all extends,
Immense and unconfined;
From age to age it never ends;
Enfolds all humankind.

Throughout the world its breadth is known,
Wide as infinity;
So wide it never passed by one,
Or it had passed by me.

My trespass was grown up to heaven;
But, far above the skies,
In Christ abundantly forgiven,
I see Your mercies rise.

The depth of all-redeeming love
What angel tongue can tell?
O may I to the utmost prove
The gift unspeakable!

Come quickly, gracious Lord, and take
Possession of Your own;
My longing heart vouchsafe to make
Your everlasting throne.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Please read:

Matthew 22:34-46

<https://bible.oremus.org/?q=466477807>

Time to Reflect

This week we continue to receive news about the horrific events that are happening in the Holy Land. A sudden escalation in the violence that has led to thousands of civilians being killed and injured with, at the time of writing, no sign of a ceasefire in sight. The images that we have seen on our screens are heartbreaking and the stories being shared give us a glimpse of the terror that is being experienced by ordinary people.

Earlier this year I visited Israel and the Palestinian territories and was struck by the beauty of a place that has been the cradle for the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. I was also saddened to see the divisions that exist that are a consequence of the political tensions in that region and of those who are still committed to the way of violence, terror, and hatred.

The reading that we have this Sunday, from Matthew's Gospel, we are told what the greatest commandment is:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

(Matthew 22:37-40, NRSVA Bible)

Jesus makes clear to his disciples what is expected of them and that it all comes back to love. Jesus makes it clear that the commandment to love God and neighbour is the cumulation of the law and the teachings of the prophets that came before him.

Jesus not only talked about this love but demonstrated the love of God and neighbour in his life, death, and resurrection. It can therefore be said that our faith is all about the love that God has shown in Christ and our calling to follow in that same way of love.

Throughout his ministry Jesus showed the love of God for all people in his feeding and healing ministry. Then when Jesus faced the violent torture of the Roman Empire, through the crucifixion, his response to his executioners was not to encourage further violence or vengeance against them but rather to proclaim God's forgiveness and demonstrate the self-sacrificial love of God in Christ to them. Consequently, the cross has become a symbol of God's love and forgiveness and the resurrection that enables a renewal of life.

In the Holy Land at the moment, it seems to hard to see how and when the violence can end. Yet when people are committed to peace and the love of God and neighbour, which is inextricably linked, then the Spirit of God can work in our hearts and minds to make that peace a reality, offering a new way of being and living. This begins with each of us being willing to open our hearts and minds to the Spirit that grants us a deep and lasting peace, that passes all understanding, and keeps our hearts and minds in the love of God.

The challenge for us is having received that same Spirit how we can demonstrate the love of God and neighbour in our lives and extend God's peace to those around us. So, this coming week I encourage you to think about what you can say and do to demonstrate the love of God and neighbour and build peace with those around you. In doing this we respond to Christ's love for us and the whole world and we work towards establishing that peace amongst all people. So may the triune God help us, through the presence of his Holy Spirit, to live and share his love. In Jesus name, Amen.

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 707 – Make me a channel of your peace

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

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
And where there's doubt, true faith in you:

*O Master grant that I may never seek.
So much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light;
And where there's sadness, ever joy:
[Refrain]

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
In giving to all men that we receive;
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928-1997).

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Final Prayer

Loving God, I see the news and I am afraid.
Violence is spiralling out of control.
I don't know what to think or feel.
The temptation to fall into hatred, or
despair feels very close at hand.
Help me to remember that nothing in all
creation can separate me from your love
that I know in Jesus. May your perfect love for
me cast out my fear and free me to discern
what is mine to do amidst the chaos of this
suffering world. Amen.

Prayers for Israel-Palestine, The Methodist Church,
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/israel-palestine/>