

## **Worship at Home service Sunday 22nd September 2024 with John Atkin**

### **A prayer of approach:**

Vibrant God, call us afresh today, to a new vision of your kingdom, to a new understanding of your purposes, to a new knowing of how best to serve you, to a new appreciation of your presence with us, to a new awareness of all that you would have us do, as your people in this place and time. In Jesus' name we pray.

**Amen.**

### **StF 157 God has spoken; by his prophets.**

God has spoken-by his prophets, spoken his unchanging word;  
each from age to age proclaiming, God the one, the righteous Lord;  
Mid the world's despair and turmoil, one firm anchor holding fast:  
God eternal reigns forever, God the first and God the last.

God has spoken-by Christ Jesus, Christ, the everlasting Son;  
brightness of the Father's glory, with the Father ever one:  
spoken by the Word incarnate, God, from God, ere time was born,  
Light from Light, to earth descending, Christ, revealing God to all.

God is speaking-by his Spirit, speaking to our hearts again;  
in the age-long word expounding, God's own message, now as then.  
Through the rise and fall of nations, one sure faith is standing fast:  
God still speaks, his Word unchanging, God the first and God the last.

[God Has Spoken by His Prophets \(Tune: Hvfrydol - 3vv\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] \(youtube.com\)](#)

### **Prayer of confession**

God of mercy and forgiveness,  
we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed.  
We have been envious and selfish, boastful and false, quarrelsome and violent.

We have hurt others and ourselves and dishonoured you.

Forgive us, O God, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and renew a right spirit within us.

**Amen.**

### **Assurance of forgiveness**

God of grace and love, thank you for your forgiveness, freely given through the cross of Christ. Thank you that you do not reject us in our weakness but welcome us in your mercy.

**Amen.**

### **Bible reading: James 3:13-18 and 4:7-8a**

## **Prayers of thanksgiving**

God of blessing and joy, thank you for your gifts, which are more than we can ask or imagine. Thank you for the gift of life, which is precious and sacred. Thank you for the gift of faith, which is a light in the darkness. Thank you for the gift of hope, which is an anchor for the soul. Thank you for the gift of love, which is the greatest of all. Thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and our friend.

**Amen.**

## **Prayers of intercession**

God of all, we feel overwhelmed and helpless as we see and hear and feel the pain of the Holy Land, Ukraine and Russia. We pray for families there and all who are bereaved, fearful, homeless, hungry and stateless. who are suffering because of the ongoing war. Most want to live in peace and harmony with each other but the violence prevents them from living the life they would wish.

God of all. All around the world there seems to be pain and anguish created by political tactics and desires, while people simply seek peace and calm, home and shelter, food and water.

God, our national health service in the UK is under so much pressure; both staff and patients are suffering. So many people with illness and injury cannot get the help and healing they need. So many staff are not able to give the help and healing they would like to.

God of all, teach us how to welcome others. We are all welcome in your kingdom. Thank you that you see us and know us and that your welcome is deep and personal. During this week help us to be particularly aware of the welcome we offer others. May this church be a place of real welcome, a place where people feel they are seen and known and feel loved and secure.

Lord, hear all our prayers and help us to be alert to the needs of others. Holy God, bless all we have prayed for, all we have brought to mind and bless us too we pray. **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.**

### **Time to reflect:**

The letter of James is concerned above all else with the life of faith, our struggle between our worldly desires and our struggle to live the life of a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ.

The struggle with living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is, we are inundated by a flood of exaggerated claims, through television, magazines and social media. The messages leap out at us. The products assure us that they are new, improved, fantastic and capable of changing our lives. For only a few pounds we can have whiter teeth, glamorous hair, tastier food, cars, perfume, diet drinks, and mouth wash that are guaranteed to bring happiness, friends, and a good life.

James in his letter is concerned that his readers, fellow followers of Christ should make good, “Christ like”, Holy, wholesome choices, that we with the help of the Holy Spirit reflect Godly values and not cling on to the world and its values. Such choices are informed by wisdom, James ask’s “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” A virtue particularly prized in Scriptures but maybe less so today.

Have you ever known anyone who claims to be wise, but who acts foolishly? True wisdom can be measured by the depth of a person’s character, James points out that you can evaluate your wisdom by the way you act, foolishness can lead to disorder, but wisdom leads to peace and goodness, Are you tempted to escalate the conflict, pass on the gossip or fan the fire of a problem/discord, recently ,How do you or would you use social media, to criticize others or their beliefs, or pass on the gossip, it can quickly get out of hand .

Careful thoughtful words and actions with loving caring words are the seeds of peace as it says in Matthew 5, God loves a peace maker. But James goes on, not mincing his words, goes straight to the point whether inside or outside the Church. Bitter envy and selfish ambition are inspired by the devil. It is easy for us to be drawn into wrong desires by the pressures of society and even by well-meaning Christian’s. Maybe by listening to the advice of—Assert yourself, go for it, set high goals, we can be drawn into greed and destructive competitiveness.

We may want to assist God with his plans for our lives. Our churches, initially our desire is innocent, but I have learned that unchecked desire can become unwanted problems.

James gives us a stark reality check as he assures us that our conduct will one day reveal our character. He explains that those who are walking in jealousy and selfishness are being fuelled by the demonic and those walking in peace are led by wisdom that comes from heaven. Once again, we are presented with a choice as to which life we want to reap, disorder or unity.

An example is Saul and David in 1 Samuel 16 -31.

Saul is fuelled by insecurity, jealousy, and envy, which eventually takes away his kingship and his life. David on the other hand, was led by peace, unity and honour which gave him grace to respond with wisdom and wait on God's timing. If you find yourself trying to arrange circumstances to open doors, bring "divine" appointments or make your voice heard, then it could be wise to really think about it and meditate on these verses and the letter of James until the Holy Spirit saturates you with peace that goes far beyond performance / what you expect.

The wisdom that James writes of is the gift of God, not the achievement of humanity. So, in choosing the way of true wisdom we are essentially choosing God's way.

### **StF 736. In heavenly love abiding**

In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear; And safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here: The storm may roar without me, My heart may low be laid; But God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?

Wherever he may guide me, no want shall turn me back; My Shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack: His wisdom ever waketh, His sight is never dim, He knows the way he taketh, And I will walk with him.

Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen; Bright skies will soon be o'er me, Where the dark clouds have been; My hope I cannot measure, my path to life is free; My Saviour has my treasure, And he will walk with me.

### **A going out prayer:**

So now we go out with confidence in you, our loving God who leads us; you know are weaknesses and our strengths.

Lord calls us, guide us, and strengthen us with your wisdom. **Amen.**