

Worship at Home service Sunday 29th September 2024 with Revd Ian Forsyth

A call to worship:

Lift up your heads to the king of glory. You who have pure hearts will receive blessings from the Lord. Lift up your heads to the king of glory; seek the face of God and put aside all obstacles to his love. **Amen.**

A gathering prayer

Loving God, you open the way for us to hear your voice and to do your will. Give us your strength, your courage, your presence, so that we may respond in word and deed and be your people for your purposes, through Jesus our Lord who gave his all for us. **Amen.**

StF 416 - There's a wideness in God's mercy

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in God's justice,
which is more than liberty.

There is welcome for the sinner,
and more graces for the good.
There is mercy with the Savior,
there is healing in his blood.

But we make God's love too narrow
by false limits of our own,
and we magnify its strictness
with a zeal God will not own.

For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more simple,
we should rest upon God's word,
and our lives would be illumined
by the presence of our Lord.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGNi1Npn0iw>

Bible readings

Psalms 15; James 5 v 13 - 20

Reflection:

The Prayer of Faith James 5 v 13 – 20

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick?

Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven (v 13-15)

The words I would like us to remember today are, Trials, Triumph and Testimony.

I have chosen to reflect on these three verses from the book of James today. James asks quite a simple question 'Is any one among you in trouble? Let them pray'. This reminded me of a hymn, what a friend we have in Jesus (Singing the Faith 531) and the second verse talks about the difficulties we face.

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.

James goes on to ask, 'is anyone happy? let them sing songs of praise. A few weeks ago, during a retreat morning at Great Billing we sang a hymn, 'Today I awake, and God is before me, by John Bell from the Iona community, (Singing the Faith 139). The verse that stood out for me was verse 3 where it says,

Today I affirm the Spirit within me, at worship and work, in struggle and rest.

The Spirit inspires all life which is changing, from fearing to faith, from broken to blest.

Along our journey in life, we may feel that we are broken in some way. I like the idea of us being broken people, as it is our Father in heaven who restores and transforms us.

In verse 14 James asks, 'Is anyone among you sick?' Jesus invites us to come to him with the words from Matthews Gospel when he says "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” In life, we all experience different trials and triumphs however when we look back at these years that seemed dark, we often recognise some triumphs. If you are going through a trial right now, Psalm 23 gives us hope today, ‘Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me’.

In verse 15, James talks of testimony, he says, ‘And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven’. During my years of Christian ministry, I have come to understand that healing is a complicated area, and we may struggle with some quite difficult questions.

People have countless stories of testimony, and I am reminded of Psalm 30 v 2 that says ‘Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit’.

Finally, the Methodist way of life (pocket guide) has a section called share we share our Faith. On so many occasions I am amazed at people’s faith story and what a privilege we get to partner with God. God involves us in the task of bringing love and restoration. Here are two questions for us to close with today. How have you shared your faith recently? And what opportunities do you have to share your Faith in the future?

May we remember the three words I started with today as we go into the next this week, Trials, Triumph and Testimony. Amen

A prayer for this month by Pete Greig

A prayer for us this month 2 Corinthians 3 v 18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Lord, thank you for making me. I’m truly grateful for the life you’ve given with all its ups and downs. But I’m even more grateful that you are still making me, transforming me into your image day by day.

I’m a work in progress.

Help me today to relax into the reality of your love. To know that it’s okay not to be okay. To unclench my fists and receive again the gifts of your grace. Thank you for believing in me way before than I believe in either of us. Sometimes I wish you didn’t trust me quite so much.

As I focus on you today, may my face begin to reflect a little more of your glory. Help me to smile more. To listen better. To be fully and deeply present to others because of your presence in me. **Amen.**

Rock of ages StF 434

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save me from its guilt and power.

Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil thy law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not alone,
Thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace:
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyes shall close in death,
When I soar through tracts unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hyJuuo24tY>

A sending out prayer: May we listen for God’s call, know his strength, see where he is leading us, be faithful in doing his work and make way for his kingdom. **Amen.**