

Worship at Home Service Sunday 17th November 2024, with Revd Alan Sharp.

StF 17: "With gladness we worship"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=705eMUhoGs8>

With gladness we worship, rejoice as we sing,
Free hearts and free voices how blessed to bring,
The old, thankful story shall scale Thine abode,
Thou King of all glory, most bountiful God.

Thy right would we give Thee - true homage Thy due,
And honour eternal, the universe through,
With all Thy creation, earth, heaven and sea,
In one acclamation we celebrate Thee.

Renewed by Thy Spirit, redeemed by Thy Son,
Thy children revere Thee for all Thou hast done.
O Father! returning to love and to light,
Thy children are yearning to praise Thee aright.

We join with the angels, and so there is given
From earth Hallelujah, in answer to heaven.
Amen! Be Thou glorious below and above,
Redeeming, victorious, and infinite Love!

Opening prayer

Lord, we approach your throne of grace, trusting in your goodness and mercy. When all around seems threatened or fragile, our confidence is in you, O Lord.

Jesus, our great High Priest – look what you have done for us!
You have gone before us, through death into new life, enabling us to stand in the presence of God and to experience the depths of joy that comes from knowing you. We praise your holy name! **Amen.**

Bible reading: Mark 13:1-8

Reflection:

I'm just reading a book "Living with the Gods" by Neil MacGregor, who was Director of the British Museum. The subtitle is "On Beliefs and Peoples" and in the introduction he says, "Every known society shares a set of beliefs and assumptions. that is an essential part of a shared identity. Sometimes they are secular, as with nationalism, but throughout history they have been religious". He then continues for almost 500 pages exploring this.

So, we all put our trust in something bigger than ourselves, beliefs and things that seem secure! And in this Gospel passage the disciples are admiring the Temple - "what large stones and what large buildings." We've all done that at some time. It may have been a large Cathedral, or it could have been some architectural wonder such as the Shard in London. But I wonder if the disciples were shocked by his answer? "Do you see these buildings - all will be thrown down"

No doubt many people see this as prophetic. Because within 50 years of Jesus' death the Temple was destroyed by the Roman authorities. Those who think Jesus is being prophetic will believe that he is looking into the future and knowing what will happen.

But one writer says that Jesus is being pastoral. He is reassuring his disciples that, despite the catastrophic events that may happen, his disciples are not to lose heart, since the end is not yet. It is a message for then and for now.

In our lifetimes we face many changes. Sometimes they threaten us, and our "belief and assumptions" can be challenged - by changes at work, failures to achieve what we hoped for, relationship breakdowns, and health scares - to name just a few. Each of these may once have seemed as secure as the stones that made up the Temple. And then we found otherwise. Our lives can bring challenges that are traumatic.

In this Gospel reading, I do find the last sentence puzzling - "This is the beginning of the birth pangs" What have "birth pangs" got to do with the situation? Sadly, these few words are not discussed or explained in commentaries! But to me it seems that Jesus is encouraging the disciples, and us. Birth pangs can be painful, and lengthy, but they produce new life. Things are very different afterwards.

And I believe that Jesus is saying that when we face disaster, or our trust is broken it need not be the end. He wants us to believe in something more.

I'm told that Spain used to have a coin with a map of the world as it was known then, before Columbus. It had the words "Ne plus ultra" - no more beyond. Then when Columbus made his discoveries, they had to obliterate the "Ne", so that it said, "more beyond".

Our human certainties can be shattered. But while we live there is always the possibility of a new start. The pain of some loss can be terrible, and almost be destructive. But Christ will help us to find there is more beyond.

StF 639: Through the love of God our Saviour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gpj1SVKoeQU>

Through the love of God our Saviour, all will be well;
Free and changeless is His favour; all, all is well.
Precious is the blood that healed us,
Perfect is the grace that sealed us,
Strong the hand stretched forth to shield us; all must be well.

Though we pass through tribulation, all will be well.
Christ has purchased full salvation, all, all is well.
Happy still in God confiding;
Fruitful, if in Christ abiding;
Holy, through the Spirit's guiding; all must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow; all will be well.
Faith can sing through days of sorrow, all, all is well.
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying;
Or in living or in dying; all must be well.

Prayers of intercession

Lord, when we see what is happening in the world, our hearts are troubled.

We take this time to pray for those places, where there is war instead of peace, grief instead of laughter, despair instead of hope.

We also pray for individuals who are struggling.
Name people or situations known to you

O God of compassion, draw near.
May your Holy Spirit brood over these situations and lives
and bring healing, comfort and peace,
creativity from chaos, rest from trouble.
Shine into these situations, so full of shadow,
that light may triumph over darkness,
and hope arise from despair.
In the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

StF 636: O love that wilt not let me go

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4D4MPIW8ptg>

O Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe, That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O light that followest all my way, I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray, That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain, And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

(Sung by a mass choir from churches in Bangalore, India)

Benediction.

Do not fear: the Lord goes before you, beside you and behind you.
The Lord will guide you through all disaster
and bring you safe into the kingdom.
Go in peace, in love and in hope.

Amen. *(Prayers taken from "Roots on the web")*