

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")*