



Worship at Home service Sunday 23rd March 2025 with Revd Ian Forsyth

Opening liturgy:

Give us this day our daily bread to give our soul rest. In a fast-paced world that seems never to rest or sleep, in an internet world of immediate response... ***Give us this day our daily bread to give our soul rest.*** Let us find that calm centre, that stillness and rest, that moment of comfort, refreshment and peace... ***Give us this day our daily bread to give our soul rest.*** To find meaning and purpose, to see the way forward, with you as our pillow in the moment of tiredness. O Lord our God, on this Lenten journey, **let us rest in the knowledge of your peace and your calm.**
Amen.

O love that wilt not let me go StF 636

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 flick'ring 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 thru' pain, I cannot close my heart to thee:
I trace the rainbow thru' 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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vU2YHuhUtCU>

Bible readings

Psalm 63 v 1 – 8. Luke 13 v 1 - 9

Reflection:

This week's worship at home service is based on the Methodist Lent material entitled 'Soul rest'.

The scripture for reflection is taken from Luke 13 v 1 – 9 where Jesus shares a parable about a fig tree that bears no fruit.

A fig tree

In the Old Testament, fig trees planted in vineyards often symbolise Judah or Israel. For example, Hosea 9:10 describes Israel as “like grapes in the wilderness,” with fig trees as a metaphor for God’s people. Micah 7:1 uses the imagery of fruit trees to reflect the prophet’s sorrow over Israel’s spiritual state, and Jeremiah 8:13 speaks of withering figs as a symbol of Israel’s judgment and lost blessings.

Let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it.

Stories about fruitless trees existed well before Jesus’ time, and he appears to draw on a familiar tale for this teaching. However, in Jesus’ version, a notable difference is that the gardener responds with leniency and care, choosing to tend to the tree rather than cutting it down immediately. This compassionate approach highlights a theme of patience and the opportunity for growth and renewal if things are well nourished and given time to rest.

If it bears fruit next year.

In Jesus’ version of the story, there is a hopeful message: this seemingly hopeless tree still has the potential to thrive, if given more time. Contrary to the owner’s belief that the tree is a “waste of soil,” Jesus’ story suggests that with patience and care, even what seems useless, can bear fruit. This reflects a theme of second chances and the belief in redemption and restoration for all.

The fig tree illustrates God’s patience and love, at times we can feel overwhelmed by everything we need to do. In conclusion today, we could choose to give ourselves time to be unplugged and just be. We can give ourselves the permission to put our mobile phones on silent or give up watching a streaming device for a short period of time. In the last year or so I have become more aware of needing to take time out and this can mean being able to tackle new tasks and work more efficiently. Taking time to pause allows us to reconnect with ourselves, and our purpose, nurturing our wellbeing, and deepening our understanding of God, life, and the world around us.

A prayer of adoration Merciful God, who directs our life, **we adore you.** Faithful God, who never changes, **we adore you.** Glorious God of forgiveness and second chances, **we adore you.** God of all nourishment, **we adore you.** All powerful, abundant God, **we adore you. Amen.**

A prayer of confession

Father God, you give us the gift of abundant life, providing for our physical and spiritual needs. We're sorry for taking your provision for granted. We're sorry: when we lose sight of your loving mercy and get wrapped up in our own self-indulgent desires; for failing to rejoice and sing your praises; for focusing on the negatives instead of the positives; for being judgemental and not giving others a second chance.

We repent, Father God: help us to turn around and to bear good fruit. Amen.

Prayer of forgiveness

God has mercy on all who turn to him.
He freely pardons and forgives our sins.

We are free to begin anew. Amen.

A prayer of praise

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, entwined as One, we give you thanks and praise. Our deepest longings are satisfied in you. You allow us second chances, never giving up on us.

Repentance changes our life and shapes our future, one that you tend and nurture, day by day. You help us endure trials and temptations, ensuring we are never pushed beyond our boundary of endurance.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, entwined as One, we give you thanks and praise for satisfying our souls. All thanks and praise to you. Amen.

The King of Heaven my shepherd is StF 479

The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never.
I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul he leadeth;
and where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth.

3 Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me;
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill,
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O, what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days,
thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house forever.

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

A prayer of blessing:

May God, the patient gardener, provide rest and nurture for your soul today. **Amen.**

Final blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever He may send you. May He guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm. May He bring you home rejoicing at the wonders He has shown you. May He bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**