

Worship at Home Service Sunday 30th March 2025, with Revd Alan Sharp.

StF 57: Let all the world in every corner sing

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07cdvjm>

Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King!
The heavens are not too high, His praise may thither fly;
The earth is not too low, His praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King!

Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King!
The Church with psalms must shout; No door can keep them out;
But above all, the heart Must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King!

Opening prayer *

Generous God, on this Mothering Sunday, we thank you for mothers, parents and all who care for us. Love shapes our life. But none more so than your love, which is beyond any other. Thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who paid for our sin with his immeasurable sacrifice. Thank you for your Holy Spirit, who keeps us on track. Thank you that when we return to you, we are always sure of a warm, comforting embrace.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thank you for restoring us. **Amen.**

Reading: Luke 15. 11b-32 (*Abbreviated*)

Then Jesus told them this parable:

“There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So, he divided his property between them. “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ... “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So, he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him.... Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So, they began to celebrate.

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So, he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ... ““My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Reflection:

This Sunday is Mothering Sunday. This will be observed in some way in many churches as they worship today. There is no such thing as a typical mother! But in most cases mothers find joy in their children and try to provide a secure family life.

Today’s reading is the story of the Prodigal Son. It raises a few questions. The son had wasted his inheritance - would he ever receive more? Was the elder brother ever reconciled? But where was the mother? And what did she think of all this?

When I read this story, I can’t help comparing it with another younger son that left home and fell out with his brother. That story is in the Old Testament – it’s the story of Jacob who had cheated on his brother Esau. Jacob needed to flee from the wrath of Esau. But in that Old Testament story we do read about the mother, Rebekah.

Where was the mother of the Prodigal Son?

If we think about it, there must have been deep anguish as she saw her youngest leave home.

Both stories remind us of the separation that all mothers face at some point. The son or daughter who is no longer a child and is out-growing home life. At worst, they may have got involved with drugs and sunk into hopelessness.

Or criminal behaviour has put them in prison. Each situation will cause anguish or worse. So, as we think about the story of the Prodigal Son today, let's not view it only from the father's or elder brother's point of view. Let's think about the mother. Like Rebekah in Genesis, this is her youngest son.

Now, this is a parable, just a story. But parables are meant to raise questions so perhaps we can think about the mother's concern. Above all, it's a story about how a wayward child finds forgiveness and love. I'm sure that the mother showed as much love as did the father when their son arrived home.

Mothering Sunday has become a time to remember our mothers and perhaps recognise that through them we learnt what love is. In this story Jesus says that the love of God is like a father welcoming a wayward son. The prophet Isaiah describes God's love in another way: "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you" (Is. 66.13). On Mothering Sunday, we appreciate the importance of nurturing love. Life's challenges can mean we forget this love. We can become lost through the mistakes and wrong choices we make. The joy is that God's outrageous love is always, always there, welcoming us home.

StF 503: Love Divine, all loves excelling <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPbD2G3i-7Y>

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown;
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver;
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory
till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Prayers of intercession *

Gracious God, we pray that your reconciling love may bring harmony to our world.

We pray for those caught up in conflicts between nations and states; for all who live in fear of the bullet or the bomb.
We pray for those whose relationships have broken down. May your love bring reconciliation, your peace dissolve bitterness, and your grace disperse anger.
We bring to you homes that are filled with conflict and pray for all who suffer from domestic violence and abuse.
Bring healing to those who bear the scars of the ways they have been treated and enable them to experience love.
We pray for all who seek to mediate, to bring reconciliation and peace, that they may have wisdom, patience and compassion.
We bring our prayer in the name of Christ,
through whom all are reconciled to you, our God. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

StF 628: Faithful One, so unchanging <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqK-UnsRTFI>

Faithful one, so unchanging
Ageless one, you are my rock of peace
Lord of all I depend on you
I call out to you, again and again
I call out to you, again and again. You are my rock in times of trouble
You lift me up when I fall down
All through the storm Your love is, the anchor
My hope is in You alone

Benediction. *

As we go into the coming week, O God,
Bless us, keep us and transform us, and help us to share your love with all we meet. **Amen.**

** Prayers adapted from "Roots on the Web"*