

Worship at Home for 6th November with Local Preacher Linda Leathersich

Almighty God, we bring you our hearts and our minds, our questions and our fears, our understanding and our uncertainty knowing that we are always safe with you.

We come now to strengthen our faith as we worship you. **Amen.**

HYMN – STF 682

God of Grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your power;
crown your ancient Church's story;
bring her bud to glorious flower
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour.

Heal your children's warring madness;
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.

Lo, the hosts of evil round us
scorn your Christ, assail his ways!
Fears and doubts too long have bound us;
free our hearts to work and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days.

PRAYER

Lord God, we praise and thank you for creation, for the world and all its peoples.

We praise and thank you that despite its vastness you know each person, each name and every deepest need.

We praise and thank you that we are precious to you, that you love us and help us to reflect your glory.

Lord God, at all times and in all places, we praise you. We thank you for being with us and for being our life-long friend.

Loving God, forgive us, for too often we run away from a challenge for fear of making a fool of ourselves. Remind us that it's better to attempt something and not get it quite right than never to attempt it at all.

Lord of all, we walk a fine line between faith and doubt, belief and unbelief, our commitment being less secure than we like to pretend. Deepen our trust in you, so that we may be equipped to meet whatever challenges life throws at us and still stand firm.

Teach us that we need to be open to questions if faith is to grow, help us to seek the answers and to deepen our faith and teach us to trust in you in whom alone lies the answer to all. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

READING: Luke 20 v 27 – 38

Message:

I wonder if your heart sinks when someone starts a conversation with the words "You are religious, what do you think about..." Are we supposed to have all the answers? How do we answer? Do we please the people asking the questions or do we give the answer that will please God? It can be scary to stand up and be counted.

There are a lot of issues in our world today, issues that maybe we should be getting involved with, whether we are political animals or not! We are in the world to try to make a difference, and that doesn't happen if we all remain silent.

Jesus answered questions that ordinary people were asking and in a way that they could understand. I wonder how he would have answered questions about Fair Trade, Same-sex marriage, our Multi-faith, Multicultural society. Do you have answers ready if you are asked?

The Sadducees asked Jesus a question about a woman who had been married 7 times and what would happen after her death, who would be her husband then? It was obviously another trick question to trap Jesus into saying something that could be held against him. The Sadducees and the Pharisees worked together to try to discredit Jesus and stop people listening to him, although these two groups were miles apart in their beliefs.

The Pharisees were entirely a religious group, set on carrying out their ceremonial law. They had added thousands of regulations on top of all that was written down by the Prophets. The Pharisees believed in resurrection from the dead and in angels and spirits and they believed in fate and God having a plan for our lives, they also believed and hoped for the coming of the Messiah.

On the other hand, the Sadducees, few in number but all very wealthy and often in positions of authority, liked to keep on the right side of Rome – they didn't want to lose their position.

They accepted the written Law of Moses and didn't rate the other Prophets. They didn't believe in resurrection, angels or spirits – so their question was obviously to try to get Jesus to say something that would be considered wrong.

So the Sadducees were on one side, the Pharisees on the other and most ordinary people in the middle. As usual Jesus gave a good answer.

The woman had done nothing wrong as she had acted according to the Law of Moses - if a man died childless then his brother should marry his widow, this was binding according to the Sadducees – they didn't believe in resurrection so why did they think there would be a problem anyway?

Jesus pointed out that heaven is not just a continuation of life on earth. We mustn't think of heaven in terms of this earth, life there will be quite different. None of us knows what heaven will be like and it would save a lot of worry if we stopped speculating and just trusted in the love of God. And Jesus said that Moses (who the Sadducees believed in) had said at the burning bush that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and as it is impossible for God to be the God of the dead, they must all be alive and therefore there must be resurrection – even the scribes who were around, thought Jesus had given a good answer. Jesus met their question and answered it in a way that everyone could understand. He faced their issue with confidence.

Today there are still many issues, people will often look to see how Christians are responding to what is happening. We never know when we will be challenged to say what we think and we have to be like Jesus, he didn't shy away, he spoke out to change people and events. It may be easier to go with the flow rather than speak out.

Remember Ships are safe in the harbour, but that is not what they are intended for! We can hide away and be safe, but God intended us to be in the world changing people and events. If it makes life a bit stormy, we just have to remember that we are anchored to God's love and he will not let us be overwhelmed, we will be safe because he will give us the right words to speak. Let's be prepared to answer for our beliefs.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Lord there are so many issues that we need to pray for, we come in faith knowing that you know all that is in our hearts at this time.

We pray that your Church on earth may prosper and bring more to know your love.

Grant not just peace but reconciliation in our world, an end to all that divides and destroys, so that all may come together and move forward shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart as you intended.

For all who are ill, especially those known to ourselves, to all the sick and suffering, give strength, help, love and healing.

Help us to search patiently for greater understanding, deeper commitment and a fuller love for you and others that we may serve you faithfully always.

We pray in the name of Jesus and say together the prayer that he taught us - **The Lord's prayer.**

HYMN – STF 645

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?

When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain, will your anchor drift, or firm remain?

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll:
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!*

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear when the breakers roar and the reef is near? While the surges rave, and the wild winds blow, shall the angry waves then your barque o'erflow?

Refrain

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death when the waters cold chill your latest breath?

On the rising tide you can never fail
while your anchor holds within the veil:

Refrain

Will your eyes behold through the morning light the city of gold and the harbour bright?

Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past for evermore?

Refrain

Blessing:

May God bless us and give us courage now and evermore. Amen