

Worship at Home with Mary Winchcombe for October 19th 2022

Call to worship:

Gracious God, we come as we are,
in all our weakness, with all our faults,
seeking your renewing, restoring touch.
Reach out in love, receive us by your grace,
and work in us through your Spirit, to your glory.

Amen

StF 59 – Lord, the light of your love is shining

Lord, the light of your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth you now bring us
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word
Lord, and let there be light

Lord, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness
Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
Shine on me, shine on me.

Prayer

Loving God we have come to worship and adore you; to praise you for all of your creation and for your love for each one of us; to thank you for your constant companionship and encouragement.

We so often fail you, but it is always your nature to have mercy and forgiveness.

Your goodness and mercy will follow us all our days. **Amen**

Look up Genesis 32: 22-31 in your Bible where Jacob wrestles with God.

Luke 18: 1-8

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Both of our Bible readings talk of struggle. Jacob is travelling to meet up with his brother Esau, whose birth-right and blessing he stole years before.

He’s worried and nervous and needs time alone to think things through; prepare himself. But he finds himself in an all-night battle with someone he later realises was God who visited him, fought with him, changed him and strengthened him in many ways. God’s blessing enabled him to move on knowing God was with him.

And then we have the parable of the widow and the unjust judge; probably a paid judge appointed by King Herod or by the Romans. Such men were notorious. Unless a person had influence and money to bribe the judge, they had no hope of ever getting their case settled.

In contrast there is the widow, who is a symbol of all who are poor and defenseless. Without resources she had no hope of ever getting justice from the judge. But she had a secret weapon - one known to every child who badly wants something - pester power – persistence along with determination.

Let's face it most parents have given in to it at some point, for a bit of peace. Persistence and determination are powerful forces.

The Judge is not offered as a picture of what God is like. What Jesus means is that if this callous judge could be moved to act by the widow's persistence, how much more will God answer people's prayers for justice.

Previously he was asked 'When will the Kingdom come?' Jesus wouldn't give a date or a prediction when God's justice will finally reign, but instead tells us how to behave while we wait – we are to pray.

This parable is about the power of prayer.

God will hear and answer. He is the opposite of the unjust judge – He is a God of love. The important bit is the need for perseverance in prayer – not to wear God down so that he'll change his mind and give us what we want. We are to keep on praying because the more we do, the more we learn to be open to God and the more we learn what He wants.

Jesus ends on a slightly tetchy note. There is just a hint of despair in Jesus' words, when he says when he returns, 'will he find faith on the earth?' How many of us will he discover continuing in obedience and hope, prayer and persistence?

The message of encouragement looked ahead to the days that would follow his ministry, when his disciples would wait in perplexity through persecution and hardship.

That encouragement is equally relevant in our own day, for those who face persecution, for their faith and those who face apathy towards their Christian witness.

We see lots of sport on our televisions.

Sportsmen and women train hard to be fit and strong.

Our Christian journey is a marathon, not a sprint. It requires perseverance and dedication. Our training is our time spent with God – reading his word, spending time with him in prayer not just talking, but also listening for his voice.

Like Jacob we will have times when we struggle, when life throws things our way that are challenging and hard.

A close relationship with God and a healthy prayer life will see us through and out the other end – usually spiritually stronger.

May we all strive to regularly persist in prayer.

Amen

Prayers of intercession:

In the certain knowledge that God answers prayer we bring our requests.

For our world struggling with unrest, oppression, war and fear.

For all who are unwell, anxious about test results, struggling with finance and hardship.

For leaders, that they may lead with honesty and integrity; for the good of all they lead.

For all who seek to help us – medical staff, emergency services, front line workers.

And for ourselves that we may be faithful servants, seeking your guidance and acting upon it.

In Jesus name.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: For I'm building the people of power

For I'm building a people of power
and I'm making a people of praise
that will move through this land by my Spirit
And will glorify my precious name.

Build your church Lord
Make us strong Lord
Join our hearts Lord, through Your Son.
Make us one Lord, In Your Body,
in the kingdom of your Son.

Blessing:

Living God, may the experience of your love,
the reality of your grace and the knowledge of your constant presence,
continue to transform our lives each day, so that we may live and work for
you more faithfully. To the glory of your name.

Amen