Worship at Home service Sunday 28th July 2024 with Revd Ian Forsyth

A call to worship:

God has been with us through this week and has seen everything we have seen and knows everything that has happened to us. Let us come to God now, bringing the whole of our lives to God in our worship, trusting that God is always fair and always loving. **Amen.**

A gathering prayer:

God who sees us, thank you for being with us this past week and for bringing us together today. As we worship, help us to see you afresh and to look with new eyes on the world in which you call us to serve you. **Amen.**

Be still my soul.

Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
in every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heav'nly Friend
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

2 Be still, my soul; thy God doth undertake
to guide the future as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

3 Be still, my soul; when dearest friends depart,
and all is darkened in the veil of tears,
then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.
Be still, my soul; thy Jesus can repay
from His own fullness all He takes away.

4 Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning on
when we shall be forever with the Lord,
when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,

sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut5LBsi-YGE

Bible readings

1 Corinthians 9 v 24 – v 27

Reflection:

This summer many of us may be watching athletes compete in the Olympic Games in Paris. In the 1924 Olympics, a man by the name of Eric Liddell took 47.6 seconds to win the 400 metres race games, and his famous victory has now become a timeless moment in modern sporting history and achievement. FF Bruce, a theologian has said of Eric Liddell that 'his refusal to run on Sunday made a great impression on his schoolmates and himself in the far distant days of 1924'. Earlier this year I read the biography about Eric Liddell and I today I want to share a reflection that may help us have a glimpse of the man and the God he loved and lived for. This may help us in running the race to the finish line and beyond.

I have always known that he was a runner but knew very little of the things he wrote, and his successes off the running track. Eric entered amateur races in Glasgow and other venues and ran on grass and cinder tracks in different race meetings. In 1919 Eric aged seventeen, set a new record for 100 yards in a time of 10.2 seconds. Running was not his only sport as he also played rugby at Eltham college in 1918 and made the point that, 'One of the hardest lessons to learn is how to start'. An unknown source has said of Eric that he had a dreadful running style, but his space devouring legs, raced on a straight path to the tape, aiming to run at speed, putting all his strength into the effort of winning.

Eric was born in China to missionary parents and sometime after the Olympics he returned to China to be an ambassador for Christ, in another country. His motto was. 'Christ for the world, the world needs Christ'. A missionary colleague in China once asked him did he ever pray that he would win a race. His answer was, 'No, I never prayed that I would win a race. I have of course, prayed about athletic meetings, asking that in this too, God might be glorified'.

In 1929 he started courting Florence the daughter of a Canadian missionary. She went to Canada in July 1930 to train as a nurse and in March 1934 they were married. They had three children, Patrica and Heather were born in China and Maureen was born in Toronto.

Eric Liddell took time out to write a book called the disciplines of the Christian Life. One small part he wrote about is the secret of obedience. He suggests taking obedience with you into your prayer hour, for you will know as much of God, as you are willing to put into practice. He shared words from 1 Corinthians 9 v 24, it says 'Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize. Run in such a way as to get the prize'. He shared the words of a hymn, 'When we walk with the Lord, In the light of His Word, what glory he sheds on our way! While we do his will,
He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey'.
Unfortunately, Eric never lived to see his youngest daughter, as he continued to work in the villages in China to help local preachers. Eric's last words were 'it is surrender', Eric had run his course on this earth and at 9:20pm in the evening of 21st February 1945, aged 43 he passed into the presence of his Lord, to enjoy 'a fellowship immeasurably richer, and a service more wonderful by far, than any which on we earth can know'.

In conclusion, may we run the race God has called us to run and go beyond. Eric's calling was not just to run but also to share his faith at various gatherings where he quoted from the Old Testament, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth', Ecclesiastes 12 v 1. Eric set his mind and heart on a different race; may we do the same to gain the prize. Philippians 3 v 13 – 14 says, 'Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus'.

Prayers of intercession

Lord God as we come to you in the stillness, help us to focus on you. Keep our minds firmly fixed on what YOU can do, not on our own strength. As we pray for the week ahead, give us the confidence to know that you go before us into every situation. Help us to remember that your strength is so much greater than ours and you offer it to us freely. Give us the humility to ask for your courage and strength rather than seeking to do things our way.

Lord, our confidence is in you: Help us to step out in faith.

Lord, we think about the week just gone. We pause to think about any difficult situations we found ourselves in. We ask: where were you in that situation? We listen in the silence for your response…
Help us to see that you are always there, sometimes ahead of us, sometimes working almost unseen, but you are there. And we thank you.
Lord, our confidence is in you: Help us to step out in faith.

Lord, we think about the battles we must face in the week ahead. We know that there will be giants and storms along the way, and we ask you to give us trust. To know that you are holding all things together. Give us the courage to believe that, even though storms may seem to be raging, you are in control. **Lord, our confidence is in you:**

Help us to step out in faith.
We think about our work, school or home life. Where might there be storms this week? We pray for the tricky situations in these contexts that make us uneasy and uncomfortable. Help us to face difficult situations with grace and love. If there are difficulties with people, we pray for them by name now in our hearts. If there are stressful situations, we offer them to you. Lord, go before us and equip us to handle everything that comes our way.

Finally, Lord, we turn to the week ahead. There may be so much we know about what will happen and who we will meet. There may also be so little… Help us to go into every situation equipped not with our armour, but with yours. Show us the gifts you have given us to use… Teach us to look to you for strength and courage rather than trying to solve our own problems. Still our storms with your peace and help us to keep our eyes fixed firmly on you. **Lord, our confidence is in you:** Help us to step out in faith.

Lead us forward in your strength. Go before us and shine your light. Help us to be people of confidence in you and you alone. **Amen.**

God who touches earth with beauty.

God who touches earth with beauty, make my heart anew. With your Spirit recreate me pure and strong and true.

2 Like your springs and running water, make me crystal pure. Like your rocks of tow'ring grandeur,
make me strong and sure.

3 Like your dancing waves in sunlight, make me glad and free. Like the straightness of the pine trees,
let me upright be.

4 Like the arching of the heavens, lift my thoughts above. Turn my dreams to noble action,
ministries of love.

5 God who touches earth with beauty, make my heart anew. Keep me ever, by your Spirit,
pure and strong and true.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu02Op8e4YE

A sending out prayer:
Great, powerful God, help us to trust you with the big things; Great, loving God, help us to trust you with the little things; All-knowing God, help us to trust you with everything, always. **Amen.**