Worship at Home Sunday 6th July 2025, with Revd Alan Sharp.

StF 526 (vv. 1 & 4): Lord of all hopefulness. (Introduced by Bear Grylls) https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p018ky7n

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever childlike, no cares can destroy, Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray, Your bliss in our hearts, Lord,
at the break of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm, Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray, Your peace in our hearts, Lord,
at the end of the day.

Opening prayer

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
we rejoice in all that you have done.
In these moments we come to praise you
and to reflect on how we can play our part in your work.
Holy, holy, holy Lord, be with us now –
inspire us, enrich our worship and encourage our mission, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-14 (selected verses)

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life?

Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"

When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So, he went off in a rage.

Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'!" So, he went and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Reflection:

St. Leonard's Road in Northampton once led to St. Leonards Hospital, a refuge for lepers. It was founded by a Norman knight and continued until the 17th century - though by then it only housed one leper. Nowadays, what most of us will know about leprosy is what we read in the bible. And when we read of leprosy in the Gospels it's a dreaded disease, and lepers are shunned.

This reading says that Namaan suffered from leprosy. So how come he was commander of the army of the king of Aram? We believe that Namaan suffered from a skin disease, often translated as leprosy, but not true leprosy. Apparently, leprosy as known today did not come to Israel until 327 to 325 BC, after the return of troops, after the Indian campaign of Alexander the Great - that's your bit of history for today!

So, not leprosy, but still not very pleasant. There had been no cure, so when a Hebrew slave-girl tells of a Jewish prophet in Samaria who can cure her master, he obtains a letter from his King to King Jehoram of Israel, asking Jehoram to arrange for the healing of his subject Naaman. The king of Israel suspects in this impossible request a pretext for starting a war against him and tears his clothes.

Then Elisha heard about it and says send him to me! But Namaan bridles at his treatment. Elisha speaks to him through a messenger, and Naman did not think very much about the river Jordan! And the American writer, Mark Twain, after a visit in 1869, wrote "When I was a boy, I somehow got the impression that the river Jordan was four thousand miles long and thirty-five miles wide. It is only ninety miles long, and so crooked that a man does not know which side of it he is on half the time. It is not any wider than Broadway in New York!"

But another servant persuades Namaan to do as Elisha said. And when he does so he is healed.

What attracts me in this story is the role of the servants. First of all, his wife's servant girl bravely talks about the prophet in Samaria, Elisha. She is only a slave but she finds courage to speak up. And then there are the servants of Namaan. They more or less say "What have you got to lose?"

The Gospel reading today (Luke 10.1-11,16-20) tells of Jesus sending 70 followers to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "I am sending you out like lambs among wolves."

The servants in this story could have felt like that! And it still seems like that today when we want to speak of our Christian Faith. Can we copy the confidence of the servant girl? To recognise opportunities to speak of Him – because it could transform someone's life!

StF 415 The Church of Christ in every age
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDMul1qbjm0
The church of Christ in every age, beset by change but Spirit-led,
must claim and test its heritage and keep on rising from the dead.
Across the world, across the street, the victims of injustice cry
for shelter and for bread to eat, and never live before they die.

Then let the servant Church arise, a caring Church that longs to be
a partner in Christ's sacrifice and clothed in Christ's humanity.

For Christ alone, whose blood was shed, can cure the fever in our blood,
and teach us how to share our bread and feed the starving multitude.

We have no mission but to servein full obedience to our Lord.
to care for all, without reserve,and spread his liberating word.

Prayers of intercession

Father, give your Church courage to speak and act as disciples of Christ, your Son. May we be unafraid to speak against injustice, and aware of opportunities to serve those in need, or to be peacemakers where we find division. Give to those who lead us the humility to listen to the voices of others. Where our world is in turmoil strengthen all those who work for reconciliation. In all that we do may your will be done. 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 (The video repeats)

Benediction. based on Luke 10

Jesus said, 'I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.'
Travel light, settle where you have been made to feel welcome,
and take my message of good news to those who have never heard it.
Amen.