

## WELCOME

Welcome to worship. It is good to come together from wherever you are, knowing that God is over all, bringing us His Presence to bind us together in His love, to bring forgiveness, healing and peace through His Holy Spirit to each one of us this morning. Jesus told His disciples and His words remain true for us today - <sup>25-27</sup> *“I’m telling you these things while I’m still living with you. The Friend, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will make everything plain to you. He will remind you of all the things I have told you. I’m leaving you well and whole. That’s my parting gift to you. Peace. I don’t leave you the way you’re used to being left—feeling abandoned, bereft. So don’t be upset. Don’t be distraught. (John 14:25-27 The Message)*

Our first hymn reminds us that our confidence is in God our rock, our fortress; the One who comes to save us.

### HYMN Our confidence is in the Lord

Our confidence is in the Lord, the source of our salvation  
Rest is found in Him alone, the Author of creation  
We will not fear the evil day, because we have a refuge  
In every circumstance we say our hope is built on Jesus

He is our fortress we will never be shaken }  
He is our fortress we will never be shaken } x2

We will put our trust in God we will put our trust in God

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### PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Lord God, the one who always makes the first move, we worship you this morning. Your creative energy enlivens us. You reach out to touch us with your amazingly powerful love – the love which changed death to life, the love which transforms us from slaves to children, from sinners to forgiven people restored to a loving relationship with yourself.

No one asked you to create the world you just chose to do it. No one asked that you should make the world so full of beautiful things you just planned it that was. No one suggested that you fill it with so many people who are kind and understanding, that was how you wanted it to be. Yet Lord God we have made a mess of your good world and spoilt our lives, destroying our friendship with you. No one thought of asking that you should do anything about that, you simply sent Jesus as a sign of your love. Thank you for Jesus, for his life on earth and his death on the cross. We praise you for his mighty resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. We praise you that we can know we are accepted, loved and part of your family. Forgive us our lack of love, our selfishness, pride, jealousy, anger. Forgive us when we want our

own way. In your mercy hear our prayer. In grace we receive our pardon from you Lord God resolved to follow you more clearly, love you more dearly in the days to come. As a token of our willingness to do this we ask that you would bless the offerings of time talents and money that we have made. Use them to bring your kingdom here on earth and please use us as your instruments of peace in the world. In Jesus name we pray saying together the prayer he taught Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**READING**      *Judges 6:11-24*

*Read by Elise Williams*

*<sup>11</sup> Then the LORD's angel came and sat under the oak tree that belonged to Joash, a man of the clan of Abiezer. His son Gideon was threshing some wheat secretly in a wine press, so that the Midianites would not see him. <sup>12</sup> The LORD's angel appeared to him there and said, "The LORD is with you, brave and mighty man!" <sup>13</sup> Gideon said to him, "If I may ask, sir, why has all this happened to us if the LORD is with us? What happened to all the wonderful things that our fathers told us the LORD used to do—how he brought them out of Egypt? The LORD has abandoned us and left us to the mercy of the Midianites."*

*<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD ordered him, "Go with all your great strength and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I myself am sending you." <sup>15</sup> Gideon replied, "But Lord, how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least important member of my family."*

*<sup>16</sup> The LORD answered, "You can do it because I will help you. You will crush the Midianites as easily as if they were only one man." <sup>17</sup> Gideon replied, "If you are pleased with me, give me some proof that you are really the LORD. <sup>18</sup> Please do not leave until I bring you an offering of food." He said, "I will stay until you come back." <sup>19</sup> So Gideon went into his house and cooked a young goat and used a bushel of flour to make bread without any yeast. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, brought them to the LORD's angel under the oak tree, and gave them to him. <sup>20</sup> The angel told him, "Put the meat and the bread on this rock, and pour the broth over them." Gideon did so. <sup>21</sup> Then the LORD's angel reached out and touched the meat and the bread with the end of the stick he was holding. Fire came out of the rock and burned up the meat and the bread. Then the angel disappeared. <sup>22</sup> Gideon then realized that it was the LORD's angel he had seen, and he said in terror, "Sovereign LORD! I have seen your angel face-to-face!" <sup>23</sup> But the LORD told him, "Peace. Don't be afraid. You will not die." <sup>24</sup> Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and named it "The LORD is Peace."*

**HYMN 191**      **Do not be afraid**

*Do not be afraid for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name you are mine*

*When you walk through the waters I'll be with you, You will never sink beneath the waves Do not. ...*

When the fire is burning all around you, you will never be consumed by the flames *Do not be afraid...*

When the fear of loneliness is looming, then remember I am at your side *Do not be afraid...*

When you dwell in the exile of the stranger, remember you are precious in my eyes *Do not be afraid...*

You are mine O my child I am your Father and I love you with a perfect love *Do not be afraid...*

## **REFLECTION**

### **Why has all this happened to us if the Lord is with us? Judges 6:13**

Shattered dreams? Most of us, if not all of us, have them. Illness, broken relationships, lack of relationship, job losses, this Covid pandemic, the list is endless - think of your own shattered dreams. When have you asked the question, why? Why is all this happening to me? Why now? Why ever? As Christians we believe that God has promised to be with us, has promised to help us. Jesus himself said to those who trusted, to those who followed, "Lo I am with you always even to the end of the world." Actually he said that to everyone but only those who trust him will know the truth of that statement. But there's the rub because often we don't know or experience the truth. C S Lewis wrote this after he had watched his wife die a very long, protracted and painful death. *Where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, if you turn to Him then with praise, you will be welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that silence. You may as well turn away.* (C.S. Lewis *A Grief Observed* Faber and Faber 1961.)

Ever felt like that, known an experience like that? Most of us have and if we haven't then we should expect to have a similar experience at some point in our lives because that sort of experience happens to human beings.

Gideon spoke out what many of us think. And yet a few verses down the line, Gideon was able to say, "The Lord is peace, shalom, wholeness completeness." What has happened between verse 13 and verse 24?

Imagine for a moment that you are Gideon. You have been brought up as a good Jew with the stories of God who has promised that you are one of His special children. After all he promised that Abraham and his descendants would live in prosperity if they followed him. There would be peace in the land, there would be peace in their hearts. Some 5-6 hundred years later, there was no peace. The Midianites and the Amalekites, they were the enemies when Israel fought its first battle, the ones who were defeated when Moses held up his hands in prayer when he called Jehovah, His banner and the worship group will

be helping us think about that name of God in a few weeks. Defeated they were then, but they regrouped, they came back and they were having a whale of a time. Every year for seven years they'd come just as the crops were about to be harvested and devour the lot. Beautiful fields full of ripe crops devastated, left with nothing. Think of the Israelites, the green shoots breaking through the surface to the earth, slender stems beginning to sway in the wind, ears of corn beginning to fill out, to ripen. Perhaps this year would be different, perhaps the harvest would be safe. And then devastation. How cruel is that? Why would the God who had promised to be with them, allow that to happen, why didn't he come with his mighty power and slay the enemies? He'd done it in the past so why not now? A question some people ask about this pandemic. Why does God allow it to happen?

God answered that question in two ways. He stated **fact** to the people. They had rebelled. The covenant was that God would be their God; that he would protect them **if and when** they trusted Him and followed His ways. They hadn't, they had forgotten him, they had gone their own way and done their own thing and the consequence of that was they were left to their own devices. God in His love allows us to choose we go. He gives us that dignity. God said, "I told you that I am the Lord your God and that you should not worship the gods of the Amorites...but you did not listen to me." Statement of fact.

God though didn't leave it there. He came to Gideon and what a picture we have of Gideon. Scared, so scared that he was down a well, threshing some corn so that he wouldn't be seen. Oozing self confidence? Not a bit of it. Scaredy custard more like! You can just imagine him in a thin squeaky voice saying, "My clan is the weakest of the tribe and I am the least important member of it." And yet God said to Him, "The Lord is with you, brave and mighty man!" Sarcasm, irony, or the knowledge of what Gideon could become with God's help. Go with all your great strength and rescue Israel because I myself am sending you. You can do it because I will help you. In the depth of Gideon's misery, in the uttermost moment of his despair, God came. And that personal encounter with God allowed Gideon to say, "The Lord is peace; shalom, wholeness, completeness."

At that point the Midianites had not been defeated, nothing on the outside had changed, but Gideon had been willing to trust that all would be well even in the depths of despair, even in the shattered dreams of the Israelites.

Perhaps you remember the story. Gideon took an army, whittled down by God from 30,000 to 300 and with God's help they defeated the Midianites. A shattered dream for Gideon and his people became a deeper personal relationship with the living God, not instantaneously but after much toil, much pain, a constant whittling away of what Gideon thought was best, until God was totally in control and Gideon was totally willing for God to be in control.

For you see, our best thoughts, our best dreams, our best schemes come nowhere near God's best plan for our lives. Gideon through trust, through patient listening and obedience found out the truth of that and as

a result was able to say God is peace. God's peace came while the storm was still whistling all around. It came when Gideon surrendered his hopes and dreams to God and allowed him to work his strength through him.

What God did for Gideon he is more than willing to do for us – both in our personal lives and in the life of our churches. We look for God to work in our lives, to work miracles, to take away our pain and despair. And yet we keep rebelling - just like the Israelites did so many years ago. We ask for what we think is best and so find a stone wall, a deaf ear. We go and do our own thing, forgetting that God knows us inside out and has given us the opportunity of being one of his special children, that's why Jesus died for us. Gideon was weak, helpless full of despair, couldn't see a way out of the cycle of violence in which he found himself. God met him there when Gideon accepted His presence first and foremost before his help. God's presence was peace. The peace came first and then the help.

Peace is not first and foremost a feeling but is about relationship, your relationship with God, our relationship with God. Give up your own dreams, your own answers and allow God's dream of a loving relationship with you to become a reality. We find that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). In His strength we find peace, a peace that the world desperately needs to hear and experience for itself, as it can, when it sees the difference it makes in the way we live our lives and in the way we react to the problems we face. Amen.

## **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

**Read by Susan White**

Lord God Almighty you are indeed holy and pure. We thank you that you are worthy to receive all our thanks and praise. You O Lord are the one who delight to give your people good things. You invite us to trust in your love and you ask us to ask in your way and will - but for that we need your wisdom. Thank you that this wisdom is one you long to share with us and does not depend on us.

We come to pray for our world, a world which needs your wisdom so much. We thank you that, as we pray, you are already answering our prayers in so many different ways. Thank you that you see the whole picture.

Holy God, our Father, give us, we pray, a spirit of contentment and peace that we may enjoy who we are and what we have. You have made us to be yours; a unique person. Help us not only to appreciate what you have given us but to be gracious and generous to others. May the world's goods neither be hoarded nor squandered but used for the benefit of all.

Thank you for your peace in our hearts and minds: that deep peace which comes from you alone. Please make your church an instrument of peace, of love, of healing. We pray for areas of conflict within the church the world over and ask that, through your wisdom, resolution would come.

Bring your gift of peace to places of war and unrest, to peoples being destroyed by greed and selfishness. We pray for all people who are abused by the ambition of others. In particular we pray for the folk of the United States of America in this difficult and dangerous period. Come, bring your healing to minds, bring your truth to bear and most of all bring peace to hearts and minds that peace may be restored in the nation. What we pray for the U.S. A. we pray for other nations across the world.

God grant your grace to the communities here in Ashkirk, Ettrick and Yarrow and Selkirk, that there may be good communication between all people. We pray for our councillors, the local resilience team, all who work to make our lives easier. We pray that as we speak and act, people would know that we are different and that the reason is that you are with us showing us a different way of living.

You have placed people in power throughout the world. Please bring them knowledge and wisdom, that the decisions they make on behalf of their citizens would be good, true, honourable, just and fair.

Comfort O Lord all who have been betrayed or deserted, all who have been misunderstood or persecuted. We pray for hostages and prisoners of conscience.

We remember all who are lonely or sick, those ill in hospital or at home and all who care for them. Come to them we pray and grant them your peace.

Thank you Lord God for the victory that Jesus has won over death and for the gift of eternal life which you freely give to us. Help us always to live in the knowledge of your love and care for us. In Jesus name we pray amen.

### **INTRODUCTION TO THIRD HYMN**

A reminder to all members and adherents to expect a letter coming through your door later this week inviting you to take time to think through whether you will vote in favour or against the proposed linking of Ettrick and Yarrow with the already linked Ashkirk and Selkirk. Each Kirk Session and myself agree that this linking is vital to the ongoing worship and mission of our respective congregations. Without each other we will not flourish.

Our third hymn reminds us that God calls us to be bringers of peace and unity.

### **HYMN 528 Make me a channel of your peace**

Make me a channel of your peace, where there is hatred let me bring your love  
Where there is injury your pardon Lord, and where there's doubt true faith in you  
*Oh Master grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console  
To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul*

Make me a channel of your peace where there's despair in life let me bring hope  
Where there is darkness only light and where there's sadness ever joy  
*Oh Master grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console  
To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul*

Make me a channel of your peace, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
In giving to all men that we receive and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

### **BENEDICTION**

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times, in all places, in every way. The blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you today and everyday...3x Amen