

Sunday 17th October 2021 E100 To boldly go...

WELCOME

God, the God of all people and all places, welcomes us to worship this today as we welcome one another here in the building and online.

Acts 17 ²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples made by human hands. ²⁵ Nor does he need anything that we can supply by working for him, since it is he himself who gives life and breath and everything else to everyone. ²⁶ From one human being he created all races of people and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live.

This is the God we praise for bringing us every good thing including the mornings.

HYMN JP 230 Thank you for every new good morning

Thank you for ev'ry new good morning
Thank you for ev'ry fresh new day
Thank you that I may cast my burdens
Wholly on to You

Thank You for ev'ry friend I have Lord
Thank You for ev'ry one I know
Thank You when I can feel forgiveness
To my greatest foe

Thank You for leisure and employment
Thank You for ev'ry heartfelt joy
Thank You for all that makes me happy
And for melody

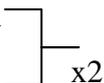
Thank You for ev'ry shade and sorrow
Thank You for comfort in Your Word
Thank you that I am guided by You
Everywhere I go

Thank You for grace to know Your gospel
Thank You for all Your Spirit's power
Thank You for Your unfailing love
Which reaches far and near

Thank You for free and full salvation

Thank You for grace to hold it fast

Thank You O Lord I want to thank You
That I'm free to thank



M G Schneider tr and adapted S Lonsdale and Michael Baughen © Bosworth and Co Ltd

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Glorious and Almighty God, the God away beyond all human comprehension we worship You in Your holiness, purity, light and love.

Glorious and Almighty God, the God of creation and recreation as we look at the beauty of Your earth, as we think about all that You have given us we worship You in your creative, generosity.

Glorious and Almighty God, the God who left all the glory in heaven coming to earth as a human being to live and to die that we Your people might have more knowledge and experience of Your love we worship and adore You.

Glorious and Almighty God, the God whose power brought Jesus back from death to life eternal we worship You in Your constant Presence with us.

Yet as we gaze upon You, we recognise How small our worship and love of You is. All too often the I of me gets in the way of the love you offer me, us reflecting in our behaviour towards You and our fellow citizens here on earth. We bow before You in sorrow at Your feet acknowledging our sin, inviting Your forgiveness and on hearing Your voice of forgiveness we rise with Your help to become witnesses to Your love and action in our world. We bring You ourselves anew. Take us and use us, our money our talents our time to impact others with Your healing, forgiving life giving love. In Jesus' name we pray saying together the prayer He taught, Our Father who art in Heaven Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done On earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever. Amen

READING Acts 13:1-12

Read by Andrew Laing

Barnabas and Saul Are Chosen and Sent

13 In the church at Antioch there were some prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (called the Black), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (who had been brought up with Governor Herod), and Saul. ² While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul, to do the work to which I have called them." ³ They fasted and prayed, placed their hands on them, and sent them off.

In Cyprus

⁴ Having been sent by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went to Seleucia and sailed from there to the island of Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues. They had John Mark with them to help in the work.

⁶ They went all the way across the island to Paphos, where they met a certain magician named Bar-Jesus, a Jew who claimed to be a prophet. ⁷ He was a friend of the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor called Barnabas and Saul before him because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸ But they were opposed by the magician Elymas (that is his name in Greek), who tried to turn the governor away from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul—also known as Paul—was filled with the Holy Spirit; he looked straight at the magician ¹⁰ and said, “You son of the Devil! You are the enemy of everything that is good. You are full of all kinds of evil tricks, and you always keep trying to turn the Lord's truths into lies! ¹¹ The Lord's hand will come down on you now; you will be blind and will not see the light of day for a time.” At once Elymas felt a dark mist cover his eyes, and he walked around trying to find someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² When the governor saw what had happened, he believed; for he was greatly amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

REFLECTION

Oh, wouldn't our prayer be that God would work in us and through us in order that when folk heard and saw they would believe because they were greatly amazed at the teaching about Jesus!

This week's readings are all about the journeys that Paul and his companions took, some really exciting and life changing, some fraught with danger, some bringing the best out of the people he met and some bringing the worst out. We left Paul known as Saul in Chapter 7 an onlooker at the stoning of Stephen. This week we will be reading one of the better known stories in the New Testament, the way in which the risen Lord Jesus met Saul on the road to Damascus, a meeting that was life changing for Saul. Each of us individually will make a choice to follow or reject having Jesus' Presence in our lives. Sometimes like Saul it is a sudden experience, for many others it happens over a period of time often without us realising it. Both are equally valid. It would be good for you to take time this week to think about your experience of Jesus in your life. Even if it is a one off event what has happened since? Why not take time to write your story out, pondering it, giving thanks to God for it and inviting Him to help you discern His Presence in the difficult parts of it.

From Ananias whose journey must have been huge. What would you have done, what would you do if God makes such a request of you. He must have thought his life was in danger, going to meet the one he knew was coming to kill all Christians. What a change of mindset was required from him. What a huge leap of faith in God required, to Barnabas the encourager – someone else who went against what the rest of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were saying about and doing to Paul, to those who thought Paul and

Barnabas were gods from Zeus, to the crowds who hailed them as folk from God to the same crowds who then tried to kill them – does that sound familiar? It should! To Paul's journeys to and from the High Priest, the governor Felix and finally to his journey which would include a shipwreck before arriving in Rome where he was kept under house arrest. Paul certainly didn't do things by half measure – it was all or nothing as far as he was concerned. And that was part of his character because he'd been like that as a Jew, before his conversion.

Total commitment to the cause without reservation, no matter what the consequences.

Andrew read about the first part of the first journey that Paul and Barnabas took together. The journey out was really exciting. In every place they visited, Paul was able to stand up and preach the Good news of Jesus' love for all - and God's word spread throughout the regions where those who believed found a deep and lasting joy through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Yet at the same time others stirred up riots and they had to leave the areas. And that is the way. People have choices to make as to whether the Gospel message is indeed good news or not. It is thought that the first journey took about two years. On the way back home Paul and Barnabas made sure the fledgling churches were in good hands. They'd spread the Good news on the way out, on the way back they needed to bring together the people into a coherent bunch – a church!

They did this by Strengthening and Encouraging the believers. It's not easy to be a Christian on your own. God made us to be in family groups so that we can gain strength from one another. So many different ideas were beginning to spring up that folk were getting confused. What did you have to do to become a Christian? It was good to have others around to help you think through your faith.

STAY TRUE TO THE FAITH urges Paul. Over the years the story of God's love, Jesus life, death, resurrection, the Holy Spirit's work in the life of a believer became honed into the Apostles' Creed. But for now it was the apostles' teaching that needed to be remembered, believed. For each person there would be part of the teaching that they remembered best of all and coming together to remember would help them to stay true to what had been taught. Stay true says Paul – don't add to it and don't take away from it. We need to beware of things creeping in to our faith which are not to be found in Jesus' message of love and forgiveness, His message of choice to follow or not. This week take time to invite Jesus to show you once more His core message of love and invite Him to show you where things which are contrary to that message play a part in your life. He is willing to help you change – just think Saul/Paul.

And then he went on with a great bit of encouragement!

KNOW THAT LIFE WILL NOT BE EASY. Paul following in his Master's example made sure that folk would be aware that trials, tribulations, temptations would come their way. This was not evidence that God had forgotten them, quite the contrary, like gold which is purified and made strong by fire, so their

faith would be strengthened by going through these times. Jesus told folk to think through the cost of faith before they took the plunge. He told them that there was a narrow way to follow, and on that narrow way they'd find that they would be taking up their cross.

The Greek word used means, "to press, to squash, to rub, to hem in, to narrow, to squeeze, to compress," Jesus uses it only once – when talking of the narrow way. Hem in, squeeze, almost squeezing the life blood out of you – Psalm 139 talks about God hemming the writer in, before, behind. But through this process comes new life and new freedom. That is a mystery we can't explain but many people have found it to be true in their experience. Trials did come for God's early followers just as they will for us too. But just like the Israelites, they would and we will find God with them and us in our times of need.

Another part of their strengthening and encouraging was to appoint elders to have oversight. People who would be there to guide the others. Just as had happened with Moses, down through the ages God invites His people to appoint some of the number to positions of spiritual oversight. That is why we have the eldership, the Kirk Session as a leadership team today. Please note the plural leaders! No one man band for the early church – no one man band for us today.

Paul and Barnabas COMMENDED THE CHURCH TO GOD'S CARE. With His help and strength they would weather whatever storms came their way.

Paul and Barnabas always told it like it was and when they got back to their home church they were able to tell – not of things that they had done but of things that God had done through them. Any lasting work is work that is done by God himself though through his graciousness, for his own purposes he chooses to use us his frail faltering people.

Changing mindsets takes 7 years so the experts say! Jewish Christians had a huge mountain to climb in accepting Gentiles as believers. After all they had been brought up to believe they couldn't eat with them, they couldn't have them in their houses, they couldn't worship with them. And yet here it now appeared that they could. No wonder there was tension. I wonder what the equivalent of that would be for us today? Perhaps you might like to spend time this week inviting God to show you and us as a church. David Wilkerson who founded a church in the slums of New York where as one worshipper put it, you might well be sitting with one high powered lawyer on one side of you and a homeless drug addict on the other. Who do we think doesn't deserve a place in church, who would we be frightened to have here today? Perhaps those are the very people that God is calling us to reach. Over the coming year each Kirk Session will be encouraged by our Presbytery to think through our mission to our communities. We will be needing all your help to hear from God what it is He wants of us. Each person's experience of God is vital so please be in touch with myself or your elder to give us your prayerful thoughts.

God frequently calls us to come out of our comfort zones in order to allow us to grow in our faith, to deepen our faith in Him, the One who is the rock of all ages, the one who promises to be our anchor in the

storms of life. He calls us to come and then go with the promise of His Word to guide us, other believers to help us and Himself to strengthen and uphold us. What a God we have.

HYMN My hope is built/Cornerstone

My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly trust in Jesus' name

My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly trust in Jesus' name

Christ alone; cornerstone, weak made strong; in the Saviour's love

Through the storm, He is Lord, Lord of all

When Darkness seems to hide His face, I rest on His unchanging grace

In every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil *Christ alone;*

When He shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in Him be found;

Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless stand before the throne. *Christ alone;*

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PRAYER OF INTERCESSION Elizabeth Davidson

Let us pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you Lord for your great goodness to us, for the beauty of our earth, the changing of the seasons, open our eyes Lord to the colours around us, the colours of our trees and our hills with the heather, open our ears Lord to the sounds of the birds, the rustle of the leaves and gurgling of our streams.

We thank you Lord for bringing us together this day and giving us the privilege of worshiping you in the different ways available to us.

We know O Lord not all Christians in this world have this freedom, we pray for those who are persecuted for their faith, we ask you to give them your strength and love. We pray Lord that those persecutors eyes can be open that all should have freedom on this earth to peacefully have their faith.

We pray for our church in the Borders, that we should be led to do your will, as we know we are your church and through us people will see something that leads them to you. We pray for our church nationally in this time of great change for many reasons, and for your church throughout the world.

We bring before you all those delegates attending the COP 26 conference that they should be open to change and encourage all people in all countries to care for our earth, this wonderful world which you created for the generations to come.

Lord, we pray today for all medical people, for the carers, nurses, doctors, those who keep our hospitals and homes clean and safe, the ambulance drivers, para medics who are under such pressure at this time and for those who are being asked to aid them.

We pray Lord for those who struggle to feed themselves and their families, and as winter approaches find it impossible to heat their homes especially now with the extra benefit being withdrawn. We ask Lord that those in power find a way to make it fairer for all to have the basics of food and warmth.

Lord, we bring before you now all those who suffer from loneliness, those who are bereaved, those who are ill and those who care for them, we take a moment now to name those known to us

We would ask you to lay your hand upon them and give them your strength and peace.

We thank you Lord for the Book of Acts, for the record of Paul's journeys, this unlikely man who came to know you and worked fearlessly and tirelessly to spread Christianity. We learn so much from Paul, and in this first missionary journey we hear about the work of the Holy Spirit through Paul for good to win over evil.

We ask Lord that we be open to listening to the message from you through the Holy Spirit that, in our lives we are given your strength and power for good to overcome evil.

We bring this prayer to you in Jesus name and ask that you will be with us in the week ahead, giving us the peace that only comes from you, that we be at peace with ourselves, at peace with others, and especially at peace with you, our dear Lord. Amen.

HYMN 739 The church's one foundation

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
she is his new creation, by water and the word;
from heav'n he came and sought her to be his holy bride,
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses, with every grace endued

'Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation of peace for evermore;
till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee.

Samuel John Stone (1839 – 1900)

BENEDICTION

Find your strength in the Lord and in His mighty power.

Go, knowing the blessing of the intimate, yet cosmic powerful Presence of God the Father, Son and Spirit in your life today and every day. Amen