

Sunday 31st October 2021 E100 Wanted: Good Leaders

WELCOME Today we meet together as congregations and online. Our God calls us to come and worship Him in spirit and in truth. The truth is that living our lives for Him in ways which bring comfort and challenge to our world is not an easy task. We are like athletes running the race of life. Paul's letter to Timothy reminds us that, "*If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.*" *2 Timothy 2:5* As Christians we believe that God is the One who has made those rules, inviting us to put our trust in Him, the One who will help us live our lives in the best way possible in order that others might see and follow that best way too. It is to this God that we bring our praise and worship.

HYMN 59 O come and let us to the Lord

O come and let us to the Lord
in songs our voices raise
With joyful noise let us the Rock
of our salvation praise

Let us before his presence come
with praise and thankful voice
Let us sing psalms to him with grace,
and make a joyful noise

The Lord's a great God and great King,
above all gods He is
Depths of the earth are in his hand,
the strength of hills is his

To him the spacious sea belongs
for he the same did make
The dry land also from his hands,
its form at first did take.

O come and let us worship him,
let us bow down withal
And on our knees before the Lord
our maker let us fall.

Psalm 95, versus 1 – 6

Verse 1: The Irish Presbyterian Psalter

Versus 2-6: The Scottish Psalter, 1929

CCLI: (A) 600239, (E&Y) 634212, (S) 27185 One License hymns reprinted with permission under: (A) A738334, (E&Y) A 738278. (S)

A-738322 All rights reserved.

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, all you people. Praise the Lord with all your life; in all that you do as long as you live. Praise God in the morning and praise God in the evening. Praise God when you rise and praise God when you rest. Praise God in times of plenty and in the times when there is less, in times of peace and in times of strife, when you are thriving and when you are downcast. In all of your life, in all that you do, as long as you live, praise God.

God, You are the Maker of the heavens and all that dwells there. God, You are the Maker of the oceans and seas and all that dwells there.

And so we worship You, *with all of our heart, all of our mind and all of our strength.*

All that we know was made by Your hands, all that we know and yet also, so much more: the farthest reaches of Heavens that are even now, still unfolding, the secrets of the Earth still hidden from our knowing, the depths of the oceans from which all life came.

And so we worship You, *with all of our heart, all of our mind and all of our strength.*

Mighty and powerful, before all things, and beyond all things yet always a God who is faithful to all creation. Faithful in love, faithful to save, faithful to tend faithful to share.

And so we worship You, *with all of our heart, all of our mind and all of our strength.*

With our human hearts, we try to love You, the all loving God. With our human minds, we try to understand You, the all-knowing God. With our human strength, we try to serve You, the all-powerful God and we rejoice to know that when our hearts falter, Your heart forgives. When our conscience mislead us You teach us that we are ever-loved. When our strength fails, You draw near and hold us close. Hear us in the quiet as we confess to You where we have turned away from You or others and where we need Your healing and forgiveness. Let us hear Your whisper Rise my child your sins are forgiven, come follow in my footsteps once more. As a token of our willingness to do just that we give you our offering here in the church or through the bank. Use it and us to bring your re-creation to bear for the good of all. 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

1 Timothy 6:11-21

Read by Nora Hunter

¹¹ But you, man of God, avoid all these things. Strive for righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. ¹² Run your best in the race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself; for it was to this life that God called you when you firmly professed your faith before many witnesses. ¹³ Before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who firmly professed his faith before Pontius Pilate, I command you ¹⁴ to obey your orders and keep them faithfully until the Day when our Lord Jesus Christ

CCLI: (A) 600239, (E&Y) 634212, (S) 27185 One License hymns reprinted with permission under: (A) A738334, (E&Y) A 738278. (S)

A-738322 All rights reserved.

will appear. ¹⁵ His appearing will be brought about at the right time by God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. ¹⁶ He alone is immortal; he lives in the light that no one can approach. No one has ever seen him; no one can ever see him. To him be honor and eternal power! Amen.

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in the things of this life not to be proud, but to place their hope, not in such an uncertain thing as riches, but in God, who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share with others. ¹⁹ In this way they will store up for themselves a treasure which will be a solid foundation for the future. And then they will be able to win the life which is true life.

²⁰ Timothy, keep safe what has been entrusted to your care. Avoid the profane talk and foolish arguments of what some people wrongly call “Knowledge.” ²¹ For some have claimed to possess it, and as a result they have lost the way of faith.

God's grace be with you all.

REFLECTION Part 1 What makes a good leader?

Good leaders? Now there's a sense of God's good timing! COP 26 is upon us and I'm sure our prayer is that our leaders will lead well and by example.

Think for a moment of who you think is or has been in the past a good leader. Think of the qualities that lead you to this belief.

Take some time over this and here in church you might like to turn to your neighbour and discuss this. I suspect that we will all come up with different ideas though some themes might run through our discussions and thoughts. I wonder if any of the following are yours, a **willingness to listen** to those who have knowledge of situations that are being faced, a **willingness to take decisive decisions** which will enable action, a willingness to **passionately encourage others** to follow good examples, a **willingness to strive towards a common goal**.

Paul has much to say in his letters to Timothy and the Thessalonians about what good leadership looks like. Words such as, preach, teach, encourage, strive for right living, godliness, faith, love, peace, endurance and gentleness. Do good works, share the riches you have with others, be generous. After all with riches come responsibilities.

All tall orders as we live in this me first society. From climate change to hoarding of vaccines, from unjust trade laws to famine we live in a world, a planet, a universe where our priorities are all wrong in part because our leadership has not been strong enough or pure enough, in part we must take responsibility for our own action and inaction. Yet this is the planet and we are the people that God loves and cares for so passionately that He sent Jesus to show us the way to live. It is always good to have an example to follow. We'll think about that in a moment but for now we remind ourselves that God

CCLI: (A) 600239, (E&Y) 634212, (S) 27185 One License hymns reprinted with permission under: (A) A738334, (E&Y) A 738278. (S)

through Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit is the One who brought creation into being and will bring re-creation to bear in His time.

HYMN 212

Morning has broken

Morning has broken
Like the first morning;
Blackbird has spoken
Like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing
Fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall
Sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall
On the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
Of the wet garden,
Spring in completeness
Where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
Born of the one light
Eden saw play!
Praise with elation,
Praise every morning,
God's re-creation
Of the new day!

Eleanor Farjeon (1881 – 1965)

REFLECTION Part 2 What can we do?

An example to follow. Think back to the person you thought was a good leader – does he or she inspire you to act as they do or did? For the Christian we have Jesus the Son whose physical, emotional and

spiritual life here on earth provides us with a way to live which inspires, directs, encourages, spurs us on to greater actions. The author of Hebrews encourages us to ***look to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith***. We know that we are filled with good intentions, we know that some of our actions are very laudable but we also know that there are times that we get frustrated with ourselves and our world. We wonder what we can do to change ourselves and our world. A bit like Paul in Romans 7 who says ***“¹⁴⁻¹⁶ I can anticipate the response that is coming: “I don’t understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can’t be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God’s command is necessary.***

¹⁷⁻²⁰ But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can’t keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don’t have what it takes. I can will it, but I can’t do it. I decide to do good, but I don’t really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don’t result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

²⁴ I’ve tried everything and nothing helps. I’m at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn’t that the real question? ²⁵ The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

Personal trainers or coaches can be very helpful. They come alongside athletes encouraging and cajoling in equal measure. Looking on from the outside they can provide helpful comment on how to change in order to improve.

One of my personal readings this week was the well known story of David and Goliath – a seemingly impossible mountain to climb and eradicate yet David very simply put his trust in the God He knew would save them. That didn’t mean he sat back and did nothing though – he went out and fought in the knowledge that God was with him. I hesitate to say that Jesus in one sense is our personal trainer but through His Spirit with us day by day He gives us the coaching and example which allows us to follow in His way.

We are called as citizens of earth and heaven to live in ways which allow God’s kingdom and rule to be here on earth as it is in heaven. It is a huge responsibility and an even greater privilege that the God who made the earth and all that is in it looks for us as part of His creation to work with Him to restore it to its full glory. In following His way and work we ourselves become good leaders, examples for others to follow. Let us like David take up the challenge to fight the giants of our day going only in the strength that God Himself provides for us, striving to run the race that is set before us. Amen

HYMN

Filled with compassion

Filled with compassion for all creation,
Jesus came into a world that was lost.
There was but one way that he could save us,
Only through suffering death on a cross.
God, you are waiting, your heart is breaking
For all the people who live on the earth.
Stir us to action, filled with your passion
For all the people who live on the earth.

Great is your passion for all the people
Living and dying without knowing you.
Having no saviour, they're lost for ever,
If we don't speak out and lead them to you.
God, you are waiting, ..

From ev'ry nation we shall be gathered,
Millions redeemed shall Jesus' reward.
Then he will turn and say to his Father.
'Truly my suffering was worth it all'
God, you are waiting, ...

Noel and Tricia Edwards ©1994 Kingsway Music

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Barbara Usher

Creator God Thank you for your beautiful creation that you have entrusted us with. We're sorry we have not cared for your world in the way you intended us to. We pray that as we learn more about the climate crisis that we will not be overwhelmed. We pray that you will help us to each play our part in caring for your planet.

God of balance, ruler of light and dark, the autumn equinox shows us the natural balance of the rhythm of creation. May we realign ourselves now into a sense of balance and equilibrium with you and all our actions. We pray for those places within our world which are out of balance in some way, whether through human greed or natural disaster.

We pray for all world leaders, especially during UN Climate Change Conference, beginning in Glasgow on Sunday. We ask that you grant them wisdom as they work to lay out concrete plans to reach the targets set out in the Paris Agreement.

We pray for any country unable to attend in person due to COVID restrictions. We ask that this doesn't detract from their ability to participate and pray for technology to run smoothly.

Loving Lord, we pray that you will place on the hearts of every leader those who are most vulnerable to climate change: the poor, the vulnerable, the children. God of justice, we pray for fairness during the COP26 talks. We know that those who are worst hit by the climate crisis are those who have done least to contribute to it and have the fewest resources to implement change. We therefore pray for radical justice and for fairness in the decisions made at COP26.

Earth-maker God, we pray that the decisions made during COP26 won't be empty words. We ask that those in positions of power will be held accountable to the targets that have been set and that they will work with conviction to not only achieve these but go beyond them. We ask that the momentum is not lost after the talks have finished.

Lord hear our prayer.

God of balance, ruler of light and darkness, we pray for those places locally which are out of balance in some way. Lend your strength to those ministering at the chalk face in the NHS, and those in need of ministration. Lend your strength to those striving to deliver quality education to the nation's young, and the students of all ages whose learning is disrupted.

We pray blessing upon leaders within the Church, especially our minister Margaret. Uphold and support her in her care for the parish, and in her recreation. We pray for the local leadership teams in the delivery of services, the various church groups, most especially at this time the work of the Eco-Committee, also those working quietly in the background, and all who build up our common life.

Put a new heart within us all, so we may live according to new priorities. In the prayer of Teresa of Calcutta, 'as we strive for success, for wealth, for stability, for status, turn our eyes down from the top of the mountain that we see to wash the feet of the world. for if we pray we will believe, if we believe we will love; if we love, we will serve.'

Earth-maker God, our society is ever restless, always craving one more thing to do, seeking happiness through more and more possessions. Teach us to be at peace with what we have, to embrace what we have received, to know that enough is enough until our strivings cease and we rest content in you alone. We ask you to stir our hearts into action. Inspire us with ways we can make a difference in our homes, communities and the world around us. We pray for your prompting where we can do more to love our neighbour. Amen.

Amen.

HYMN 622 **We sing a love that sets all people free**

We sing a love that sets all people free,
That blows like wind, that burns like scorching flame,
Enfolds the earth, springs up like water clear:
Come, living love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love that seeks another's good,
That longs to serve and not to count the cost,
A love that, yielding, finds itself made new:
Come, caring love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love, unflinching, unafraid
to be itself, despite another's wrath,
a love that stands alone and undismayed:
come, strengthening love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love, that, wandering, will not rest
Until it finds its way, it's home, its home, its source
Through joy and sadness pressing on refreshed:
Come, pilgrim love, live in our hearts today.

We sing the Holy Spirit, full of love,
Who seeks out scars of ancient bitterness,
Brings to our wounds the healing grace of Christ:
Come, radiant love, live in our hearts today.

BENEDICTION

The mighty God who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ take you into His protection enfold you with His love direct You on your journey's and the blessing of His Almighty Powerful, Re-creating Life Giving, Presence be in your life today and everyday Amen

SONG FOR COP 26 Rise Up You tube <https://youtu.be/fsHB8PmW2qI>

We gotta rise up and bring hope to the nations, gotta rise up together as one
Right now the world is waiting, act now there's no escaping
Now is the time to change the future rise up and care - for the world- in its need.

Hear the cry, creation is groaning, it's longing for freedom to come
Earth and sky - and our deep sorrow- waiting for hope in a new day begun
Oceans of justice and rivers of fairness do the right thing and blessing will come
God of love - have mercy on us- show us the way - Let justice be done

We gotta rise up and bring hope to the nations, gotta rise up together as one
Right now the world is waiting, act now there's no escaping
Now is the time to change the future rise up and care - for the world- in its need

See the weak the poor and the weary sad and crushed by profit and loss
Skies are black and land is burning rivers are roaring and storms show their power
Burning hot sun and floating ice melting the cry of our children is laid on the line
Something's wrong- and needs to be right- we need your help - while there is yet time.

We gotta rise up and bring hope to the nations, gotta rise up together as one
Right now the world is waiting, act now there's no escaping
Now is the time to change the future rise up and care - for the world- in its need

Chorus

Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God

Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God

© Ken Donald 2021