

Winchester Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit
Service at Home – 9th May 2021
Christian Aid Sunday

Prepared by Rev John Archer

Preparation

As we prepare to worship God let us keep silent for a moment, calm our minds and focus on God's never failing presence with us.

Call to Worship

God of all creation we come together or apart, longing to meet with you to be refreshed and restored, by the spring of living water, by the source of all life. In your mercy meet with us here.

Let us read pray or sing (StF 106)

1. God, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight,
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!
2. Christ, you have come to bring
on your redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
O to all humankind
let there be light!
3. Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy Dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light!
4. Blessed and holy Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,

through the world far and wide
let there be light!

John Marriott (1780-1825)

Prayer (based on Psalm 65: 5–8):

O God of our salvation
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
By your strength you established the
mountains,
you are girded with might.
You silence the thundering seas
the roaring of the waves,
the tumult of the peoples.
Those who live at earth's farthest bounds
are awed by your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and the
evening shout for joy.
Help us to add our voice to creation's praise
and to shout for climate justice.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Bible Lesson Matthew 11: 1–28

Let us read, pray or sing (StF 696)

1. For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord;
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.
2. Lead us forward into freedom;
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.
3. All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned;
pride of status, race, or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow life's brief span.

4. You, Creator-God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

Intercessions

We think now of all the people in this world
who are less fortunate than we are:

those facing famine
the homeless,
those overwhelmed by disease
especially India,
victims of war and genocide.
those with inadequate means to provide
for themselves or improve their
situation,
the weak the sick and the oppressed.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Reach out to them in their need.
and give them strength and courage,
the conviction that someone cares
a reason to look forward.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Almighty and ever-loving God
grant your blessing on all who like *Christian Aid*
strive to help the needy, all who campaign for
their cause,
who supply food and clothing,
nursing and medicine,
education and training, crops and machinery,
the will and opportunity to help themselves

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Grant that those who are hungry may find
bread for life, and teach us the part that we
must play in bringing that to pass, working for
your kingdom not just in heaven but here on
earth.

*Lord in your mercy here our prayer
in the name of Christ our Saviour.*

Amen

Read pray or sing (StF 707)

1. 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:

*O 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.*

2. 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:

*O 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.*

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

Sebastian Temple (1928-1997)
from the Prayer of St Francis

Sermon

Chapter 11 in Matthew's gospel is about Jesus' identity and the people's response. It ends with the classic comfortable words "My yoke is easy" but on the way to that, what Jesus says is anything but comfortable.

The Question

It opens with John in prison and sending his disciples to Jesus, asking "Are you he who is to come?" Jesus gave them a short and powerful answer, and then when they had left gave quite a biting sermon to the crowd. *Read v 7 – 9 again.*

People were not above criticising and comparing their preachers. John was an example of the austere 'desert type' preacher –

living an ascetic type of life cut off from society. They criticised him for it. Jesus was the 'social' preacher who socialised with all types. He was criticised as being a socialite, a party-goer, a friend of outsiders. Both criticisms well off the mark of course. People still do this today.

During the pandemic many people used the internet to view and hear some of the other preachers around. Jesus castigates the crowd many of whom ignored the healings and miracles, and were indifferent to his message of care for the sick and the lonely and the poor. However John's disciples took back his powerful answer to the question "Are you the Messiah?"

The Answer

Read again verses 4 & 5

"Go back", said Jesus, "don't tell John what I am saying but tell him what I am doing".

The challenge of Jesus is still the same today. Don't just listen to what I tell you, but look what I can do for you and see what I have done for others. What was it that they saw? It was what we still see today.

a) Those who were blind to the truth about themselves, about their fellow men and about God, have their eyes opened (conversion experiences of all sorts).

b) Those whose feet were never strong enough to remain in the right way and on the right road are strengthened.

c) Those who were deaf to the voice of conscience and of God begin to listen.

d) Those who were tainted with the disease of sin are cleansed.

e) Those who were dead and powerless in sin are raised to newness and loveliness of life.

That is the powerful answer that Jesus gave to them and gives to us. And that is not all. At the end of the chapter he gives the promise about

his yoke being easy.

The Yoke

"Come to me those who are exhausted and weighed down".

The yoke was the wooden collar which linked 2 oxen as they pulled the plough and kept to straight lines.

Jews thought of the Torah (law) as a yoke and found the mass of rules to be followed to keep right with God a burden. Jesus said his yoke is easy – well fitting and crafted to fit, no chafing.

Maybe he was an expert at yoke making – he was after all a carpenter for about 20 years!

He says to us "The life I give you is not a burden to chafe you. Your life and your task is made to measure to fit you".

God has a task for each of us. He invites us to lay our burdens down – but not to have a life of indifference and inactivity – but to take on the burden of love. The 'rest' for our souls comes from picking another burden up, but we wear the easy yoke of Christ and faith in him as we pull the load.

Go back to Jesus' answer to John's disciples. How do we see the Messiah?

In action that heals strengthens and liberates those who have no power, the blind see, the lame walk, the poor have good news preached to them, those who are heavy laden get to put their burdens down. That is the aid that Christ brought to our world and that is the *Christian Aid* that we must continue to bring to God's world.

This sermon has been about our response to Jesus command, but of course this week we celebrate the very practical ways that *Christian Aid* is responding all over the world.

A Prayer

Our God
we pray for transformation of hearts and minds
for the stones of indifference
to become hearts of compassion
for the stones of anxiety to become hearts of
hope
In Christ's name we pray
Amen

Offering Prayer

Gracious God
for all you have given us
and all that you give to us here and now
we offer you our thanks and praise
and ask your blessing on all our gifts.
Amen

Read pray or sing (StF 248)

1. I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,
weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.
2. I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.
3. I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'I am this dark world's Light;
look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk,
till travelling days are done.

Horatius N. Bonar (1808-1889)

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God our father,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us and those we represent,
now and always

Amen

Acknowledgements:

Some prayers from Christian Aid resources 2021

Some prayers from Nick Fawcett "Prayers for All seasons"

Church Copyright No. 30794