

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit**  
**Worship at Home: Sunday 24 July 2022**

**Hello!**

We're all different! That's true about our looks, our likes and dislikes and much more beside. Our genetic heritage, our family story and events in our lives all play a part in producing 'difference' in one way or another. Those differences - the ways in which we are unique - affect the way we view and relate to other people and, it seems to me, the way in which we respond to God. Here's a hymn which poetically expresses our common limited understanding of God.

StF 53 How shall I sing that majesty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOI-YWWpEXk>

How shall I sing that majesty  
which angels do admire?  
Let dust in dust and silence lie;  
sing, sing, ye heavenly choir.  
Thousands of thousands stand around  
thy throne, O God most high;  
ten thousand times ten thousand sound  
thy praise; but who am I?

Thy brightness unto them appears,  
whilst I thy footsteps trace;  
a sound of God comes to my ears,  
but they behold thy face.  
They sing because thou art their sun;  
Lord, send a beam on me;  
for where heaven is but once begun  
there alleluias be.

How great a being, Lord, is thine,  
which doth all beings keep!  
Thy knowledge is the only line  
to sound so vast a deep.  
Thou art a sea without a shore,  
a sun without a sphere;  
Thy time is now and evermore,  
Thy place is everywhere.

(John Mason (c. 1645 – 1694)

**Prayer**

Dear God, the amazing kaleidoscope of life is way beyond what any of us can fully take in and it's not surprising that you are too! So we thank you for all your creative power, for Jesus and for every way in which you work by your living Spirit, helping us to grow as members of your family. Amen.

**Introduction:**

I wonder how that hymn was greeted when it was first read or sung in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in more recent years? Even in my lifetime some Christians in Britain would say that John Mason's verses are far too vague about God.

Our first reading shows us something of the impact culture of one sort and another has upon personal beliefs. Paul warned Christians in Colossae against two particular dangers, one arising from local religious faith and the other from the Jewish roots of Christian faith.

**Reading:** Colossians 2:6-15

*'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

*See to it that no-one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world and not on Christ.*

*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the Head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the flesh; not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature,*

*God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.'*

Paul was living and serving in a different age and culture to our own, so it's not surprising if some of what he says is strange to us. His main point is that the vital way of getting to know God and to grow in our relationship with him is through Christ - Jesus is our true 'wisdom' in knowing God, how we can know more of him. So, Paul also says that religious rules and practices are not the primary way in which we are put right with God and, as an example, he refers to the Jewish rite of circumcision. Our trust in God forgiving and welcoming us is through Jesus Christ who is, as Charles Wesley put it, '*Jesus – the name high over all*'.

**Hymn:** Jesus, the name high over all (StF 357)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WS86YUTDbQ>

Jesus – the name high over all,  
in hell, or earth or sky!  
Angels revere, and nations fall,  
and devils fear and fly.

Jesus – the name to sinners dear,  
the name to sinners given!  
It scatters all their guilty fear,  
it turns their hell to heaven.

Jesus – the prisoner's fetters breaks,  
and bruises Satan's head;  
power into strengthless souls its speaks,  
and life into the dead.

O that the world might taste and see  
the riches of his grace!  
The arms of love that compass me  
would all the earth embrace.

His only righteousness I show,  
his saving grace proclaim;  
'tis all my business here below  
to cry: 'Behold the Lamb!'

Happy if with my latest breath  
I might but gasp his name;  
Preach him to all, and cry in death:  
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

**Reading:** Luke 11: 1-13

*'One day, Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them:*

*"Father, Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."*

*"Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'*

*"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' Though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*

*"So, I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though*

*you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"*

### Reflection

Jesus assures us that God is far more willing than we may imagine to help us along the road and to provide for our needs. So, the question for each of us is: how much do we want and seek his help?

There are differences between Luke's shorter version of 'The Lord's Prayer', and the version we find in Matthew's Gospel (6: 9-13). But, in each we find the same emphases made by Jesus: honour and trust God and express his attitude and ways in our relationships with each other.

After giving us this prayer, Matthew adds that Jesus said it is vital that we forgive others. Luke adds a story and questions about how willing we are to seek God's help. As Jesus said, bearing in mind that parents want to respond to the needs of their children – *"how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

As I said at the beginning, we are all different! We know that from our own experience. That must affect how we respond to God. So, hard and fast rules and regulations about how we can get to know him better are likely to be a burden and snare rather than a help.

Take as an example, the way in which we pray. There is no *'proper'* way. What helps someone else may not be helpful to you – and vice versa! Further, it may be that at various times in our lives we may need to follow a different way of praying. Recently, I came across helpful advice by the late Dom Don Chapman, one-time Abbot of Downside. *"Pray as you can and do not try to pray as you can't."*

To help us grow as friends, disciples of Jesus within the family of God, there are two essentials for us to hold on to – Jesus, the human

expression of God; and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God alive and active, who can help us to understand Jesus and to follow God's ways in our lives, in and through our varied relationships and responsibilities.

When I speak with one of my family or a friend on their birthday, I'm especially glad if they allow me also to sing the 'blessing' version of *'Happy Birthday'* that I learned while with our St Andrew's Church in Eastleigh. It's one of the ways in which I can share with someone how important Jesus is!

*'Happy birthday to you, to Jesus be true. May God's richest blessing be bestowed upon you.'*

Someone may ask, what does that mean - *'to Jesus be true'*? When I sing it I mean, find out who he is – what he did, what he said, how he died and was raised to new life; find out more of all that he can be for us. But I also mean be *'true'* to him in the way in which you then live as his friend, learning from him, and following his way with the help that God offers us by his living Holy Spirit.

Here's a simple chorus that many find helpful in being *'open'* to the Spirit of God, both in their individual lives and in our church family life and mission. When we are puzzled or troubled by what is happening and simply do not know to think, say or do, singing or saying this chorus is one way to help us to focus beyond ourselves on God and his way for us.

### Chorus – StF 395

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DtJgaGRav4>

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God  
fall afresh on me.

Break me, melt,  
mould me, fill me.

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.

Daniel Iverson (1890-1977)

## Prayers for God's people and world

Thank you, dear God, for the sheer marvel and mystery of creation in its myriad forms, way out in deepest space as well as under our feet! Thank you that you reach out to us in the whole gamut of life.

Forgive us that so often we are pre-occupied with our own individual lives and miss out on so much around us - including the desperate need of others struggling simply to exist.

We pray for any who speak and act as if they have all the answers, and also for those who struggle in the morass of feeling that they are worthless and know nothing worthwhile.

We ask you to help us, each one, to recognise both our limitations and our potential, as we learn to live in the wider context of your loving purpose for all of your creation.

(Feel free to have time and space now to think of and pray for anyone or anything on your heart and mind)

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We ask it all in the name of Jesus . Amen

Let's end our prayers with the prayer Jesus gave us, in the version we find in Luke's Gospel:

"Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

## Prayer of Dedication

Here's a prayer to help us offer our gifts of love and life, time and energy, as well as money, to serve God's purposes in the life of the Church and more widely in our common life . . . . .

With these gifts, gracious God, we offer you our lives and the life of the Church, to work with you in your life-giving and renewing work in us and through us in your world. Amen

**Hymn:** Lord, you call us (StF 664)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siBX8rVyc4>

Lord, you call us to your service,  
each in our own way.  
some to caring, loving, healing;  
some to preach or pray;  
some to work with quiet learning,  
truth discerning,  
day by day.

Life for us is always changing  
in the work we share.  
Christian love adds new dimensions  
to the way we care.  
For we know that you could lead us,  
as you need us,  
anywhere.

Seeing life from your perspective  
makes your challenge plain,  
as your heart is grieving over  
those who live in pain.  
Teach us how, by our compassion,  
you may fashion  
hope again.

Lord, we set our human limits  
on the work we do.  
Send us your directing Spirit,  
pour your power through,  
that we may be free in living  
and in giving  
all for you.

(Marjorie Dobson b1940)

## Let's end with the Benediction:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.

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Service prepared by the Revd Eric Renouf