

## Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit

### SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Prepared by Sandra Timms

#### Welcome

Today is Bible Sunday when we give thanks for the Bible in the life of Christian faith. So let's begin our service today by thanking God for this wonderful gift.

#### Prayers of Approach

Loving, Creator God, we have so much to thank you for, not least for this wonderful gift of life with all its joys - and challenges! Today especially, we praise you for the power of your Word in the book we call the Bible. For the lessons we learn in its pages through the lives of those who heard your voice and trusted you enough to step out in faith; through poets who expressed the raw feelings and reality of human life; through historians who recorded the growth of a nation and prophets who challenged and encouraged the people with your Word; through those who kept records of Gods actions among them and especially of Jesus Christ, who, by his example of unconditional and sacrificial love enabled the transforming power of your Holy Spirit to be known in our lives. Living God, for all the ways you still speak, guide, challenge, and inspire hope, please accept this worship we offer today as our love token to you. Amen.

#### Listen, Read, Pray or Sing along

God Who Sets Us On A Journey – tune Hyfrydol  
(Joy Dine & Revd, Mervyn Dine)

[God who Sets Us on a Journey \(Hyfrydol\) - YouTube](#)

God who sets us on a journey to discover, dream and grow,  
lead us as you led your people in the desert long ago.

Journey inward, journey outward, stir the spirit,  
stretch the mind.

Love for God and self and neighbour marks the way that Christ defined.

Exploration brings new insights – changes, choices we must face.

Give us wisdom in deciding, mindful always of your grace.

Should we stumble, lose our bearings, find it hard to know what's right,

we regain our true direction focussed on the Jesus light.

End our longing for the old days; grant the vision that we lack.

Once we've started on this journey there can be no turning back.

Let us travel light, discarding excess baggage from our past.

Cherish only what's essential, choosing treasure that will last.

When we set up camp and settle to avoid loves risk and pain,

You disturb complacent comfort, pull the tent peg up again!

Keep us travelling in the knowledge, you are always at our side.

Give us courage for the journey Christ our goal and Christ our guide!

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According to the Wycliffe Global Alliance, as of Sept. 2023, the whole of the Bible has been translated into 736 languages so far, and the New Testament into an additional 1,658. Smaller translations of the Bible have also been translated into 1,264 other languages. Opposition to Bible translation for the general public cost John Wycliffe his life, but happily for many billions of people since, there were others willing to take up the challenge! However, there are 7,000 different languages spoken in the world today. It seems that the translators will never be out of a job! So it's time to look at our first reading today from –

#### DEUTERONOMY 34; 1-18

#### Reflection

The eventual rescue of the Israelites from Egypt came through both human and divine means - although the human (Moses) wasn't too sure of his credentials at first! His life was also safe and

fairly comfortable. But he learnt to trust God and for the next 40 years, through all the wanderings and faithlessness and failures of the people (and a few mistakes of his own!) the faith and love of God's servant Moses only grew in strength. He was known as Israel's greatest prophet and yet he himself never did enter the Promised Land. However, God did give him an extraordinary vision of it before the baton was passed on to Joshua.

### **Prayers of Confession**

Sovereign God, we know that you are so much greater than our human minds can fathom, able to achieve things far beyond our imaginations, working in ways that defy all expectations. Forgive us when we lose sight of who you are and what you can do; When we see things from a human rather than divine perspective and fail to grasp opportunities you offer us because we forget that what is impossible for us alone, is possible with you beside us. Help us always to put you first in our lives, even when it means putting our own interests second. So may your love be shown and your kingdom brought a little closer. Amen.

### **READ MATTHEW 22;34-46**

The Pharisees take quite a lot of criticism from Jesus and not surprisingly they are keen to get their own back. Jesus was a threat to their traditional understanding of the Law. But this last attempt to trap Jesus was no more successful than the previous ones. The question as to which is the greatest commandment in the Law is answered in a way the Pharisees couldn't possibly disagree with, even if they wanted to. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind" After all, loving God and commitment to doing his will is what the Pharisees claimed to live by. Jesus is implying that there can be no true love of God without love of neighbour. (which can be construed as a dig at those who view the legalities of the Law, as love of God - over and above compassion for the people!) Interestingly, Deuteronomy 6;5 (where we first find this Law) states "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all the soul and with all your strength" I wonder, did Jesus purposely change "strength" for "mind" perhaps suggesting

they ought to be thinking a little more deeply at the purpose of the Law?

So Jesus not only answers their questions satisfactorily, he also puts one of his own to them (v41) as he quotes Psalm 110;1

Although Jesus has never refused the title "son of David" he is claiming here to be much more than that, much more than a human being, even if that human being is of royal blood! The Pharisees knew what Jesus was inferring and were unable (or unwilling?) to answer, so they went away and plotted against him.

Jesus knew the scriptures well. He would have grown up memorising them from a small boy. He would have read Deuteronomy 20;16 that taught, "In those towns that the Lord your God is giving you as a special possession, destroy every living thing!" - And 1 Samuel 15;2-3 ""This is what the Lord of Heavens armies has declared; I have decided to settle accounts with the nation of Amalek for opposing Israel when they came from Egypt - now go and completely destroy the entire Amalekite nation - men, women, children, babies, cattle, sheep goats, camels and donkeys! (We don't often talk about these things in church!)

As human beings on the journey of life, we don't always get it right. We allow fear, pride, desire for power and even ignorance to get in the way. In the recent past, certain passages of the Bible have been used to sanction medieval witch hunts and justify slavery and apartheid. Or to wield power over the more vulnerable or less educated. It is still used today by some to exclude women from leadership and ministry in the Church, to oppress gay people and to destroy the environment.

But for all the negatives, there are far more positives. The teachings and example of Jesus that we learn about from the Bible, was the major influencer of the abolition of slavery and apartheid; of social services, schooling, medical care and charitable work, the adoption and fostering of children and the abolition of child labour. We even have Christianity to thank for our holidays (holy days!)

And of course, now that winter is looming, Warm Spaces are back on the agenda. Created as a

response to the Cost of Living Crisis, and soaring energy bills, the Warm Welcome Campaign supported more than 7,000 warm spaces last winter, with around half of them run by churches. As a result, an impact evaluation found that Warm Welcome Spaces not only reduced chronic loneliness amongst guests from almost 40% to just 6%, it fostered relationships!

And so for me, the most important thing the Bible gives us is Jesus. Jesus for me is the decisive revelation of God, disclosing what a life filled with God looks like. And it isn't about keeping to the letter of the Law. Rather, it's about how we live out the liberating, life-affirming, healing, good news of Christ in the world today. So let's pray

### **THANKSGIVING PRAYER (prayer handbook 2023)**

God is love, and where love is, God is there. We give thanks for the hidden acts of love.

For gracious words that lower tensions.  
For hopeful words that temper grief.  
For comforting words that soften pain.  
Thanks be to God, for God is love.  
And where love is, God is there.

For pardon privately sought and given.  
For meditation that works through misunderstandings.  
For injuries forgiven and friends reconciled.  
Thanks be to God, for God is love.  
And where love is, God is there.

For acts of generosity performed without fanfare.  
For needs secretly met and hardship quietly relieved.  
For acts of kindness assuring someone they are loved.  
Thanks be to God, for God is love.  
And where love is, God is there.

In many ways that others never see,  
without publicity or thought of any reward,  
sometimes without invoking God's name,  
God's love is made known.  
Thanks be to God, for God is love.  
And where love is, God is there. Amen.

### **Listen, Read, Pray or Sing along StF 439**

ABBA FATHER

[Abba, Father, let me be yours and yours alone \(Singing the Faith 439\) - YouTube](#)

Abba Father, let me be Yours and Yours alone,  
Let my will forever be ever more Your own.  
Never let my heart grow cold, never let me go.  
Abba Father, let me be Yours and Yours alone.

Dave Bilborough b.1965

### **Prayers of Intercession (using StF 698 Fred Kaan)**

Gracious God, with silent hearts we bring to mind how hate and war diminish humankind. We seek in worship to increase our knowledge of the things that make for peace. And so in prayer we lift to you the people of Israel and Palestine right now who are bent on warfare. Help them to understand the error of their ways and to find the courage and humility to find a path of reconciliation by which they may build peace together.

Hallow our will as humbly we recall the lives of those who gave and give their all. We thank you Lord for women, children, men, who seek to serve in love, today as then. God of peace, we pray for justice and protection for all those delivering aid and comfort for those mourning and scared. May they feel your strength and love surrounding them and have all their needs met.

Give us deep faith to comfort those who mourn and high hope to share with all the newly born, strong love in our pursuit of human worth, lest we forget the future of this earth. God of all creation, teach us to be peacemakers. Guide us in our pursuit and the common good. Inspire us to welcome all, forgive all and love all. Direct us as we walk in the shadow of Jesus – the Way, the Truth and the Life. Inspire us to see the world through your eyes that we might find hope and joy each day, supportive of each other for the sake of your Kingdom.

So, Prince of Peace, disarm our trust in power, teach us to coax the plant of peace to flower. So may we, impassioned by your living Word, remember forward to a world restored. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer:**

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. And lead us not into temptation; but  
deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power  
and the glory are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Offering and Prayer of Dedication**

Loving God, source of every good gift, bless our  
offerings today as tokens of our love for you. May  
they be used to bring compassion, mercy and  
love in the furtherance of your Kingdom. Amen

## **Listen, Read, Pray or Sing along StF 483**

WE ARE MARCHING IN THE LIGHT OF GOD

[We are marching in the light of God StF 483 \(with lyrics for congregations\) - YouTube](#)

We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching, oh,  
we are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching oh,  
we are marching in the light of God.

We are living in the love of God,  
we are living in the love of God.  
We are living in the love of God,  
we are living in the love of God.  
We are living oh,  
we are living in the love of God,  
we are living oh,  
we are living in the love of God.

We are moving in the power of God,  
we are moving in the power of God.  
We are moving in the power of God,  
we are moving in the power of God.  
We are moving oh,  
we are moving in the power of God,  
we are moving oh,  
we are moving in the power of God.

South African Traditional  
v.1 Anders Nyberg b.1955  
vv 2,3 Andrew Maries (b.1949)

## **Closing Blessing**

To God, who blesses us beyond our imagining,  
who loves us beyond our dreaming, who forgives  
us beyond our deserving, and who uses us  
beyond our hoping, be praise and thanksgiving,  
honour and adoration, now and always. Amen

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