

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 4th February 2024

Prepared by the Revd Kate Cambridge

Welcome to this week's service at home sheet.
As you prepare yourself for worship, take a few moments to still your heart and wait upon God, to seek strength for the journey and to become aware of God's presence with you now. We pray with Psalm 61.1, *'for God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.'*

Our opening song, taking words from Isaiah 40, also encourages us to wait upon God.

Listen, read, pray or sing along to STF 89

[Strength Will Rise \(Everlasting God\)](#)

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
We will wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord.
Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
We will wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord.

Our God, you reign forever.
Our hope, our strong deliverer.

You are the everlasting God,
The everlasting God.
You do not faint, you won't grow weary.
You're the defender of the weak,
You comfort those in need;
You lift us up on the wings like eagles.

Brenton Brown and Ken Riley

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God our hope and our strength,
you are the everlasting God,
the one who delivers us from harm,
who defends those who are weak,
who brings comfort to the distressed,
whose love and compassion are without limit.

What prayers of praise and adoration are in your heart today? Bring them before God in the silence, knowing that he hears our prayers and knows the deepest thoughts of our hearts.

Forgive us Lord, for the times when we try to keep going in our own strength,
Forgive us Lord, for the times when we are too distracted and forget about you.
Forgive us Lord, when we are full of our own needs and say, think or do things which hurt other people.

Lord, you are faithful and just, your compassion and mercy are without limit. We thank you for your forgiveness and the abundance of your love for all of your children. May we know again today your presence with us, your Word inspiring and challenging us, your Spirit moving within us, all for the glory of your name, Amen.

Introduction to the readings

Our first reading today, from the prophet Isaiah, reminds us of the greatness of God. When we are overwhelmed by life or question the power and the love of God, this passage is one which encourages us to lift up our eyes and know again the majesty of our God.

The gospel reading, coming towards the beginning of Jesus' ministry, shows Jesus healing the sick and casting out demons. His popularity was growing, but people did not yet recognise who he was. Perhaps both readings remind us that there is always more to learn about God. May our hearts be open as we read and reflect on God's word today.

Read Isaiah 40.21-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,

when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see:

Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;

because he is great in strength,

mighty in power,

not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob,

and speak, O Israel,

'My way is hidden from the Lord,

and my right is disregarded by my God?'

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,

the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;

his understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint,

and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary,

and the young will fall exhausted;

but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their
strength,

they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary,

they shall walk and not faint.

Read Mark 1.29-39

Reflection

Who has never looked up to the heavens and felt small in comparison with the greatness of God's creation? On a clear night, the sky appears to be a great canvas, full of stars, inspiring awe and wonder at the majesty of the one who created them and who calls each one by name (Isa 40.26).

My daughter is looking at Vincent Van Gogh in her art class at school – and we came across these magnificent paintings while researching for her homework.

The first painting, *Starry Night*, was painted in 1889, while Van Gogh was at inpatient in a hospital near Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in France, after suffering a breakdown. One of his late works, it became one of his most famous.



[Van Gogh Starry Night - The Painting and The Story \(vangoghgallery.com\)](http://vangoghgallery.com)

Starry Night over the Rhone, painted a year earlier, equally inspires awe, with the vibrance of the night sky - and the lights of the city reflected in the water – shining themselves like stars.



[Starry Night Over the Rhône | \(vangoghgallery.com\)](http://vangoghgallery.com)

Isaiah 40 begins a section of the book known by many scholars as Second Isaiah. Set in the 6th Century BC, many of the Israelite people found themselves living as captives in Babylon. They were surrounded by a people with myriad gods and were tempted to question the power and love of *their* God. Babylonian religion was dominated by 'astral deities' – so when they looked at the stars, God had to remind his people what they were seeing. The Babylonians believed, as many do

today, that the 'hosts of heaven' determined the fates of mortals. Yet each of the stars in the sky was created by God. To name something was to have power and authority over it; God reminded his people that he called each star by name. 'Astral deities' had no power over his people – they were not to be afraid. If we turn to look at Psalm 8, the Psalmist here also reflects on the majesty of God's creation and the smallness of humankind:

'When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?' (Psalm 8.3-4)

Isaiah reminds us that *'the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.'* (Isa 40.28) I love the image of God *'enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.'* (Isa 40.22). We may feel small and insignificant when we look at the vastness of God's creation – and for good reason! However, that same God, beyond compare, is also the God who cares for his people. He had not forgotten his people in captivity and brought them words of comfort and hope, promising a return to Jerusalem from their exile.

The majesty of God's creation and the incomparable power and might of God is contrasted in Isaiah 40 with his intimate love for those he has made. His people are challenged to lift their eyes and recognise the incomparable majesty and power of God, the creator of all. Yet that same God sees and knows the needs of his people. Our way is not hidden from God, or our cause disregarded, however we might feel (Isaiah 40.27. And so the chapter ends with a call to God's people to trust in him and wait for the Lord:

*'He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,*

*they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.'* (Isa 40.29-31)

To ponder

Do you find yourself inspired by God's creation to worship God the Creator? What is it about the world that most fills you with wonder?

If you ever feel insignificant, remember that the God who knows each star by name, knows you by name too and loves you. (You might want to consider Psalm 139 and John 10.3)

When eagles ride on thermals, rising columns of warm air, they soar effortlessly. If you are struggling, reflect on the love and power of God, who is there for you. What does it mean for you to 'wait for the Lord' (Isa 40.31)?

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along STF 471

[Lord I come to you](#)

Lord I come to You,
Let my heart be changed, renewed,
Flowing from the grace
That I found in You.
And Lord, I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of Your love.

Hold me close,
Let Your love surround me;
Bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
And I will soar with You,
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love.

Lord unveil my eyes,
Let me see You face to face,
The knowledge of Your love
As You live in me.
Lord renew my mind,
As Your will unfolds in my life
In living every day
By the power of Your love.

Hold me close,
Let Your love surround me;
Bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
And I will soar with You,
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love.

Geoff Bullock (b. 1956)

Prayers of Intercession



Image from www.pexels.com

O God, who brings princes to naught, and makes rulers of the earth as nothing, we pray for the leaders of the world. Where there is conflict and nation wages war against nation, raise up leaders with wisdom, who will work for justice, peace and the good of all peoples.

Great God, creator of all that is, seen and unseen, Help us to look beyond the majesty of creation to worship you, the everlasting God and creator of all. Teach us how to care for the world you have made, to tread lightly on the earth and to work to protect your planet from harm.

Loving God, you give power to the faint and strengthen the powerless. Hear our prayers for those who are struggling and in need of hope and strength – we entrust them to you in the silence.

O Lord, those who wait on you renew their strength. Raise us up as on eagles wings, give us strength and help us to trust in you and to wait on you, in the joys, sorrows and anxieties of our lives.

The Lord's Prayer:

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.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along STF 465

[Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer](#)

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven.
Feed me now and evermore;
Feed me now and evermore.

Open thou the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream shall flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield;
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

William Williams (1717-1791)
translated by Peter Williams (1727-1796)

Closing Blessing

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