


Cheshire South Circuit
Worship at Home service 21st April 2024

Call to Worship

Shepherd of all, by laying down your life for your flock you reveal your love for all. Lead us from the place of death to the place of abundant life, that guided by your care for us, we may rightly offer our lives in love for you and our neighbours. **Amen.**

A prayer of praise and adoration

Dear Lord, we praise and thank you that you sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins, to give us eternal life. And we worship our Saviour that he was not forced into laying down his life, for he was too powerful to be forced, but he did this willingly for us. Thank you that in his power, he rose from the dead so that we might live in newness of life in him. Praise to God, in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

A prayer of thanksgiving

Dear God, Thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives; thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you that you bring us hope even through the toughest of times, strengthening us for your purposes through the power of your Holy Spirit. Thank you for your immense love and care. Thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life. We give you praise and thanks, for you alone are worthy. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

A prayer of Confession

Gracious and loving God, open our hearts so that we are able to admit to you the fullness of our lives - that which is beautiful and good, and that which is hurtful and hateful. We confess that we do not follow Jesus in all that we do. We love with conditions. We judge and condemn. We cast the first stone, and keep the logs in our own eyes. We do not turn to you as the source of our healing. Forgive us, we pray. Forgive us our sin, and empower us to be imitators of Christ in love and service. **Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

Friends in Christ – know this: the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, and we are reminded of this surpassing grace. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Alleluia! **Amen.**

Hymns & Psalms no. 260 *Jesus is Lord*

1 Jesus is Lord! Creations voice proclaims it,
For by his power each tree and flower
Was planned and made,
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it,
Sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord!

*Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!*

2 Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
In flesh he came to die in pain
On Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding –
Yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free.
Jesus is Lord! ...

3 Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
From death he rose; and all his foes
Shall own his name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
To show by works of power that Jesus is Lord!
Jesus is Lord! ...

CCLI 821965 David J. Mansell

Readings: Acts 4:5 -12

⁵The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone."

¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

1 John 3:16 - 24

¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

¹⁹This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²²and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

John 10:11-18

¹¹"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Message

Peter and John had been brought before the Sanhedrin. This was the same council which had condemned Jesus. It consisted of 70 members and the high priest. The Sanhedrin was mostly made up by the Sadducees - wealthy, powerful intellectuals. They asked Peter by what power he had healed the beggar:

²Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." ⁷Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. (Acts 3:2-7)

And they asked Peter by what authority he had preached:

11 While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. (Acts 3:11-13)

The religious leaders felt threatened by the actions and words which Peter and John had been speaking. Once more, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke - again, boldly telling the council that the one they had crucified had risen again. This turned the tables on the Sanhedrin, effectively putting them on trial, rather than the council seeking to question and punish the apostles. Peter spoke boldly and took the offensive rather than being defensive of his actions and words. We, too, have the power of the Holy Spirit to call upon. We too can speak boldly about our faith. Peter refers to Jesus as the stone which the builders rejected, having become the cornerstone. The cornerstone - or capstone unites the two sides of an arch and holds it together. The people had rejected Jesus, but he is now the capstone of the church. Without Jesus there would be no church, because it would have nothing to hold it up. The Gospel is the Good News - the Good News that Jesus' life, teaching, death, resurrection and saving power is what enables the church to stand. In the passage from John's gospel chapter 10 we see Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The hired hand keeps watch over the sheep for payment - it is his job and no more. The Good Shepherd cares for his sheep because he loves his flock. Jesus, the Word made flesh, came so that he could give himself because of his love of all people throughout all time. That is the love of God. God's love is not static or self-centred. God's love reaches out and draws others in. This is the pattern of true love - when we are willing to give freely to the point of self-sacrifice. God paid dearly with the sacrifice of his son's life. Jesus accepted our punishment. He paid the price for our sins and then offered us the new life he had bought for us. Having received God's love, our love for others must become like Jesus' love. We must be willing to give up our comfort so that others can join us in receiving God's love. But we don't have to do that under our own strength. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit, and like Peter, we can rely on the Holy Spirit to give us strength. We can be bold in our words when we share our faith with others. We can speak kindly, yet firmly of our faith and of the love of God. The power of the Holy Spirit will be in our words. Some people will hear and come to faith. Others may not, but we must continue to share God's love with those around us. We will never know how many of the seeds of faith we have sown will one day grow. **Amen.**

A prayer to say "Thank you Jesus"

Lord Jesus, How can we ever thank you enough? You endured more pain, more shame, more sorrow, more grief than we can possibly fathom. Help us to remember why you gave your life -because of love; because of mercy; because we desperately need them both. **Amen.**

A prayer of Intercession

You, O God, love us from the moment of our conception. You know us and you love us in the womb. You love us and you call us from before the moment of our first breath, and you love us when we first see the light of day. As a parent loves their child before ever seeing it, and then embraces it gently from the moment of its birth, so you love us - and we thank you.

Help us dear God to love one another in this way...

Lord, hear our prayer...

You love us, O God from the time of our naming.

You love us in our growing and hold us as we take our first steps. You love us and walk beside us as we explore the world with eager hands and eyes. As a parent loves their child whilst seeing it grow and develop, so you love us - and we thank you.

Help us dear God to love one another in this way...

Lord, hear our prayer...

You love us, O God, as we mature and seek our way. You love us as we become aware of the world around us. You love us as we smile and play; you even love us when we say no and when we begin to stray. As a parent loves their child whilst seeing it become proud and tall, so you love us even when we sin and fall.

Help us dear God to love one another in this way...

Lord, hear our prayer...

We thank you God for loving us when we are unloving, for caring for us when we are uncaring, and for calling to us when we go far away.

Help us dear God to love one another in this way...

Lord, hear our prayer...

Lord hear our prayers of love this day for those around us, for those we now hold before you, and for those we have thought of in our moments of caring...

Lord, hear our prayer....

We ask all these things in the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord and our brother. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer ...

Hymns & Psalms no. 135 *Go tell it on the mountain*

*Go tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus is his name.*

1 He possessed no riches,
No home to lay his head;
He fasted in the desert, he gave to others bread:
Go tell it on the mountain ...

2 He reached out and touched them,
The blind, the deaf, the lame;
He spoke and listened gladly
To anyone who came:
Go tell it on the mountain ...

3 Some turned away in anger,
With hatred in the eye;
They tried him and condemned him,
Then led him out to die:
Go tell it on the mountain ...

4 Father, 'now forgive them'
Upon the cross he said;
In three more days he was alive
And risen from the dead:
Go tell it on the mountain ...

5 He still comes to people,
His life moves through the lands;
He uses us for speaking,
He touches with our hands:
Go tell it on the mountain ...

CCLI 821965 Geoffrey Marshall-Taylor

Benediction

Let us love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of his Holy Spirit, and may God's blessing be upon us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

This worship service was prepared by Mrs. Sally Graham