

Cheshire South Methodist Circuit 
Worship at Home Service - Sunday 20th October 2024

Call to Worship

Eternal One, whose thoughts and ways are not ours, you alone are God, awesome, holy, and most high. School us in the ways of faith and wisdom, that we, like Job, may learn to truly see and hear, and in humility find blessing. **Amen.**

A prayer of praise and adoration

Dear Lord, We bow before you in reverence. You are the King of kings and Lord of lords. You have dominion over everything in the heavens and on earth. Yet you still care about even the smallest detail in each of our lives. And so we rejoice in you every day. Lord - you are worthy to be praised. We toss the word "awesome" around to describe many things in the world. Forgive our misuse of the word - you alone are awesome; nothing can compare to your power and glory. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen**

A prayer of thanksgiving

Thank you, Lord, for your love. It brings us acceptance and significance.

Thank you, Lord, for your truth. It brings us guidance and direction.

Thank you, Lord, for your mercy. It brings us help and comfort.

Thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness. It brings us stability and strength.

Thank you, Lord, for your beauty displayed in the earth. It brings us joy and delight.

Thank you, Lord, for your way of redemption - the cross. It brings us salvation and regeneration.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Amen

A prayer of Confession

Merciful Lord, we confess that with us there is an abundance of sin, but in you there is the fullness of righteousness and abundance of mercy. We are spiritually poor, but you are rich and in Jesus Christ came to be merciful to the poor. Strengthen our faith and trust in you.

Assurance of Forgiveness

We give you thanks for the glorious word of forgiveness born of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, continue by your grace to pull us to your Word. And may we read it over and over, being assured, indeed, we are forgiven through Christ. In his holy and precious name we pray. **Amen**

Songs of Fellowship no. 133 *God is here, God is present*

God is here, God is present,
God is moving by His Spirit;
Can you hear what he is saying,
Are you willing to respond?
God is here, God is present,
God is moving by His Spirit;
Lord, I open up my life to You,
Please do just what you will.

Lord, I won't stop loving You,
You mean more to me than anything else.
Lord, I won't stop loving You,
You mean more to me than life itself.

CCL821956 Ian Smale

Readings

Job 38:1 - 7, and 34 -41

Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: ² “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? ³ Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. ⁵ Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?

⁶ On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone — ⁷ while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

³⁴ “Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? ³⁵ Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, ‘Here we are’? ³⁶ Who gives the ibis wisdom or gives the rooster understanding?

³⁷ Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens ³⁸ when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together?

³⁹ “Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions

⁴⁰ when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket? ⁴¹ Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?”

Hebrews 5:1 - 10

Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. ³ This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honour on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” ⁶ And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” ⁷ During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Mark 10:35 - 45

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. ³⁷ They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” ³⁸ “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” ³⁹ “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.” ⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Message

Job was a wealthy and upright man. Through no fault of his own Job lost everything. Satan attacked Job, trying to drive a wedge between him and God, by getting Job to believe that God’s governing of the world was not good and just. Satan had to ask God for permission to test Job; God is still in charge. Through his suffering, Job did not understand why he was being attacked. He wanted to know why.

His friends tried to answer this by suggesting that Job had brought his suffering upon himself by sinning. They urged him to repent. Job's friends were wrong. Suffering is not always a result of direct sin. When we experience suffering it may not be our fault; we don't have to add to our pain by feeling guilty that some hidden sin is causing our troubles.

Then a young man who had overheard Job's friends interjected. He criticised the friends for what they had suggested. The young man said that Job was a good man, but that he had allowed himself to become proud, and that God was punishing him. This may have been partially true, but in reality we cannot know why sometimes suffering comes into our lives. God is beyond our comprehension, and our part is simply to remain faithful. Finally, God answers Job. It is made clear to Job that whatever happens - God is in control of the world, and only he understands why the good are allowed to suffer. Job learned that when nothing else was left, he had God, and that was enough. Like Job, we should remain faithful regardless of whether God allows blessing or suffering to come to us. We must hold fast to the knowledge that those who remain faithful will experience God's great rewards in the end. After losing everything, Job was restored through faith.

Bearing suffering faithfully is also in our passage from Hebrews. Jesus had been in great agony as he prepared to face death (Luke 22:41-44). Although Jesus cried out to God to be delivered, he was prepared to suffer humiliation, separation from his Father, and death in order to do God's will. Jesus was the Son of God, but he was also a human being and felt the pain and anguish of suffering as we do. Our faith can sustain us through the most difficult of times.

In our Gospel passage from Mark, Jesus has just predicted his death for a third time to his twelve disciples. James and John then asked Jesus if they could sit either side of him in glory. They wanted honoured places in Christ's Kingdom. The disciples still thought that Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom, and when Jesus asked them if they could "drink the cup" they said they were willing to face anything for Christ. They both did suffer: James died a martyr (Acts 12:2) and John was forced to live in exile (Revelation 1:9). Jesus did not, however, grant their request. We can ask God for anything, but we must remember that our request may be denied. James and John wanted the highest positions in Christ's kingdom, but Jesus told them that greatness comes from serving others.

So, how can we apply these passages to our lives today, and to the modern world we live in? Job's suffering was unimaginably great. He lost everything. There are people in war-torn parts of our world who - yesterday, today, tomorrow and beyond are losing everything. Like Job's suffering, this is through no fault of their own. And yet, we still see people holding fast to their faith to give them strength through horrendous times. Even outside the regions of warfare that we see reported on the news, there are stories of appalling suffering. There are floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, storms, mudslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and other natural disasters which cause suffering to millions of people across the world. Suffering can also come through the evil actions of others: shootings, knife attacks, muggings, abuse, modern slavery. It is easy to become overwhelmed and disillusioned - but our faith gives us strength. God is still in charge - no matter how unjust and chaotic the world may seem. How can we respond? What is our part to play?

We should remain firm in our faith and offer prayers for those who suffer. But we must never lose sight of the fact that we are servants of the Kingdom. Where we can take action we should. Many of the issues of great suffering today are too immense for us as individuals or small church groups to step in and become directly involved with helping, but what we can offer - we should offer. Regular donations to, or fundraising for organisations working to alleviate suffering, lobbying governments, boycotting wrongdoers, and speaking out for justice and equality are all works we can do to support those in situations of suffering and despair. Our first action must be to stay firm in the faith that no matter how dire things look, God is still in charge, and those who remain faithful servants will be rewarded in the end.

A prayer

Help me not to fear the future but to boldly trust that you are in control when my emotions plunge me down, and when I am in despair. And times when I can't talk and don't know what to say, help me to "Be still, and know that you are God". Be my comforter, my healer and bring me peace. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Singing the Faith no. 20 *Be Still for the presence of the Lord*

1 Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found-
we stand on holy ground.
Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.

2 Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight-
our radiant King of light!
Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

3 Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place:
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace-
no work too hard for him.
In faith receive from him.
Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

CCL 821965 David J Evans

A prayer of Intercession

Hear us today as we pray for a world too often darkened by hatred, evil, power and greed. Within our darkest night, let your light shine. God of power and might, your broken world cries out from the depths, a world dominated by the darkness of war, terror, pain and suffering. In a world full of strife and conflict, we turn to you, our mighty and loving God. We know that you cause everything to work together for the good of those who love you, and yet we don't understand the evil and suffering we are witnessing and enduring. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us in our prayers for our brothers and sisters across the earth. Show us how we can be your instruments in caring for those who suffer through no fault of their own. Empower us to do whatever we can, to speak up for others in their pain. We all have particular concerns - global issues, national, local and personal. Hear us Lord, as we bring these to you. We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

O Lord, you who do not look away from the pain of this world, open our eyes, we pray, to see the pain of our neighbour and, by grace, to become the healing presence and power of Jesus to them, so that our hearts might be kindled with your love for those in need. We pray this in the name of Jesus.

Amen

This worship service was prepared by Mrs Sally Graham