


Cheshire South Circuit
Worship at Home - Sunday 9th March 2025

Call to Worship

A love that never ceases, a creativity that designed the universe, a hope that cannot be quenched, a pursuit of reconciliation, a faithfulness we can rely on: these are the things that are of God. Then let us worship God. **Amen.**

A prayer of praise and adoration

Creator of all, sustainer of all, Saviour of all, your glory and majesty are beyond our understanding, your power too awesome to behold. And yet your love enfolds us as a gentle breeze. Saviour of all, sustainer of all, Creator of all, we bless your holy name **Amen**

A prayer of thanksgiving *Psalm 103:1 - 5* (The Message Bible)

“O my soul, bless God. From head to toe, I’ll bless his holy name! O my soul, bless God, don’t forget a single blessing! He forgives your sins - every one. He heals your diseases - every one. He redeems you from hell - saves your life! He crowns you with love and mercy - a paradise crown. He wraps you in goodness - beauty eternal. He renews your youth - you’re always young in his presence.” *Thank you Lord, Amen.*

A prayer of Confession

God did not say, “You shall not be tempted; you shall not be troubled; you shall not be distressed.” God did say, “You shall not be overcome.” Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led into the wilderness, where he was tempted. Sheltering God, Guiding God, as you were present with Jesus in his wilderness experience, so you are present with us: you have urged us to trust you: “Love me and call upon me, and I will answer you, I will be with you in trouble, and will honour you.” We have felt discouraged, and at times even abandoned and betrayed by you, O God, when all manner of things have not gone well with us. **Lord, have mercy.**

Instead of following where you lead, O God, at times we follow a tempter who shows us a vision of the world that is a mere counterfeit of what you desire for us. At times, O God, we are deceived and enticed by imitations of love, abundance, and joy. **Christ, have mercy.**

O God, when you have not answered in the ways or in the time we desire, we have been tempted to lean on our own understanding and not acknowledge you in all ways. We so often have sought to control our lives and order our own steps, often ignoring your wisdom and pushing your guidance aside. **Lord, have mercy.**

Help us to trust you to journey with us and to guide us.

Help us to rest in your promise to never leave us or forsake us **Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10) Amen.

StF no. 435 *We come to you with no pretence*

1 We come to you with no pretence,
Yet nourished by your grace.
We come as people needing love
Within this time and place.

2 We come confessing all we are,
Yet all we have to give.
We ask for your renewing power
To teach us how to live.

3 We need your spirit to be strong,
Your risking, leaping faith,
That brings the love of God to bear
In every aching space.

4 Then from this point, restored, renewed,
We pledge to take your way;
To live responding to your call
With each succeeding day.

CCL821965 Andrew Pratt

Psalm 91: 11 - 12 The Message Bible

He ordered his angels to guard you wherever you go; if you stumble, they'll catch you; their job is to keep you from falling.

Deuteronomy 30: 11 - 14 The Message Bible

This commandment that I'm commanding you today isn't too much for you, it's not out of your reach. It's not on a high mountain—you don't have to get mountaineers to climb the peak and bring it down to your level and explain it before you can live it. And it's not across the ocean—you don't have to send sailors out to get it, bring it back, and then explain it before you can live it. No. The word is right here and now—as near as the tongue in your mouth, as near as the heart in your chest. Just do it!

Romans 10: 4 - 13 The Message Bible

The earlier revelation was intended simply to get us ready for the Messiah, who then puts everything right for those who trust him to do it. Moses wrote that anyone who insists on using the law code to live right before God soon discovers it's not so easy—every detail of life regulated by fine print! But trusting God to shape the right living in us is a different story—no precarious climb up to heaven to recruit the Messiah, no dangerous descent into hell to rescue the Messiah. So what exactly was Moses saying? The word that saves is right here, as near as the tongue in your mouth, as close as the heart in your chest. It's the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God—"Jesus is my Master"—embracing, body and soul, God's work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead. That's it. You're not "doing" anything; you're simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That's salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: "God has set everything right between him and me!" Scripture reassures us, "No one who trusts God like this—heart and soul—will ever regret it." It's exactly the same no matter what a person's religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. "Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help."

Luke 4: 1 - 13 The Message Bible

Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wild. For forty wilderness days and nights he was tested by the Devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when the time was up he was hungry. The Devil, playing on his hunger, gave the first test: "Since you're

God's Son, command this stone to turn into a loaf of bread." Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to really live." For the second test he led him up and spread out all the kingdoms of the earth on display at once. Then the Devil said, "They're yours in all their splendour to serve your pleasure. I'm in charge of them all and can turn them over to whomever I wish. Worship me and they're yours, the whole works." Jesus refused, again backing his refusal with Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God and only the Lord your God. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness." For the third test the Devil took him to Jerusalem and put him on top of the Temple. He said, "If you are God's Son, jump. It's written, isn't it, that 'he has placed you in the care of angels to protect you; they will catch you; you won't so much as stub your toe on a stone'?" "Yes," said Jesus, "and it's also written, 'Don't you dare tempt the Lord your God.'" That completed the testing. The Devil retreated temporarily, lying in wait for another opportunity.

Message

God calls us to keep his commands. That sounds simple, but the people of God were struggling to do so. Moses addressed this in Deuteronomy when he pointed out to the people that the laws were written; all they had to do was to follow the instructions. Today too, we need to read our bibles to know what God calls us to do to obey him. Paul's letter to the church in Rome refers to what Moses said in Deuteronomy. Paul explains how Moses' words telling the people to read the law and obey were a way of preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah. In a way the coming of Christ was the "end of the law". This is because Christ fulfils the purpose of the law; he perfectly exemplifies God's desires on earth. Christ is the end of the law because in comparison the law is powerless to save. In order for a person to be saved by the law, they would have to lead a perfect life - not sinning even once. Of course this is impossible. Paul explains in Galatians 3:19 that the purpose of the law was to show people how guilty they are. The Old Testament sacrificial system helped people to understand the significance of the true once and for all sacrifice, and helped to clarify Christ's work of salvation. Paul used words from Deuteronomy because they were familiar to the people. Moses had used this as a farewell challenge to the people: "The word is right here and now—as near as the tongue in your mouth, as near as the heart in your chest. Just do it!" Paul uses similar words to apply to Christ. Christ has provided our salvation by his coming to earth, and his coming back from the dead. Paul tells us that God's salvation is right here in front of us: "The word that saves is right here, as near as the tongue in your mouth, as close as the heart in your chest."

All we need to do is respond and accept his gift of salvation. Accepting Christ as our Lord and Saviour is simple. We hear the Good News, we accept the Good News, and we become Christians. As disciples of Christ we are helped in our Christian journey by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, however, we can think that being led by the Holy Spirit means we will always be guided "beside quiet waters" (Ps 23:2). But that is often not the case at all. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert where he was tested; we may also find ourselves led into difficult and testing situations.

Temptation can come at any time. We should take special care at times when we are vulnerable. These are not only times when we are "down". We need to be on our guard in times of victory and success just as much as during times of discouragement and weakness. The Devil tempted Jesus in the desert, just as he had tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, but Jesus resisted. Knowing and obeying God's word is an effective weapon which we can use to protect ourselves. It is part of the armour of God (Ephesians 6:17). Jesus used scripture to counter the Devil's attacks. We can do the same. We need to know scripture - and use it with faith in God's promises, because the Devil also knows scripture and how to twist it to trick us. The Devil misinterpreted Psalm 91 "He ordered his angels to guard you wherever you go; if you stumble, they'll catch you; their job is to keep you from falling." The Psalm is speaking of God's protection of his people; the Devil twisted it to mean that God's power could be used for foolish and sensational displays. Christ defeated the Devil in the desert: "The Devil retreated temporarily, lying in wait for another opportunity." Temptation for Jesus was not a one-time event. He confronted the Devil in many forms throughout his ministry.

The same also applies to us. We should be always on our guard, and especially vigilant at times when we know we are most vulnerable. But we should not be afraid. We can remain confident and sure that God will be faithful in his promises. The Holy Spirit will guide and help us through the trials and times of testing. The power to resist is right here, as near as the tongues in our mouths, as close as the hearts in our chests. "Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help." **Amen.**

A prayer for strength in times of temptation

God of deliverance and freedom, you taught the people of Israel to acknowledge that all things come from your bountiful hand. Deepen our faith so that we may resist temptation and, in the midst of trial, proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF no. 236 *Forty days and forty nights*

1 Forty days and forty nights
You were fasting in the wild;
Forty days and forty nights
Tempted and yet undefiled.

2 Burning heat throughout the day,
Bitter cold when light had fled;
Prowling beasts around your way,
Stones your pillow, earth your bed.

3 Shall not we your trials share,
Learn your discipline of will;
And with you by fast and prayer
Wrestle with the powers of hell?

4 So if Satan, pressing hard,
Soul and body would destroy;
Christ who conquered, be our guard;
Give to us the victor's joy.

5 Watching, praying, struggling thus,
Victory shall be ours too;
Angels minister to us,
As they ministered to you.

6 Saviour, may we hear your voice;
Keep us constant at your side;
And with you we shall rejoice
At the eternal Eastertide.

George Hunt Smytton (1822-1870)

A prayer of intercession

Beloved friends, in this season of repentance and healing, we accept God's invitation to be ever-mindful of the needs of others, offering our prayers on behalf of God's community in the church and the world.

We pray for a true and just, lasting peace in the many war-torn parts of the world. We pray for our local communities. We pray for our friends and our families.

Fill us with your strength to resist the seductions of our foolish desires and the tempter's vain delights, that we may walk in obedience and righteousness, rejoicing in you with an upright heart. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

May God's Word be in our hearts,
May God's Word be on our lips,
May God's Word be in our touch.
May God's Word direct our feet
On this day and for all days to come
May God's Word be the life we live. **Amen.**

This worship service was prepared by Sally Graham