

Call to worship

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." To God we come; to worship, to pray, to learn and to receive. We come with our fears and our failings, but trusting in God, our Rock and our Redeemer. And as we share together, even over distance and time, bless us and feed us we pray. Amen

StF no. 489 All I once held dear

1 All I once held dear, built my life upon, all this world reveres, and wars to own, all I once thought gain I have counted loss; spent and worthless now, compared to this.

Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing. You're my all, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you, Lord.

2 Now my heart's desire is to know you more, to be found in you and known as yours. To possess by faith what I could not earn, all-surpassing gift of righteousness.

Chorus

3 Oh, to know the power of your risen life, and to know you in your sufferings.
To become like you in your death, my Lord, so with you to live and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b 1950)

Prayers of Thanksgiving and praise.

Wonderful God! We thank you for our life together in Christ. It is in Him and through Him that we have been made one. We thank you that though we are all very different people, that though we come from different places and have different hopes and fears, different thoughts and expectations, yet we are one in Christ.

Thank you for the hope, the joy, the peace and the love with which you have flooded our lives; for the new sense of meaning, purpose and direction with which you have touched our lives; for the new awareness of your presence in every moment of our lives.

We praise you for the joy we have received from family and friends, and through the wonder of your creation. We are grateful for those whose love and kindness have changed our lives, our attitudes and our hearts. We thank you for the knowledge that Christ is our Saviour and that Jesus is Lord; for your hope for the future, your cleansing for the past and your power and presence for today. We thank you and ask that by your Holy Spirit we may live, speak and act as your thankful people every day of our lives. In the name of Christ who makes us one. **Amen**

Prayer of confession

Lord, you know us better than we know ourselves. You know our strengths and our weaknesses, our pain and the hurt we cause each other. You know we are not pure and clean when we stand before you, but when we confess our sin and affirm that Jesus is Lord, you restore our relationship with you and with each other. Forgive us our harsh words, our self-centredness and our overconfidence. Forgive us our failure to trust you in everything. Forgive us our insensitivity to the needs of others and our excuses when we go wrong. Teach us your truth, fill us with your grace, and by your Holy Spirit empower us to love one another as Christ has loved us. **Amen**.

Assurance of forgiveness

Even in our moments of doubt, our lack of faith, and the blindness which means we fail to see God amongst us, God is still at work. God is still healing. God is still forgiving. Even when we fail to see God, God still sees us, and still loves us. Sisters and brothers, your sins are forgiven. Go in peace, and give praise to God!

New Testament Lesson - Luke 10:38-42 - Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Message

In our reading from Luke, we are introduced to Martha, who just might be the patron saint of this century. Martha was "worried and distracted by many things," 2,000 years ago. Before TVs, before mobile phones, before social media, before any of the things that distract us in our day and age. Martha was worried and distracted by many things. I can only imagine what it would be like for Martha today!

We live in a time of never-ending worries and distractions? The distractions are obvious, and include the ones mentioned above. The worries, though, are equally obvious. And they seem to grow all the time, and trying to distract ourselves from our worries just seems to wear us out all the more. We can all relate to Martha, who was worried and distracted by many things.

When the distractions of life threaten to pull us apart, we need to re-attach ourselves to Jesus, by spending time with him in daily prayer, and weekly worship. We need to re-attach ourselves to Jesus to be re-attached to what truly matters in life.

That's what Mary was doing in this reading – re-attaching herself to Jesus. She was sitting at Jesus' feet, learning from him. Jesus tells Martha that Mary chose the better part.

But we can't end there. Because Martha was doing something important, after all. If everyone just sat at Jesus' feet, everyone would have gone hungry. There is a balance that is important.

What Mary is doing is important, but what Martha is doing is also important. There is nothing wrong with what either is doing. But where Martha does go wrong, is that she focuses on doing so much that she starts having a negative attitude about it. She starts being pulled apart. We might be called to serve right now, or we might be called to sit at Jesus' feet in prayer. Both are important. But the motivation is even more important. Serving another will not be helpful at all if we do in a distracted way, or if we are resentful about doing, or feel forced to do it. That is not what God wants. God wants us to do all things with love. Serving a dinner with love can be an act of worship; it can be a time of prayer. Or it can lead to distraction and anxiety and worry and resentment.

Perhaps we all have a little of Mary and a little of Martha in us, we have so much to do with the demands of family, world and church and we sometimes wish others would notice just how much we do and maybe appreciate it or even help us with it. But what we really need and sometimes allow ourselves is to stop, sit in the presence of our Lord and listen to his voice.

As Christians and as Church there are occasions when we choose: Bustle over stillness. Noise over quietness. Distraction over focus. Our lives are full of distractions but to sit at Jesus feet requires us to turn off those distractions and just be with Jesus and to listen to Him. To walk with Jesus requires us to slow down and walk at His pace not ours.

The washing up is going nowhere, the dust will not grow legs and walk, the lawn will still need mowing tomorrow so when Jesus comes close and speaks to you stop, listen, be with him, it is the better choice.

We certainly do live in a time when the worries and distractions are all around us. It is all too easy to become bitter and resentful in our world today, and to let fear and worry crowd out love and forgiveness. It is all too easy to find ourselves being dragged down by what is around us, being pulled apart from all of these things.

Today's gospel reading is a timely reminder to us to take time each day to re-attach ourselves to what truly matters. To spend time with God in prayer, to sit at Jesus' feet. And take time each week to be reattached to God through our worship. These are the things that will keep us from being worried and distracted by so many things.

But then, after we are re-attached to what matters, we are called to go and serve our neighbour in need, to go and show God's love and mercy and grace and kindness to everyone we encounter. We can help the world and stay connected to what truly matters, by bringing Jesus' love to all those around us. We can choose the better part, which will not be taken away from us. And we do this for the glory of God. Amen. Take a time to sit quietly.

Prayers of intercession

Almighty God, as we come together to worship and praise you, and thank you for all that you give us, we ask you to hear our prayers for the church, the world, our local community and people in need.

Lord, in your mercy: hear our prayer.

Holy God, we pray for all Christian churches throughout the world as they meet to worship and praise you and enjoy fellowship with each other. We particularly pray for the safety of Christians who are persecuted because of their faith. We pray for the leaders of all Christian churches in the

South Cheshire area; please send your Holy Spirit to guide, strengthen and inspire them as they seek to lead their congregations. We ask that there will be a growing desire to work together, and we give thanks for those who come up with fresh ways of making your name known to the wider community.

Lord, in your mercy: hear our prayer.

Creator God, we pray for our troubled world We pray for all who bear the responsibility of leadership, for heads of state, ambassadors and political advisers; let your will for our world be accomplished through the decisions they make and give them a vision of peace and reconciliation. God of mercy, look with compassion on all who are affected by the present conflict in the Middle East and in Ukraine. Grant insight to hardened hearts, comfort to the fearful, protection to those in danger, and hope to those who are despairing.

Lord, in your mercy: hear our prayer.

Loving God, we pray for those who are ill at home or in hospital, for those who are experiencing extreme pain and for those anxiously awaiting a diagnosis, treatment, procedure or an operation. In a moment of silence, please pray for anyone that you know who needs God's healing touch today......

Almighty God, we ask you to draw close to all of those mentioned so that they may be aware of your healing presence, and we ask you to provide your peace and comfort for them at this time. Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, your Son Jesus Christ is the light of the World, a light which no darkness can quench. We remember before You those who have died, either recently or at this time of year, and pray that they are now experiencing the light of Christ which shines eternally and brings hope and comfort to the bereaved.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen Our Father who art in heaven** ...

StF 530 To be in your presence

To be in your presence to sit at your feet when your love surrounds me and makes me complete

This is my desire, O Lord this is my desire this is my desire, O Lord this is my desire. To rest in your presence not rushing away to cherish each moment – here I would stay

This is my desire, O Lord this is my desire this is my desire, O Lord this is my desire.

Noel Richards (b 1955)

A prayer of blessing

May the grace of God surround us. May the peace of God live in us. May the love of God shine from us, bringing warmth and light to the world. And may the blessing of the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit, be yours today and always. Amen.

(This act of worship was prepared by Jenny Smith)