# Cheshire South Methodist Circuit Worship at Home - Sunday 27th July 2025

# Call to Worship

We come to this time, either together or in our own separate spaces, to worship the One who created us, the One who calls us, the One who equips us, the One who loves us without end. With joyful hearts, let us worship God. **Amen.** 

## A prayer of praise and adoration

Abba, Father, you are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. You are our creator, and our Counsellor, guiding us daily to make wise decisions. Lord, you are our comforter in sorrow, pain, or distress. We praise you for drawing near to us whenever we seek you. You are El Roi, the God who sees us all, and you are eternal. You are our heavenly Father and the Father of the fatherless. How great you are, Father God, and your faithfulness is shown day in and day out. You are holy, God: yet you made a way for us each to approach you. We praise you for being our helper, and for your Holy Spirit's conviction, correction, and protection in our lives. You are invisible, but we see you with eyes of faith - you are Jehovah God, and Jehovah Jireh, the One who provides for all our needs. We praise you as our Jehovah Rapha, our God who heals, and for being Jehovah Raah, our faithful shepherd. You are King of kings, and Lord of lords. And you are Jesus, the name above all names. **Amen** 

# A prayer of thanksgiving

We thank you God, for creating the world and for preserving it until now. We thank you for the regular return of day and night, and of the seasons, and for the dependability of nature and of time. We thank you for memory, which enables us to build on the experiences of the past; for imagination, which admits us to a wider world than we could otherwise know; and for foresight, by which we plan for the future. We thank you for your patience with us in our failings; for friends and family with whom we can celebrate our successes; and for those closest to us who support us in our times of need. Bless those who have little food or friends to comfort them in body or spirit. Bless those who are housebound, and those who have gone before us in faith. We ask this in your holy name. **Amen**.

# A prayer of Confession

Lord God, you have shown us such love, and stretched out your arms to draw us into your embrace. Yet we so often fail to show that love within our lives, or recognise its source.

Forgive our short-sightedness, for the times we've failed to see your love in the generosity of friend or stranger, the shoulder to cry on, a willing ear to listen, a word of encouragement, holding our hand that extra mile. Forgive us for failing to notice how much you care for us. **Amen**.

# **Assurance of Forgiveness**

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:11-12) **Amen**.

# **Hymns & Psalms no. 546** *Come my soul, thy suit prepare*

1 Come, my soul, thy suit prepare, Jesus loves to answer prayer; He himself has bid thee pray, therefore will not say thee nay.

**2** Thou art coming to a King: Large petitions with thee bring; For His grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much. 3 With my burden I begin: Lord, remove this load of sin; Let Thy blood, for sinners spilt, set my conscience free from guilt.

**4** Lord, I come to thee for rest; take possession of my breast; there Thy blood-bought right maintain, and without a rival reign.

**5** While I am a pilgrim here, let Thy love my spirit cheer; as my guide, my guard, my Friend, lead me to my journey's end.

John Newton

#### Readings: Genesis 18:20 - 32

**20** Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous **21** that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." **22** The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.

23 Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

**26** The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

**27** Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, **28** what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?"

"If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it."

**29** Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?"

He said, "For the sake of forty, I will not do it."

**30** Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?" He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

**31** Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?" He said, "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it."

**32** Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it."

#### Psalm 138

1 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise. 2 I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your unfailing love and your faithfulness, for you have so exalted your solemn decree that it surpasses your fame. 3 When I called, you answered me; you greatly emboldened me. 4 May all the kings of the earth praise you, LORD, when they hear what you have decreed. 5 May they sing of the ways of the Lord, for the glory of the LORD is great. 6 Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly; though lofty, he sees them from afar. 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me. 8 The LORD will vindicate me; your love, LORD, endures forever— do not abandon the works of your hands.

# **Luke 11:1 - 13** *Jesus' Teaching on Prayer*

 ${f 11}$  One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."  ${f 2}$  He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. **3** Give us each day our daily bread.

**4** Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

**5** Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; **6** a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' **7** And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' **8** I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

**9** "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. **10** For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

**11** "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? **12** Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13** If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him

## Message

Today's passage from Genesis is about God's mercy. God had said that he would destroy the plains cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because the inhabitants of the two cities were living in great wickedness. God is righteous and this story shows God's wrath and judgement for the wickedness of the people. Abraham petitioned God over and over again for mercy on the people of the cities. With each plea, God listened and showed mercy. Ultimately there were not even ten righteous men and so the cities were destroyed. This story isn't about Abraham changing God's mind about the cities - it is a clarification of God's nature to Abraham. Abraham was bold in his requests to God, because he was passionate about justice for the people of Sodom.

Persistence in prayer is a powerful tool. It helps us as we pray. We can see more clearly what is driving us to ask God for help with. As we persist in prayer we can grow in boldness. God wants us to be bold in our prayer, not timid and fearful. God is our Father; he loves us and does not want us to feel we cannot approach him for help and guidance. God knew there were not ten righteous men in Sodom, but he was merciful enough to allow Abraham to intercede for the city. Our gospel passage from Luke is headed *Jesus' Teaching on Prayer*, and this shows us that we should speak boldly to our Father, in the knowledge that he has immeasurable love for us. We say the Lord's Prayer by memory, but do we really hear the words we are saying? It is a very bold prayer. We start by reminding ourselves that God is supreme - we hallow His name, honouring His name as holy. But then the prayer goes on boldly to make powerful requests. We ask to be fed, to be forgiven, for power to forgive others, for strength against temptation. This is a bold prayer - and Jesus gave us these words to speak regularly to our Father in heaven. Jesus followed this up with an explanation of why we should be praying this bold prayer. This, like Abraham's petition to God for Sodom, is a matter of persistence.

Jesus spoke of persisting to the point of shameless audacity to get the help needed to feed the late night traveller. Jesus tells us to ask boldly - to knock and the door will be answered. Even good fathers make mistakes as illustrated by Jesus suggesting that a father may either deliberately or mistakenly give a snake to his son instead of a fish, or a scorpion instead of an egg. How much better, then, does our perfect heavenly Father treat his children? Today's Psalm – no. 138, is a Psalm of praise, but it also tells us again of the immeasurable love God our Father has for us. David tells of how when he called to God he felt greatly emboldened. We too should always remember how very loved we are. God loves each and every one of us so dearly. We should approach him in prayer with whatever we have on our hearts - and we should be persistent in our prayers. The Holy Spirit will help and guide us in our prayers, and like Abraham we will see increased clarity in what is driving us to ask for help.

And next time we join together in saying the Lord's Prayer - or if we are saying it alone - be sure to hear the words you are speaking. It is a bold prayer, which we have been given by Jesus to repeat persistently to our loving Father. We should pray boldly - approaching God confidently, in the knowledge that he is listening and that he cares deeply for every one of us. **Amen.** 

# A prayer for boldness and persistence in prayer

Father, as we face our fears, and when we are feeling afraid, when we are feeling timid - remind us of who you are and who we each are in you. You are strong and courageous, the mighty King and loving Father. You have said in your word that, as your children, we wait upon you, we can take courage and speak boldly, because we know you are with us. You are for us, and you empower us with the courage

and strength we need for whatever is placed before us. We know your Holy Spirit guides us and gives us the clarity to persist in both our prayers and through life's trials. **Amen**.

**StF no. 528** *Pray without ceasing, pray* 

1 Pray without ceasing, pray, your captain gives the word; his summons cheerfully obey, and call upon the Lord: to God your every want in instant prayer display; pray, always pray, and never faint; pray, without ceasing, pray!

2 In fellowship, alone, to God with faith draw near, approach His courts, besiege His throne with all the powers of prayer: go to His temple, go, nor from His altar move; let every house His worship know, and every heart His love.

3 Pour out your souls to God, and bow them with your knees, and spread your hearts and hands abroad, and pray for Zion's peace; your guides and kindred bear for ever on your mind; extend the arms of mighty prayer, and grasp all humankind.

Charles Wesley

# A prayer of intercession

To intercede in prayer is to be like a bold warrior. If the battle is to be won in prayer, then there must be warriors willing to stand in the gap and fight.

Father God, we are saddened by the great suffering of so many of your children across the world. We bring before you those suffering in foreign lands as well as those local to us who find themselves in a hard place. We pray for those who suffer physically with illness, and those with depression or anxiety. Lord God, our Father, we pray now and ask that you breathe on these people by your Holy Spirit and bring great love to them - and we will boldly continue to humbly and earnestly petition on their behalf.

Help us to minister to others in the strength of your Spirit and to work in unity together. May we shine your glorious light into the darkness and remain steadfast and true to you. We lift all those in significant leadership to you; guide their thoughts, cover their actions and where necessary renew their minds.

We pray that you would lay new paths of righteousness in troubled lands. It is disturbing to see the difference between rich and poor widening in and across so much of the world; we lift those in poverty to you, and boldly ask for miracles of provision, healing and restoration.

We boldly ask these prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus. Amen

# The Lord's Prayer

## **Closing Prayer**

Father, we thank you for the empowerment that comes through your Word. From your Word we receive the spirit of boldness to enter into all you have provided, and all you ask of us. Because we know your love for us and all your children is beyond measure we will continue our persistence in seeking justice. Let mercy, justice and grace speak continually for us and through us. In Jesus' unfailing name, **Amen**.

This worship service has been prepared by Mrs. Sally Graham