

Sunday 12th September 2021

Call to worship

Come to worship, to be comforted and disturbed, challenged from our complacency but also offered forgiveness and the hope of eternal life.

Come to Jesus, prophet, priest and king.

Hymn: StF24 - Come, Now is the time to worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvLajUBOUfE>

Prayer:

Creative God,

You called us into your kingdom and adopted us as your children.

Redeeming Saviour,

You showed us how to be servants, denying ourselves to serve others.

Sustaining Spirit,

You give us strength to take up our cross in the service of the kingdom of God.

Teach us to serve others and in doing so, to serve you.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

OT Reading: Psalm 19

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2019&version=NIVUK>

Hymn: StF 56 - King of Glory, King of Peace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikj7CiC7v0U>

NT Reading: Mark 8:27-38

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+8%3A27-38&version=NIVUK>

Reflection

When we think of the cross, what comes to mind? We may have in our mind's eye a particular image, or perhaps something we can see around us now in our church building. Or we might be wearing a cross as an item of jewellery, be reminded of a film we have seen about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, or of some music we have heard or sung about the cross.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus is beginning to take control of the story that others want to write for him. In hindsight, we know that Jesus chose to go to Jerusalem, where he was arrested, tortured and put to death. We know too that on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, offering us the gift of eternal life through forgiveness of our sins. But when Jesus speaks to the disciples about his death, it comes as a shock. Surely death on a cross cannot be the fate of someone who is clearly the Messiah, God's chosen and promised deliverer? That was certainly Peter's first reaction.

Jesus responds by talking about his followers taking up their cross – not his but theirs, and ours. And when he asks us to take up our cross, he is not speaking metaphorically. We are called to be willing to suffer, actually and really suffer, for the sake of the Gospel. For

many of us, most of us probably, this cost of discipleship will not be onerous. But there are Christians all over the world who suffer horribly for their faith - see Open Doors for stories to explore or share.

Aware of the relative safety in which we live – even after a coronavirus pandemic – let us give thanks and pray for all who suffer for their faith.

Moment of quiet reflection

Hymn: StF563 - O Jesus I have promised

Modern Tune: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNz-33V1V8A>

Traditional Tune: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UU_cev2ri90

Prayer for others

So many people in our world today are taking huge risks with their lives for causes they believe in. We think particularly of those in Afghanistan who have taken to the streets to protest about the rule of the Taliban. It's difficult to comprehend how frightening and disorientating it must be for the Afghan people to be living with this rapidly changing reality and so we pray for safety. For those showing huge courage, we ask that their voices are heard, and that we in the west keep listening, thinking and praying for them. We pray that leaders with influence use the power they have to guide those who desperately need it to safety.

Loving God draw close to the people of Afghanistan,

may we see and be inspired by those who take risks for justice.

Caring is very much in the news this week and we are reminded of both the cost of care in pounds and pence and the personal costs for those who do the caring. Thank you Lord God for everyone who cares. Whether for elderly relatives, for people with disabilities, or for the frail and infirm in care home settings. May we never devalue the care givers. And as we as a society wrestle with the cost of care, help us not to lose sight of the human lives that are deeply affected by care needs and caring. Thank you that you are a God who deeply cares for us all. Help us to understand the full meaning of being cared for and cared about by our Creator.

Loving God draw close to all who give care,

may we see and be inspired by those who care so diligently for others.

We are aware of many different people and groups fighting hard for climate justice; trying to bring to our attention the peril the world is in and effect change. Thank you for people who care deeply about the environment and are not afraid to use their voice to speak about it. We pray for everyone preparing for the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow later this year. We particularly pray for the young people who are mobilising their friends and classmates. Thank you for their thoughtful concern and the energy they devote to thinking

about such huge global issues. May they be determined rather than daunted by the scale of the challenge and be encouraged in their pursuit of change.

Loving God, draw close to the people around us who fight continually for climate justice,
may we see and be inspired by those who speak up and make us listen.

Many of us will have examples of Christian around this world facing persecution and danger. Brothers and sisters who live in countries hostile to their beliefs and for whom expressing their faith is a highly provocative act. Please draw near to everyone who is in danger today because they follow Christ. Help persecuted Christians around this world find safe spaces to express their faith and, for those for whom there is no safe space, may they know your deep love for them. May they powerfully feel the presence of your Holy Spirit and hold onto the promise of the Gospel.

Loving God draw close to all for whom discipleship is costly,
may we see and be inspired by those who choose to worship you whatever the circumstances.

Finally, we pray for ourselves. Whatever circumstances face us in the week to come may we face them in the knowledge that you are always with us. May we learn how to let go of the things of this world that weigh us down or distract us from serving you.

Loving God draw close to all of us this week as we work out what discipleship means,
may we see and be inspired by those who model lives of faith and service.

Amen

Hymn: StF465 - Guide me O thou great Jehovah
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4n1hGjDDg>

Final blessing

Loving God,
we commit to following you this week
into corners of the community
we usually prefer to ignore.
Help us to pray and speak and act for change.

Amen.