

Sunday 1st November 2020

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.
God is ever present, around us and within us,
though separate let us worship together in God.

Suggested hymn For all the saints
Watch [here](#)

Prayer

Eternal God, in whom all souls dwell and all lives are lived, we come to you in praise, lifting our voices and our hearts in thanksgiving. You know our inner thoughts, our fears and our hopes, our despair and our dreams and you are always with us. We thank you for your loving presence with us and around us as we journey through the ups and downs of life. You know our potential, our skills and gifts whether we use them or not and we thank you for the people who inspire us and who encourage us to grow in faith and love. We thank you for Jesus and his inspiration which has led us to gather together, following his way and serving one another in love.

We offer this time to you, and to each other, and pray for listening ears and open hearts as we worship together. Let us share the words that Jesus taught his disciples, saying,
Our Father....

Readings Psalm 107:1-7 &33-37 (Afua)
Matthew 23:1-12 (Johny)

Reflection

Psalm 107 is generally thought to be a community thanksgiving offered before the sacrifice in a festival service, a gathering of the whole community in celebration. Verses 1-3 form the introduction and would probably have been recited antiphonally, by people who recognised the saving nature of their God. Verses 4-7 begin the narrative of that people, their stories of God's rescue and the reason they needed rescue.

Verses 33-37 are part of a cultic hymn, the equivalent to our hymn of praise and adoration but once again using the story of the people. It highlights the way that people turn to God in their times of distress, something that still happens today, even among people with little or no acknowledged faith. As Harry Emerson Fosdick put it in his book 'The meaning of Prayer', prayer is as natural as breathing, it is part of our DNA and in times of stress we default to that natural state.

This psalm is written in the belief of people of that time, we in our modern world, and in the knowledge we have from Jesus of a partnership with God would express this differently but the underlying reasons would be much the same. I am reminded of two stories which express the partnership aspect of our relationship with God. A man has fallen overboard and is floundering in the sea, he prays to God to save him and keeps treading water. A little while later along comes a boat and he is urged to climb aboard but he replies no, it is okay God will save him. Later still a helicopter hovers overhead and a line is lowered to the man but again he declines and says God will save him. Later still the man drowns and arriving in heaven he expresses his disappointment that God had not saved him. God replies, I sent a boat and a helicopter, but you said no. The other story relates to someone who is down on their luck and struggling financially, they turn to God in prayer and ask to win the lottery. This happens for a few weeks, then a reply comes, at least meet me halfway and buy a ticket!

How does God rescue us? How would you explain your understanding of what you might expect? Sometimes a rescue can be spectacular but not always. The spectacular is often described as miraculous but is the ordinary gentle rescue any less miraculous for the person involved? A miracle is defined as 'a remarkable and welcome event that seems impossible to explain by the laws of

nature and tis therefore attributed to a supernatural agency'. Now that begs the question do you believe in miracles? I was asked that question during a Women's Conference I was leading with my friend Debbie. I reflected with the group that had they asked me that pre 2012 I would probably have said I though there was usually an explanation for such events even if at the time we were unaware of it. However, since engaging with Quantum Theology and reading more about desire + imagination = reality, I was now sure that the things we might regard as miracles were happening and that it fell into the realm of a change in reality. They don't happen very often because we are not yet very good at changing reality through the power of our minds (the Spirit) but I believe this is what happened when Jesus turned the water into wine.

Saints have often been looked on as purveyors of miracles, and pilgrimages are frequently made to facilitate miracles. Today is All Saints day in the Christian calendar, and a time to celebrate the lives of those who have been sainted. We don't really do saints in our tradition, but I am sure we could all name some even if only the patron saints of our four nations and of course St Paul. There are many myths and legends told about our Patron Saints, particularly St George and St David where there is not much actual fact available in the history annals, but we do know that St Andrew is the earliest being recognised as the brother of Simon Peter and an apostle in his own right and adopted as patron saint of Scotland in 750 AD. St Patrick was born in Britain and at sixteen was captured by Irish Pirates and taken to Ireland where it is thought he spent six years living in a herd of children in a wood before hearing a call from God to escape. He followed the call, making his way to a port (200 miles) and on returning to his kinsfolk he commenced training for the ministry and later returning to Ireland as Bishop of Ireland.

What makes a saint? Maybe take a few moments to consider that question and who in our time might qualify?

For some saints it may have been performing miracles, but for most it is a life devoted to the service of others alongside a devout belief in God and living a holy life. Perhaps the most famous modern saint is St Theresa of Calcutta, of whom there are many stories and much evidence of her sainthood in her daily life. She could truly say 'do as I do', and the world will be better for it. This brings us to our reading from Matthew in which Jesus recognises the learning of the pharisees and urges people to listen to what they say but not do what they do, because they do not apply their learning to their actions. He then goes on to say that the greatest among us will be the servant, and those who exalt themselves, think of themselves as better than others, will be humbled, and those who are humble will find themselves exalted.

In today's world we often see examples of people who think they are better, worth more, or deserve more reward or to be held in higher esteem, rarely would many agree outside their own small world. I believe in human rights, and that everyone should have equal opportunity, however all too often 'my right' becomes 'I am special' and the equality of human rights is somehow forgotten. Jesus said we are all one, we are to treat one another as one, to love our neighbour as if they are an extension of our ourselves, which in oneness they are. Oneness is about servanthood, wanting the best for others and giving of yourself for the benefit of others. There are many examples in our world today where there is need, where there is an opportunity to serve others, food banks are probably one of the best examples either by donating or working at a foodbank but volunteering in any capacity, whether for a charity or the Friends of a hospital, or Citizen's advice is about service, giving our time to help others. In many ways we are all called to be saints although most of us would shy away from that description.

We need to share stories and experiences, to reflect upon who and what is making a difference in our world and why, so that we can recognise saintly behaviour and be inspired to model our own behaviour on such patterns. Walking the way of Jesus rarely means adopting 1st century clothing and patterns of life, it means asking ourselves what is the most loving thing I can do in this situation and then having the courage to do that even if it has a personal cost. In fact, saintly living rarely

comes without some personal cost. The pharisees were accuse of talking the talk without walking the walk, are we ready to walk the walk?

ymn [Listen to tune here](#)

Gathered here to hear the stories
told by people long ago.
Stories of their lives and witness
to the God who helped them grow.
As we listen to their stories
we reflect on what we hear,
seeing God within our story,
sensing God is always near.

Gathered here we share our stories,
seeing God on every page.
Stories told of love and laughter,
sometimes joy and sometimes rage.
In their telling is revealed
all our human wants and woes,
but we also learn to treasure
how God's love throughout them flows.

Gathered here to share our witness
So, we pray for open hearts.
May our stories joined together
help us cherish what they chart;
you are one with all your people,
we have never been alone.
May our lives reflect the story
through which all your love is shown.

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Prayers

Loving God, as we gather in worship we pray for all those who have lived there lives in servanthood, following the way of Jesus. We remember those who have been recognised and acknowledge the unsung heroes to have made a difference to world in which we live. We give thanks for their tireless devotion in serving others.

Loving God, may our lives reflect your love and our choices make a difference.

We pray for all those who find themselves trapped in desperate situations, fearing the future and inwardly crying out for help. We remember people who are hungry, people who are homeless, people who feel isolated and lonely, people who are confused by their own minds. In our lives of faith may we find the inspiration to reach out and make a difference and celebrate and give thanks for the charities that offer help in these situations.

Loving God, may our lives reflect your love and our choices make a difference.

In this pandemic we have witnessed many people who have offered their time and help to others and we know the price key workers have paid to keep hospitals, care homes and essential services running. We give thanks for their selfless love for others and offer their stories to the narrative of our journey.

Loving God, may our lives reflect your love and our choices make a difference.

We pray for those who hold positions of authority, councillors, mayors and politicians. We recognise that it can be difficult to balance the needs of everyone with the need to balance the books and pray for your kingdom where power and money are no longer the drivers of action and everyone has

what they need. May we have the courage to speak out when we see injustice and reach out to those suffering from injustice.

Loving God, may our lives reflect your love and our choices make a difference.

In our life together may we encourage one another to be creative in our expression of faith, seek to serve one another in love and inspire one another to live as one. As we celebrate the stories of the past may we always be looking to the future and new ways to express our trust in you and our love for you. May we aware of opportunities and open to change.

Loving God, may our lives reflect your love and our choices make a difference.

In Jesus name, Amen.

Our offering to God.

As we continue to worship apart but together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

Suggested hymn

From heaven you came helpless babe

Watch [here](#)

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.