

## At Home Service 18<sup>th</sup> October 2020

### **Opening words – Psalm 96: 1-6**

I sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among all the peoples, his marvellous works among all the peoples.  
For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.  
For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.  
Honour and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

### **Songs of Fellowship 1002 Sing to God new songs of worship (tune Ode to joy)**

#### **SING TO GOD NEW SONGS** of worship:

All His deeds are marvellous;  
He has brought salvation to us  
With His hand and holy arm:  
He has shown to all the nations  
Righteousness and saving power;  
He recalled His truth and mercy  
To His people Israel.

#### Sing to God new songs of worship:

Let the sea now make a noise;  
All on earth and in the waters  
Sound your praises to the Lord:  
Let the hills be joyful together,  
Let the rivers clap their hands,  
For with righteousness and justice  
He will come to judge the earth.

#### Sing to God new songs of worship:

Earth has seen His victory;  
Let the lands of earth be joyful  
Praising Him with thankfulness:  
Sound upon the harp His praises,  
Play to Him with melody;  
Let the trumpets sound His triumph,  
Show your joy to God the King!

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### **Prayer of adoration**

#### *Silence*

God of majesty, as we come to worship you it is as though we are standing with Moses on the holy mountain; or with David on the City of Zion; or with the prophets and saints in your heavenly court:

Sing to God a new song! Sing to God all the earth! Praise the holy name of the Lord!

As we come into your presence, it is as though we join with the Israelites bringing their offerings in procession with psalms and hymns and trumpets, singing with joy of the beauty that we find here in your sanctuary:

Sing to God a new song! Sing to God all the earth! Praise the holy name of the Lord!

God in majesty, all the wise cry out to you in their need, and we want to tell all the world of your marvels, your wonders and your care. We come to declare your justice, to proclaim that your love is the firm foundation of our lives: Sing to God a new song! Sing to God all the earth! Praise the holy name of the Lord!

### **Prayer of confession and declaration of forgiveness**

God of truth, you are searching for truth in us, for that wholehearted devotion which takes up all we are and turns it towards your purpose and your ways.

#### *Silence*

That we may serve the living God: And await the One who saves us. God of truth, help us to turn away from all that is false in us and in the world, all that is hypocritical and insincere. Help us to turn aside from any loyalty which stands between ourselves and you, that our service to you may be complete, pure, holy.

#### *Silence*

That we may serve the living God: And await the One who saves us.

God of truth, you look for obedience and faithfulness in us, a standard of integrity which comes from the heart, and which shows where our true loyalty lies. You expect us to strive for this in ourselves, and honour it in each other.

### *Silence*

That we may serve the living God: And await the One who saves us.

### **Isaiah 45.1-7**

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him – and the gates shall not be closed: I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me, so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the LORD do all these things.

### **Matthew 22.15-22**

When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard the parables, they realized that Jesus was speaking about them. <sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. <sup>16</sup>So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. <sup>17</sup>Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' <sup>18</sup>But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup>Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup>Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' <sup>21</sup>They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' <sup>22</sup>When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

### **Sermon**

Cyrus the Great, who founded the Persian Empire that ended the Babylonian captivity is described as God's anointed (messiah). This is a title that is usually reserved for Israel's kings and high priests and Cyrus is the only non-Israelite given this title. He is called by God and anointed for the sake of Israel.

Jesus is asked about whether it is right to pay taxes to Caesar, another non-Jew who has control of the land of Israel. His head is on the coin that is in daily use and is used to pay the taxes to Caesar. So, we get that wonderful saying that we sometimes use today, 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's'.

It was Paul who reminded Christians that rulers had been placed in their position by God and so should be listened to. I wonder if we would agree with that thought, especially as we see the abuse of that power and the corruption that exists in so many places across the world.

I personally believe that rulers, whoever they might be, are accountable to both the people and to God. We might be expected to pay our taxes to the state but there is an expectation that this money will be used wisely for the good of the country and the world.

However, we are also subject to the ways of God. This places on us as individuals and as a people the responsibility to challenge those who abuse their God given power. And those last four words are key to our understanding of Jesus' teaching and to understanding the role of Cyrus. Power and authority comes from God to be used in the way that God intended. It is God who deserves our all and who reigns supreme over all people from the most powerful in this world to the least powerful.

This must mean that we have a duty to God to speak out against injustice and abuse wherever we see it in our land and across the world.

It took the Manchester United and England footballer Marcus Rashford to change the government stance on children's lunches during school holidays, righting a wrong in this country, a wrong that needs addressing permanently. I can't find out if he has a faith but even if he doesn't here is a man speaking out against injustice. And I was amazed to discover how many more foreign football players are involved in justice issues in their home countries – providing hospitals, schools and aid to those in need. We may not have the income of these footballers but justice is something that we still need to be involved in as God calls us to do the same. Whilst we may 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's' we are also reminded that abuse of power will be accounted for before the one who as Creator, Sustainer and Saviour looks for our praise, our adoration and our love in response to all that He gives to us.

### ***Singing the Faith 82 O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder***

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works thy hand hath made, I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder, thy power throughout the universe displayed:	When through the woods and forest glades I wander and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees; when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur, and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:
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*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:*

*how great thou art, how great thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:*

*how great thou art, how great thou art!*

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin:	When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home — what joy shall fill my heart; then shall I bow in humble adoration, and there proclaim: my God, how great thou art:
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### ***Prayer of Thanksgiving***

Pilgrim God, we praise you for that grace which is always on the move from death to life, desolation to hope, famine to feasting. As we travel this road of pain and rejoicing, we give thanks that you go with us as our guardian and friend:

– that you have taken us by the hand and led us, giving guidance and support.

Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

– that you have strengthened us for the work of faith, the labour of love, the steadfastness of hope.

Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

– that you have made us imitators of your saints and disciples, and of our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

– that as we have received your Word with joy, even in the midst of our suffering, you have revealed to us your ways. Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

– that we belong to you and you have shown us your glory.

Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

– that through our example others have been encouraged and inspired.

Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

### ***Intercessions***

#### ***Silent prayer***

God of majesty, your glory fills the earth and the heavens. You are the maker of every good thing. We worship you and offer you our praise.

We pray that we may worship you in the things that we do: that, turning aside from the idols of power, wealth and success we may worship you by pursuing freedom, justice and opportunities for all.

Glorious God: we will worship you alone.

We pray that we may worship you in the things that we say: that, turning aside from the idols of popularity, conformity and cynicism we may worship you by speaking of goodness, forgiveness and love.

Glorious God: we will worship you alone.

We pray that we may worship you by being the people that you call us to be: that, turning aside from the idols of appearance, cleverness and self we may worship you by leading lives radiant with humble, self-giving love.

Glorious God: we will worship you alone.

We pray that we may worship you in every part of our lives, for everything belongs to you, creating, sustaining, life-giving God. Glorious God: we will worship you alone.

In the name of Jesus, who by his life, death and rising again, revealed the true glory of God. **Amen.**

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

*Please say this in whichever form you prefer*

### ***Offering and prayer of dedication***

God of all goodness and grace, receive the gifts we offer; and grant that our whole life may give you glory and praise; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### ***Singing the Faith 406 – Have you heard the good news? – Stuart Garrard***

*Have you heard the good news?*

*Have you heard the good news?*

*We can live in hope*

*because of what the Lord has done.*

*Have you heard the good news?*

*Have you heard the good news?*

*We can live in hope*

*because of what the Lord has done.*

1     There is a way  
      when there seems to be no way,  
      there is a light in the darkness:  
      there is a hope,  
      an everlasting hope,  
      there is a God who can help us.

*Refrain*

2     A hope for justice  
      and a hope for peace,  
      a hope for those in desperation:  
      we have a future,  
      if only we believe  
      he works in every situation.

*Refrain*

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### ***Blessing***

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go out in peace, to serve the holy God in love and justice, through sacrifice, always in praise:

**God of glory, come to us. God of glory, stay with us. God of glory, travel with us. God of glory, lead us home.**

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