

At Home Service 20th September 2020

Psalm 145: 1-4

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name for ever and ever.

Every day I will bless you, and praise your name for ever and ever.

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

Hymn – Bless the Lord, O my soul (10,000 reasons)

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| <p>1. <i>Bless the Lord oh my soul</i>
<i>Oh my soul</i>
<i>Worship His Holy name</i>
<i>Sing like never before</i>
<i>Oh my soul</i>
<i>I'll worship Your Holy name</i>
The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes</p> | <p>2. <i>Bless the Lord oh my soul</i>
<i>Oh my soul</i>
<i>Worship His Holy name</i>
<i>Sing like never before</i>
<i>Oh my soul</i>
<i>I'll worship Your Holy name</i>
You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find</p> |
| <p>3. <i>Bless the Lord oh my soul</i>
And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore
Forevermore</p> | <p>4. <i>Bless the Lord oh my soul</i>
Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name
Yes I'll worship Your Holy name
Lord I'll worship Your Holy name</p> |

Prayers

Loving God, I have come to worship you. Help me to remember that you are here with me. May I pray to you in faith, sing your praise with gratitude, and listen to your word with eagerness, through Christ my Lord.

Eternal God, source of all blessing, help me to worship you with all my heart and mind and strength; for you alone are God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Glad and generous God, draw me into the outpouring of your love, that I may not begrudge your grace.

For you feed the hungry whether or not they have worked for it; you forgive those who repent whether or not they have been adequately punished; you provide a welcome for the stranger whether or not they are nice to know; you give life to all people whether or not they use it well.

Glad and generous God, forgive my resentment at the liberality of your blessings, the profusion of gifts poured out on good and bad alike, the abundance of your mercy, on which I too depend: Draw me into the flow of your compassion, that I may not resist the healing tide of grace. Amen.

Almighty God, I don't always know how I got to where I am, and I certainly don't always know where I am going; I don't always choose the right path, and I certainly don't always follow it; I don't always deal well with

the struggles of life, and I don't always give thanks for the joys of life either; I don't always think of the effects that my choices cause to others, near and far. I am too often selfish, wanting what I want no matter what the cost to others. Almighty God, forgive me, reassure me and cradle me within your forgiveness.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is his gracious word: 'Your sins are forgiven.' Amen. Thanks be to God.

Jonah 3.10 - 4.11

¹⁰ When God saw what the people of Nineveh did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

¹ But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry.

² He prayed to the LORD and said, 'O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing.

³ And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.'

⁴ And the LORD said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?'

⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶ The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush.

⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered.

⁸ When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

⁹ But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.'

¹⁰ Then the LORD said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night.

¹¹ And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'

Matthew 20.1-16

Jesus said to his disciples: ¹'The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; ⁴and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" ⁷They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." ⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." ⁹When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." ¹³But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

Reflection

I think that we would all rejoice over someone who comes to faith at whatever point in life this comes for them. But is there an expectation that those of us who have been life-long followers of Jesus will be treated

better than those who come to faith much later. That in essence is the picture given in the Gospel reading where those who have toiled through the difficult parts of the day expect more when they see the rewards of those who have joined the workers in the cooler breeze of evening. Would we also resent others receiving the same reward that we do when they come to faith late?

In Jonah we have the picture of a whole people repenting and being saved from the punishment that should rightly be theirs and Jonah is angry that God has relented. How would we feel in his place? Are there times when each of us feel that punishment must come on an individual or a people?

These stories are meant to make us understand that the love of God is so great that his forgiveness is offered in the same degree to all. There is no ranking of sin or wrongdoing. We have all done wrong – we have all sinned. We have fallen short of God’s ideal and we need forgiveness, something that isn’t measured by what we might see as the number of sins or the magnitude of them. When you think about it, it doesn’t matter whether the high jumper fails to get over the bar by an inch or by a metre – he hasn’t met the requirement and has failed to reach the standard. So it is with us in God’s eyes – we have either cleared the bar or failed to do so. However we view it we all fall short and are all sinners – there is no ranking of sin.

As Methodists our very doctrine is based on what we call the ‘Four Alls’. We acknowledge that all people need to be saved – none of us are pure or holy except through the intervention of Jesus. We believe that all people can be saved – sin is not measurable and so there is no one who is beyond the love and forgiveness of God. We believe that all people can know that they have been saved as the Holy Spirit works within them. And finally, we believe that all people can be saved to the uttermost – there is no limit on what God can do for us. Christians believe that they are forgiven through Jesus, regardless of past wrongs whatever these might be, and, we should rejoice at the thought of more finding the peace that God offers to us through Jesus.

Hymn – Singing the Faith 272 – From heaven you came

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| 1 From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.
<i>This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.</i> | 2 There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said. |
| 3 Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered. | 4 So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving. |

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950). Words and Music: © 1983, Thankyou Music. Administered by Kingswaysongs, a division of David C Cook <tym@kingsway.co.uk>

Intercessions

Loving God, I thank you for your many gifts to people. Sometimes I find it hard to share my gifts with others. Help me to overcome my possessiveness and selfishness.

Loving God, you offered the people of Nineveh your forgiveness and a new start in life. You offer all forgiveness in Christ. Help me to share that forgiveness with those who wrong me. Generous God: make me generous, too.

Loving God, like the landowner who met the needs of the workers in the vineyard, even those who had come to the work late in the day, you offer me the unconditional love I need. Help me to share the news of your saving love with others. Generous God: make me generous, too.

Loving God, you filled the first Christians with your Holy Spirit, uniting them in love and equipping them for the struggle. You give me your Holy Spirit. Help me to share with others in a common life of worship and service. Generous God: make me generous, too.

Loving God, I thank you for your many gifts to people, and most of all for the gift of yourself in Jesus Christ who came to share my humanity that I might share in the riches of your love. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

Offering and prayer of dedication

O God of all grace, there is in you an awesome generosity; your rain falls on the just and the unjust, your mercy provides bread in the desert, your joy gives nourishment for growth, and food for a feast.

What can I offer to you? Yet you ask of me! What can I do for you? Yet you call me to follow!

May I make my offering with hands that are open, and a heart that is not closed up with resentment. May there be no spirit of murmuring within me, but may my giving be focussed on the needs of others, not in the pride – or cost – of my gift.

For your love is turning my world inside out as I learn to treasure all that Jesus has given me and given for me; and your justice is turning my world upside down as I honour the last and the least for his sake.

Hymn – Singing the Faith 342 – All hail the power of Jesus name

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| 1 | All hail the power of Jesu's name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all. | 2 | You seed of Israel's chosen race,
you ransomed of the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all. |
| 3 | Hail him, the heir of David's line
whom David Lord did call,
the God incarnate, Man divine,
and crown him Lord of all. | 4 | Let every kindred, every tribe
on this terrestrial ball,
to him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all. |
| 5 | O that with yonder sacred throng
we at his feet may fall,
join in the everlasting song,
and crown him Lord of all! | | |

Edward Perronet (1726–1792) adapted by John Rippon (1751–1836)

Blessing

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be in my midst and remain with me always. Amen. I go with God, who will provide for me with an open hand, and cherish me with an open heart. I go with God, who calls me to be a bearer of the divine generosity in the parched and starving places of the world.

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