**Service – 12th July 2020**

***Leader of Worship: Daniel Harris***

***Family address and Preacher: Revd Richard Bradley***

**Welcome and opening words**

Good morning. My name is Daniel Harris and along with Richard Bradley we will be travelling with you through this time of worship.

Psalm 150 says:

Praise the Lord.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+150&version=NIV#fen-NIV-16396a)]

Praise God in his sanctuary;  
    praise him in his mighty heavens.  
2Praise him for his acts of power;

… Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

So let us praise God as we sing our first song ….

**Opening Hymn of Praise: Holy, Holy, Holy**

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| 1.. Holy, holy, holy,  Lord God Almighty!  early in the morning  our song shall rise to Thee;  Holy, holy, holy! -  merciful and mighty!  God in three Persons,  blessed Trinity! | 2.. Holy, holy, holy!  All the saints adore Thee,  casting down their golden crowns  around the glassy sea;  cherubim and seraphim  falling down before Thee,  which wert, and art,  and evermore shall be. |
| 3.. Holy, holy, holy! -  though the darkness hide Thee,  though the eye of sinful man  Thy glory may not see;  only Thou art holy;  there is none beside Thee,  perfect in power,  in love, in purity. | 4.. Holy, holy, holy!  Lord God Almighty!  all Thy works shall praise Thy name,  in earth, and sky, and sea:  Holy, holy, holy!  merciful and mighty!  God in three Persons,  blessed Trinity. |
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**Prayers of Adoration and Confession:**

Creator of everything,

We come to you.

Sometimes we come sensing that we have consumed too much;

Sometimes we come feeling like we haven’t had enough.

We don’t have to be literally talking about food.

We can over-consume, or be malnourished, with many things in life.

Friendships, feelings, workloads or addictions ….

The list is endless.

But when we find our lives out of balance,

Leaning too far either one way or the other,

We find ourselves falling into your hands.

You stop us from falling over.

If we do fall, you pick us up.

And you remind us what we really need,

What we really seek,

Is found in worshipping you

the Creator of Everything.

So we come to you, as we are,

Grateful and wishing to explore

The abundant life that you offer us.

Loving God - thank you

Amen.

**Family address**

I want us to think about food and drink! I wonder what foods do you like and what foods do you dislike?

I have some 8 different foods here, I wonder if you like them or dislike them? Who likes/dislikes….

\*Chocolate? \*Apples? \*Dr Pepper? \* Crisps? \*Bananas? \*Sprouts? \*Cherries? \*Haribos?   
*(for those following the script and the video…these items may change depending on what I can get from the shops!)*

There is one thing all these foods have in common and that is that they will satisfy us for a short period of time only. None of them despite how much we like them will satisfy us for long periods.

But our spiritual food which is God’s Word to us in the Bible, will always satisfy! It will always feed us and will always give us the strength to cope with life and its challenges and its joys. And it is important that as Christians we read the Bible and learn more of God through it which will give us strength for our lives.

Let us pray….  
Loving God, help us to read and to understand your Word written for us in the Bible. May it always give us strength for life and the joys and challenges we may face. Amen.

**Bible Reading part 1: Isaiah 55:1-7**

**55**‘Come, all you who are thirsty,  
    come to the waters;  
and you who have no money,  
    come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
    without money and without cost.  
**2**Why spend money on what is not bread,  
    and your labour on what does not satisfy?  
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,  
    and you will delight in the richest of fare.  
**3**Give ear and come to me;  
    listen, that you may live.  
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
    my faithful love promised to David.  
**4**See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,  
    a ruler and commander of the peoples.  
**5**Surely you will summon nations you know not,  
    and nations you do not know will come running to you,  
because of the Lord your God,  
    the Holy One of Israel,  
    for he has endowed you with splendour.’

**6**Seek the Lord while he may be found;  
    call on him while he is near.  
**7**Let the wicked forsake their ways  
    and the unrighteous their thoughts.  
Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,  
    and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

*May God help us, by the Holy Spirit, to understand His Word.*

**Reflecting together part 1 – “Come, listen, see”**

“The exiles are summoned to return and be restored” are words from an NIV Study Bible Commentary I have on my shelf *(Hodder and Stoughton, 1987, 2000, London)*

I thought those words in a different time and context spoke to where we are today with the Covid-19 virus.

The opportunity for churches to open is set before us and it is like the return of the exiles. For some of us we have been isolating in our homes and limited in how we worship. Not dissimilar to the exiles who were taken from their homes and from the Temple where they would worship.

And to those exiles, who may have been fearful and reluctant, God through Isaiah says, **“Come”** (Isaiah 55:1 – NIV)

Often water in the Bible means spiritual nourishment. For the exiles they didn’t have scripts of worship…zoom…Facebook….YouTube or any other of the technologies that have and are helping us to

worship! Some of you will be read this…some of you will be watching me on video….some of you might be doing both! The exiles didn’t have that luxury.

But the invitation is the same. Whether to the exiles in Isaiah’s time or to the church on the 12th July 2020 – God’s invitation is the same – “Come”. Whether your church has or will make the decision to open in the coming weeks or whether it decides to remain closed. God’s invitation is the same – **“Come”.**

Not only are they to come to Him from exile but they are to come and **“drink”** and come and **“eat”**.

There is also something of the senses in this reading as well!

God, through the prophet Isaiah, also says, **“listen”** (Isaiah 55:2 – NIV)

*For the last 2 or 3 Sundays I have had a blocked left ear! My hearing has been limited. That has had its frustrations in not always hearing what someone is saying…but also its advantages in not listening and having a good excuse!!! (I hope Ruth, my wife, missed that bit else I am in trouble!!)*

But we can sometimes be like that with/in our spiritual lives too. Do we sometimes “play deaf” with God? I recall in my call to ministry so many of us candidating for the ministry had similar journeys. Several of us had felt the call and battled with it…it is not that we weren’t listening but that we wanted to be sure we had heard correctly! Yet, some colleagues felt they had ignored the call when it originally came.

I recall one colleague once telling me that he regretted ignoring his call to ministry when it first came. And it was years later when he responded to the call of God on his life.

The other sense that Isaiah refers to it “seeing” (Isaiah 55:4 - NIV)

*Have you ever had that experience of trying to point something out to someone…it may be a bird in a tree or something in the water in a lake or the sea. You can see it as clear as day and then person you are trying to show just cannot see it despite trying!*

In a confident prayer in Psalm 27 David says, **“I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”** (Psalm 27:13 – NIV)

Friends we have to have faith and trust that God is in control. That we must respond to God’s goodness by ‘coming’ to Him, ‘looking’ for Him, and ‘listening’ to Him.

**Time of reflection/prayer**

*I want to invite you to take a few moments of reflection. You may feel as though you have strayed from God - if that is you then take this time to return to Him.*

*You may be someone who feels they are not listening to God about something in your life – if that is you then take this time to pray that God would help you hear.*

*You may be someone who feels that you can’t see God working in your life – pray that God would reveal Himself to you in power.*

**Song/hymn: Dear Lord and Father of mankind**

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| --- | --- |
| 1.. Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  forgive our foolish ways;  re-clothe us in our rightful mind;  in purer lives Thy service find,  in deeper reverence, praise. | 2.. In simple trust like theirs who heard,  beside the Syrian sea,  the gracious calling of the Lord,  let us, like them, without a word  rise up and follow thee. |
| 3.. O Sabbath rest by Galilee!  O calm of hills above,  where Jesus knelt to share with Thee  the silence of eternity,  interpreted by love. | 4.. With that deep hush subduing all  our words and works that drown  the tender whisper of Thy call,  as noiseless let Thy blessing fall  as fell Thy manna down. |
| 5.. Drop Thy still dews of quietness,  till all our strivings cease;  take from our souls  the strain and stress,  and let our ordered lives confess  the beauty of Thy peace. | 6.. Breathe through the heats of our desire  Thy coolness and Thy balm;  let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  speak through the earthquake,  wind and fire,  O still small voice of calm. |
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**Bible Reading part 2: Isaiah 55:8-13**

**8**‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
    neither are your ways my ways,’  
declares the Lord.  
**9**‘As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
    so are my ways higher than your ways  
    and my thoughts than your thoughts.  
**10**As the rain and the snow  
    come down from heaven,  
and do not return to it  
    without watering the earth  
and making it bud and flourish,  
    so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,  
**11**so is my word that goes out from my mouth:  
    it will not return to me empty,  
but will accomplish what I desire  
    and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.  
**12**You will go out in joy  
    and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and hills  
    will burst into song before you,  
and all the trees of the field  
    will clap their hands.  
**13**Instead of the thorn-bush will grow the juniper,  
    and instead of briers the myrtle will grow.  
This will be for the Lord’s renown,  
    for an everlasting sign,  
    that will endure for ever.’

*May God help us, by the Holy Spirit, to understand His Word.*

**Reflecting together part 2 – “Growing in God”**

*In recent weeks/months we have enjoyed some of the nicest weather I can ever remember having in the UK. We have watered our garden regularly in that time as rain was so scarce for a time. I have also been watering some of the plants in the Bamford Chapel and Norden URC grounds too.*

*It was a few days into the hot weather when I suddenly thought the Chapel flowers would need doing! So I went out with hosepipe (and watering can when our hose pipe wouldn’t reach any further) and I watered. Some of the plants looks like they might have already died! But I watered them anyway. And I was thankful and amazed at how they were revived by the water they received.*

I thought about that when I read Isaiah 55:10 (NIV) **“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth, and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater.”**

Plants etc. need water to grow. They need the sunlight to grow. I am always amazed how quickly our grass grows when it has rain and sunlight on it!

In our spiritual lives we need to be watered as well. We need to be fed. That is why Church is so important. That is why Bible studies/homegroups/study groups are so important as together we learn more about God’s Word to us in the Bible.

And God, through Isaiah, says some powerful words: following on from verse 10 above, God says, **“…so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”** (Isaiah 55:11)

In the context of this passage from Isaiah I wonder if the “word” spoken of is the invitation to “come” (as we reflected on in part 1) to come to God and receive from Him as we see Him and listen to Him!

As we come and eat and drink of His spiritual sustenance in His Word and in, of course, the sacrament of Holy Communion when we share together (as we did last week) in the bread and wine of sacrifice and new life.

I want to end this short reflection with a question for us all (myself included):

***Q: What Word is God speaking to us and how are we going to respond?***

**Time of reflection/prayer**

Image(s) and music with the question above on the screen for people to reflect upon

**Song/hymn: The Lord’s my Shepherd**

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| 1.. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.  He makes me lie in pastures green.  He leads me by the still, still waters,  His goodness restores my soul. | Chorus: *And I will trust in You alone,*  *and I will trust in You alone,*  *for Your endless mercy follows me,*  *Your goodness will lead me home.* |
| 2.. He guides my ways in righteousness,  and He anoints my head with oil,  and my cup it overflows with joy,  I feast on His pure delights. | Chorus: *And I will trust in You alone,*  *and I will trust in You alone,*  *for Your endless mercy follows me,*  *Your goodness will lead me home.* |
| 3.. And though I walk the darkest path,  I will not fear the evil one,  for You are with me,  and Your rod and staff  are the comfort I need to know. | Chorus: *And I will trust in You alone,*  *and I will trust in You alone,*  *for Your endless mercy follows me,*  *Your goodness will lead me home.* |
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**Prayers of intercession**

Loving Father, thank you that you are great and abundant in power, your understanding is beyond measure.

You have promised that you will remain with us and invite us to stay rooted in you.

We pray for communities, friends and families who struggle to find meaningful purpose in life.

We pray for those people who are struggling to make ends meet through difficult economic times.

May you grant them peace and reassurance.

We pray for those who do not have their centre of gravity within you, and may have stretched themselves too far.

Call them into relationship with you.

We pray for communities who are facing local lockdowns, and national leaders working to find ways forward for our country.

Grant them your counsel and wisdom.

We continue to pray for our own churches within this Missional Partnership.

May you grant wisdom as we consider how and when to open up for public gatherings.

Protect your church, Lord, from the attacks of the enemy.

Root out the sin that causes conflict that can harm your church.

Fill your people with love and humility.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

**Closing Song/hymn: How deep the Father’s love for us**

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| 1.. How deep the Father's love for us,  how vast beyond all measure,  that He should give His only Son  to make a wretch His treasure.  How great the pain of searing loss -  the Father turns His face away,  as wounds which mar the chosen one  bring many sons to glory. | 2.. Behold the man upon a cross,  my sin upon his shoulders;  ashamed I hear my mocking voice  call out among the scoffers.  It was my sin that held Him there  until it was accomplished;  His dying breath has brought me life -  I know that it is finished. |
| 3.. I will not boast in anything,  no gifts, no power, no wisdom;  but I will boast in Jesus Christ,  His death and resurrection.  Why should I gain from His reward?  I cannot give an answer,  but this I know with all my heart,  His wounds have paid my ransom. | Stuart Townend  ©1995 Thankyou Music  ccli 169737  Streaming Licence 595811 |

**Closing prayer of blessing for the week ahead**

Having met with God in worship, may we continue to be in His presence.

May God the Father bless us and keep us close to Himself.   
May God the Son be our Saviour and Lord.

May God the Holy Spirit be our guide today and every day.

Amen.