

Worship for Sunday 17th October 2021 (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Good morning and welcome. My name is Malcolm Aldridge and I am from Henley in Arden. As well as worshipping and praising our wonderful creator God we shall be listening to Rev. Richard White our preacher for today. Richard will be talking to us about the impact of climate change and in particular the importance of our own personal actions, choices and responsibilities.

As ever we give thanks for the efforts of the whole team who contribute so much to ensure these services are produced every week.

To open our service this morning let us join together in singing Stf.545 'Be thou my vision'

StF 545 Be thou my vision

**1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
 be all else but naught to me, save that
 thou art ;
 be thou my best thought in the day and
 the night,
 both waking and sleeping, thy presence my
 light.**

**2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true
 word,
 be thou ever with me, and I with thee,
 Lord ;
 be thou my great Father, thy child let me
 be ;
 be thou in me dwelling, and I one with
 thee.**

**3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the
 fight ;
 be thou my whole armour, be thou my
 true might ;
 be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my
 strong tower :
 O raise thou me heavenward, great Power
 of my power.**

**4 Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty
 praise :**

**be thou mine inheritance now and
 always ;
 be thou and thou only the first in my
 heart :
 O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou
 art.**

**5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright
 Sun,
 O grant me its joys after victory is won ;
 Great Heart of my own heart, whatever
 befall,
 still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.**

Irish, 8th century

translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)

versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860–1935) (alt.)

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Our 'Call to Worship' this morning is based upon words taken from Psalm 104. These words are encapsulated in the first 18 verses of no 824 in Singing the faith. These will now be read by Rachel Knight from Stockton who will allow time for us to join in the responses which are shown in bold.

StF 824

Psalm 104 v1-18

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul.
**O Lord my God, how excellent is
 your greatness!**
- 2 You are clothed with majesty and
 honour,
 wrapped in light as in a garment.
- 3 **You spread out the heavens like a
 curtain**

and lay the beams of your dwelling place in the waters above.

4 You make the clouds your chariot and ride on the wings of the wind.

5 **You make the winds your messengers and flames of fire your servants.**

6 You laid the foundations of the earth, that it never should move at any time.

7 **You covered it with the deep like a garment; the waters stood high above the hills.**

8 At your rebuke they fled; at the voice of your thunder they hastened away.

9 **They rose up to the hills and flowed down to the valleys beneath, to the place which you had appointed for them.**

10 You have set them their bounds that they should not pass, nor turn again to cover the earth.

11 **You send the springs into the brooks, which run among the hills.**

12 They give drink to every beast of the field, and the wild asses quench their thirst.

13 **Beside them the birds of the air make their nests and sing among the branches.**

14 You water the hills from your dwelling on high; the earth is filled with the fruit of your works.

15 **You make grass to grow for the cattle and plants to meet our needs,**

16 Bringing forth food from the earth and wine to gladden our hearts,

17 **Oil to give us a cheerful countenance and bread to strengthen our hearts.**

18 O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

From *Common Worship*

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Prayer of approach

Loving God we open our hands, our hearts and our minds to your word; we ask you to cleanse our thoughts and inspire us in our worship as we absorb the power and the glory of your Holy Spirit. We offer ourselves as your loving servants ready to do your will. **Amen**

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Adoration

Wondrous Lord we are spellbound in awe and amazement at the finery and beauty of the universe and dwelling place that you created for us out of your love for mankind. We humbly accept our special responsibilities in looking after and sustaining your unique creation and give thanks for the privileges that you have granted us entirely through your grace. We give thanks for the seasons of the year soon to be reflected in autumnal beauty as the annual cycle of nature's renewal runs its course according to your will.

This morning we offer ourselves to you in worship, praise and thanksgiving in response to your incomparable love for us. **Amen**

Prayer of confession

We pray together 'Dear Lord, you commanded that we love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, our minds and our souls and with all of our might; and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Forgive us Lord when we have not loved you as we know that we should especially when we have taken your creation for granted and plundered its riches without thought.

Forgive us when we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; when we have failed to recognise all mankind as our neighbours and have not shared our God given good fortune in equal measure with them; when we have said the right thing and yet done the wrong thing in your eyes; when we have strayed away from the footsteps of Jesus.'

Pause to reflect.....

As we reflect upon our confession let us take comfort that by the grace and mercy of God and through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross

'Our sins are forgiven'.

Our second hymn this morning reminds us of the forgiving grace of our Lord.

STF 424 God forgave my sin in Jesus' name

- 1 God forgave my sin in Jesus' name ;
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his love as he told me to.
He said :
*'Freely, freely you have received,
freely, freely give ;
go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'***

- 2 All power is given in Jesus' name
in earth and heaven in Jesus' name ;
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.
*Refrain***

Carol Owens (b. 1931)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Old Testament Reading

Job 38:1-7,34-38 (NRSV)

The LORD Answers Job

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:

'Who is this that darkens counsel by words

without knowledge?

Gird up your loins like a man,

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone

when the morning stars sang together

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

'Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,

so that a flood of waters may cover you?

Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go

and say to you, "Here we are"?

Who has put wisdom in the inward parts,

or given understanding to the mind?

Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?

Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass

and the clods cling together?

Gospel

Mark 10:35-45 (NRSV)

The Request of James and John

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them,

'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.'

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

SERMON

Both Old Testament passages you just heard relate to the world that our Lord created. There are other references scattered through the Bible but none so well known as Genesis with the iconic "In the beginning, God..." Followed by the Garden of Eden where His intentions are shown to be fundamentally flawed! God holds Adam to account for eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of Knowledge. Typical of human behaviour Adam passed the blame to Eve who passed the blame to the snake who didn't have a leg to stand on! I am not going to get into the detail of the Genesis accounts of creation in this message beyond the writer's intention of reminding the reader that it was God who created the world and passed responsibility for its welfare to human kind. We avoid that responsibility at humanity's peril. During October there will be a lot of focus on the extent of climate change and what humans can do to mitigate that damage. COP26 opens on 31st October hosted by the UK and I ask your prayers for this vital conference. Hopefully binding international commitments

will be made and kept. As rural chaplain I see for myself and hear from others the effects of climate change and the pace of it.

This summer my brother and I went back to the farm where we grew up having not been there since I was 11 years old. We left when my parents separated, and the farm had to be sold. In subsequent years the farm was sold again in two halves, one part bought by a local farmer who had adjacent fields. The half with house and buildings went to a wealthy business person who bought neighbouring land to add to the holding. Fifty years later the contrast between the two halves is significant. The local farmer ripped out the hedges adding all four arable fields to the one he already owned to make one big field which has been cropped ever since. The house and farm buildings were demolished to be replaced by a mansion sized house and gardens with a landing strip for a private plane. Neither house or buildings can be seen from the road because he has planted trees and hedges all round it and covered the awkward shaped corners and hard to farm banks with trees and shrubs. My late father and grandfather would have been delighted to see all the planting and restored habitat as both loved trees and birds and all native species but never had the money to invest in such schemes. But they did what they could in their generation with a mix of permanent pasture and crop rotation in the cereal fields. If dad had to cut down a tree he planted two...

On Tuesday morning I will be at Stratford livestock market mixing and mingling with farmers and others involved in rural life. Some are motivated to grow a business and accumulate wealth for their own and their families pleasure caring little for their carbon footprint but they are in the minority. Most have a sense of responsibility to pass on the land to the next generation in as good or better condition than they received it. Most

have a deep sense of duty to grow food for the nation doing so responsibly and gladly accept grants to leave margins round arable fields for wildlife and other environmental schemes. Most care well for their livestock knowing that a well cared for animal will be more productive whether that be meat, milk or eggs. A sheep farmer was telling me how one of his sheep had been badly savaged by a walker's dog. He took it to the vet for surgery and stitching and nursed it back to health. I observed that the vet's bill must have been much more than the ewe was worth. "Well, yes" he said "but that's not the point is it?" That might not be an attitude that the public assume a man with literally 1,000 sheep would have. He took time away from the 999 to care for the one injured one. Most arable farmers regularly have soil analysed to check for a healthy level of micro organisms and tiny creatures that never see the light of day as well as other organic matter that maintains a quality environment for plant growth. The decline in flying insects in recent decades is noted with concern by almost all in rural communities. My impression is that most farmers will embrace the changes needed to reduce their carbon footprint and loss of bio-diversity. What they don't like is being asked to compensate for damage being done by other industries.

This online service is not the time and place for a lecture on ecology – and I'm not sufficiently qualified if it was! However, it is my responsibility as a preacher to relate the ancient texts to the modern world to give guidance on human behaviour starting with us. Fred Pratt Green wrote in a harvest hymn "God in his love for us lent us this planet, gave it a purpose in time and in space, small as a spark from the fire of creation, cradle of life and the home of our race" (StF 727). We must not try and pass the buck to others when things go wrong. Some years ago my brother in law, at the time of 'mad cow disease' redefined B.S.E. as "Blame Someone

Else" when things go wrong! As individual people in South Warwickshire we cannot do a great deal about international trade and the massive carbon footprint of China and USA (no. 1 and no 2 in world pollution) beyond praying for the conference and writing to our MP. But local action is possible and called for, after all it was the local Parish Council that prevented our application to build a carbon negative bungalow on our own land and I know some other P.C.'s who almost always oppose solar panels, wild flower patches, wind turbines and such like.

What can you or I do about climate change? If the big polluting nations won't play ball then what we do might feel like a waste of time and effort but let's hope and pray that our tiny contributions as local Christians will show willing and encourage others by example. I am not diminishing the complexity of the problem, far from it, I get annoyed by pressure groups and social media campaigns that do that. The countryside around us that has been so therapeutic during the lockdowns is a complex interdependent system. Changing one part will always have a knock on effect elsewhere. Many centuries of farming have created a lot of what we look at for good and for ill. Watching TV programs recently about Devon and Cornwall I was noting how many beautiful views would be lost if sheep or ponies or cattle were taken out of it and the moors left to 'rewild'. The result would be miles of walking along paths seeing no further than the trees and undergrowth surrounding you. Powerful campaign groups exaggerate the negative impact of farming – livestock and arable- while diminishing the positive contribution made and to be made by responsible farmers. Prime farmland is bought and reforested or rewilded by well-meaning and influential wealthy celebrities who, it seems to me, don't realise that the food previously produced from those fields is replaced by imported goods. In recent decades UK food

imports have risen dramatically while English farmed land decreases by more than one percent per year. We now only grow 55% of what we consume... Its my belief that heavy polluting industries should not be allowed to offset their carbon footprint by taking prime farm land out of food production to plant trees etc.

How should we respond? Firstly by examining our lifestyle choices and by looking at what we buy, where it has come from and its carbon footprint. I was appalled when I read the ingredients list of meat free 'bacon'. Palm oil, olive oil, soya beans and many chemicals that I haven't heard of. Yet some of these products are promoted as a healthy option. I read the label on plant based 'milk' and again find oils and ingredients from several continents with added synthetically made vitamins. It takes 17 times more water to produce a litre of almond milk than cow's milk. How many forests have been cut down to be replaced with palm oil plantations? Radio 4 aired a program which asked the question 'just how healthy are heavily processed plant based foods? (Inside Health 28/09/21). Vegans and vegetarians are right to tell us that livestock farming contributes to green house gases and pollution and the farming industry is addressing this. They are also right to say that meat consumption is a factor in exacerbating food poverty in parts of the world and obesity in others. But if everyone went 'meat and dairy free' it would change our countryside dramatically and impact complex ecosystems. As a theologian I believe that "God lent us this planet" and we must look after it but the causes of climate change and the solutions are complex. We must challenge all who promote simple solutions.

My wife and I are trying to do our bit. We eat vegetarian two days a week but not with manufactured meat replacements. We do still run two cars but they are not heavy

drinkers! On long runs I set the cruise control to 62mph, fast enough to just keep ahead of the heavy's but much lower fuel consumption/pollution. (We live in a village with limited public transport) We shop locally only going to town to fill the larder and freezer every three weeks or so. We have a few hens who recycle into eggs what little food waste we have. We collect rainwater for garden and pot watering, car washing etc. and use bath water to flush the toilet. We try and only buy imported food if, like rice or tea for example, it can't be grown here. (One exception is a preference for cane sugar because some low income countries depend on this for their economy whereas fields used for sugar beet in England could grow other food crops). And lots of other small things that some might dismiss as token gestures but we think are worth doing and honour our creator God. I hope you can think of lots more ideas.

I think it was OXFAM who said years ago "Live simply that others might simply live". Along with our own lifestyle changes pray for COP26 and for our government who, I believe, need to do much more to improve home insulation and green energy production without reducing farmed land.

*"The Lord made grass to grow for the cattle and plants to meet our needs,
Bringing forth food from the earth and wine to gladden our hearts,
Oil to give us a cheerful countenance and bread to strengthen our hearts". Psalm 104 14-15*

StF 272 From heaven you came

- 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.
*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.***

- 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)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of intercession

Dear Lord grant love, wisdom and generosity of spirit to all leaders, governments and authorities that they may nurture the natural resources that you have given us; respect all other nations and peoples as equal to their own in all respects and share their nation's wealth and resource for the benefit of all mankind. We pray especially for all parties involved in the forthcoming climate change conference that their whole beings may be overwhelmingly infused with your Holy Spirit helping them to understand that love and care will always triumph over aggression and greed.

Lord in your mercy.....

Hear our prayers.

We pray Lord for the poorer and underdeveloped nations who are already suffering the effects of climate change that they may be cherished and supported compassionately by the wealthier industrialised nations who have already claimed the fruits of open access to your creation.

Loving God we recognize too our personal responsibilities for climate change; grant us wisdom to evaluate and change our behaviour and values where we can contribute to the

restoration of the wonderful and perfect universe that you gave to mankind.

Lord in your mercy.....

Hear our prayers.

Heavenly Father we give thanks for the wonderful medicines and care that we have enjoyed in our own country in mitigation of the effects of the Covid virus but we remember those who still are suffering from life changing ill effects and the loss of loved ones. Through your spirit of compassion Lord grant them relief from their illness and sad losses so that they may be restored to a happy and healthy life.

We pray for those sufferers too in countries far less equipped to deal with the pandemic that they may receive generous and compassionate support from other nations.

Lord in your mercy.....

Hear our prayers.

Dear Lord we enjoy a life of freedom from war and oppression but we remember those who live every day in poverty and fear; we pray for all the ordinary peoples caught up such situations with no proper home and little access to food, water or medicine. Inspire us Lord with love and generosity to support them in whatever way we can.

Lord in your mercy.....

Hear our prayers.

Finally Lord we pray for ourselves, our families and friends. Grant us peace and contentment in our lives but inspire us to demonstrate our love and worship of our Lord Jesus Christ in the hope that many around will join us in living out the Gospel of Christ.

Lord in your mercy.....

Hear our prayers.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

We say 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 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 forever
Amen**

**Our Father who art in heaven
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the
glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen**

The Offering & prayer

Gracious Lord accept the material gifts that we
give you and with them our lives to be used in
the service of Jesus Christ.

Amen

StF 446 I will offer up my life

**1 I will offer up my life
in spirit and truth,
pouring out the oil of love
as my worship to you.
In surrender I must give my every part ;
Lord, receive the sacrifice
of a broken heart.**

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
to so faithful a friend, to so loving a*

King ?

Saviour, what can be said, what can be

sung

*as a praise of your name
for the things you have done ?*

O, my words could not tell, not even in

part,

*of the debt of love that is owed by this
thankful heart.*

**2 You deserve my every breath
for you've paid the great cost ;
giving up your life to death,
even death on a cross.
You took all my shame away,
there defeated my sin,
opened up the gates of heaven,
and have beckoned me in.**

Matt Redman (b. 1974)

THE DISMISSAL

Let us join together now in saying the words of
the grace.

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the
love of God and the fellowship of the Holy
Spirit, be with us all evermore. AMEN**

And now our closing hymn

StF 345 And can it be

**1 And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood ?
Died he for me, who caused his pain ?
For me, who him to death pursued ?
Amazing love ! How can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me ?**

**2 'Tis mystery all : the Immortal dies !
Who can explore his strange design ?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine.**

'Tis mercy all ! Let earth adore,
let angel minds enquire no more.

- 3 He left his Father's throne above —
so free, so infinite his grace —
emptied himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free ;
for, O my God, it found out me !
- 4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
fast bound in sin and nature's night ;
thine eye diffused a quickening ray —
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
my chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
- 5 No condemnation now I dread ;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine !
Alive in him, my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach the eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ, my
own.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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StF 424 God forgave my sin in Jesus' name

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StF 272 From Heaven you came

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Stf 446 I will offer up my life

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StF 824 Psalm 104

From Common Worship

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StF 545 Be thou my vision

Irish, 8th century

translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)

versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860–1935) (*alt.*)

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StF 345 And can it be

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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NRSV

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