

Worship for 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome to each one of you joining us for this service.

How good it is to praise and worship our God together.

We are grateful and give thanks to all those taking part, those bringing our Scripture readings, those with the technology and knowhow to bring it to our screens and to Rev. Audrey Simpson for the sermon.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Happy are those who walk with God, their delight is in the Lord. Blessed are those who trust in God, they are like trees planted by water. The Lord knows the way of the righteous and gives to all according to their ways and the fruit of their doings. Let us worship God who knows us and loves us. We praise and worship God.

We join together as we sing our first hymn 'Lord I come before your throne of grace, I find rest in your presence and fullness of joy.' StF 58

Hymn: StF 58 – Lord I come before your throne of grace

- 1. Lord, I come before your throne of grace;
I find rest in your presence
and fullness of joy.
In worship and wonder
I behold your face,
singing what a faithful God have I.
*What a faithful God have I,
what a faithful God.***

*What a faithful God have I,
faithful in every way.*

- 2. Lord of mercy, you have heard my cry;
through the storm you're the beacon,
my song in the night.**

**In the shelter of your wings,
hear my heart's reply,
singing what a faithful God have I.**

*What a faithful God have I,
what a faithful God.*

*What a faithful God have I,
faithful in every way.*

- 3. Lord all sovereign, granting peace from
heaven,
let me comfort those who suffer
with the comfort you have given.**

**I will tell of your great love for as long as I
live,
singing what a faithful God have I.**

*What a faithful God have I,
what a faithful God.*

*What a faithful God have I,
faithful in every way.*

Robert Critchley (b. 1959) and Dawn Critchley (b. 1965)

Prayer of adoration

Father we worship and adore you for the light
you bring to this rather dreary time of the year
when we long for spring.

Thank you for the blessing of every shoot and
bud,

the reminders of your presence and your ever
circling, ever giving love.

For you are our creator God the source of all life

and we praise you for the promise of life eternal.
Gracious God we celebrate our lives in you,
rooted and grounded in your love,
the love we see in Jesus who lived among us
knowing our humanity in its fullness.
Loving God we worship you in the power of the
Spirit filling us with your love and showering us
with many blessings,
be with us now as we worship you.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Merciful God, when we are enticed by the ways
of the world, and forgetting you,
forgive us.

When we fail to keep our roots in your life giving
water, and give in to negativity,
forgive us

When our trust in your grace and love is lacking,
and prevents us from serving you,
forgive us.

When we turn away from your promise of
eternal life,
forgive us.

Generous God, you know our hearts better than
we know ourselves.
You deal with us justly.
Grant us your forgiveness and by the power of
your Spirit,
strengthen and empower us to follow your way.
Amen.

Our next hymn is 'Blest are the pure in heart, for
they shall see our God.' Number 244 in StF

Hymn: StF 244 – Blest are the pure in heart

**1. Blest are the pure in heart,
for they shall see our God:
the secret of the Lord is theirs;
their soul is Christ's abode.**

**2. The Lord, who left the heavens
our life and peace to bring,
to dwell on earth in lowliness,
our pattern and our King.**

**3. Still to the lowly soul
he does himself impart,
and for his dwelling and his throne
chooses the pure in heart.**

**4. Lord, we your presence seek,
a vision of your face;
give us a pure and lowly heart,
a temple of your grace.**

vv. 1, 3 John Keble (1792–1866)

vv. 2, 4 William John Hall

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Jeremiah 17:5-10 (NIVUK)

⁵ This is what the Lord says:

'Cursed is the one who trusts in man,
who draws strength from mere flesh
and whose heart turns away from the Lord.

⁶ That person will be like a bush in the
wastelands;

they will not see prosperity when it comes.
They will dwell in the parched places of the
desert,
in a salt land where no one lives.

⁷ 'But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

⁸ They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.'

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?

¹⁰ 'I the Lord search the heart
and examine the mind,
to reward each person according to their
conduct,
according to what their deeds deserve.'

Psalms 1 (NIVUK)

¹ Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of
water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither –
whatever they do prospers.
⁴ Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the
judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶ For the Lord watches over the way of the
righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20 (NIVUK)

The resurrection of the dead

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised
from the dead, how can some of you say that
there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is
no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ
has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been
raised, our preaching is useless and so is your
faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be
false witnesses about God, for we have testified
about God that he raised Christ from the dead.
But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are
not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised,
then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ

has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are
still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have
fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this
life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people
most to be pitied.

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the
dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen
asleep.

Luke 6:17-26 (NIVUK)

Blessings and woes

¹⁷ He went down with them and stood on a level
place. A large crowd of his disciples was there
and a great number of people from all over
Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal
region around Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who had come
to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.
Those troubled by impure spirits were cured,
¹⁹ and the people all tried to touch him, because
power was coming from him and healing them
all.

²⁰ Looking at his disciples, he said:

'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²² Blessed are you when people hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil,
because of the Son of Man.

²³ 'Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because
great is your reward in heaven. For that is how
their ancestors treated the prophets.

²⁴ 'But woe to you who are rich,
for you have already received your comfort.

²⁵ Woe to you who are well fed now,
for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

Sermon

Today on Racial Justice Sunday our gospel retells part of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain. Jesus comes down from the mountain to a level place. On the level he looks people in the eye and tells them truths that stir hope in some and put the fear of God in others. He tells them straight that:

- their society is not as God desires – it is out of kilter
- some are in deep need while others, who could do something to level things up, look only to themselves and their interests – woe belongs to them
- God's bias is towards those in need – they will be blessed

With it being Racial Justice Sunday and our reading coming from Luke's beatitudes I'd like to read to you a few paragraphs from a piece written by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 2013 which recount two well-known stories from his life.

'One of the earliest and most painful memories of my childhood is accompanying my father, a school principal, to the shop – I think it was in Ventersdorp – and witnessing him being humiliated by a young white shop assistant... being addressed, "Ja, boy?" by one much younger than himself, and being forced to swallow his pride.

But I believe the most defining moment of my life occurred when I was about nine years old, outside the Blind Institute in Roodepoort where my mother was a domestic worker. We were standing on the stoep when this tall white man in a black cassock, and a hat, swept by. I did not

know that it was Trevor Huddleston. He doffed his hat in greeting my mother.

I was relatively stunned at the time, but only later came to realise the extent to which it had blown my mind that a white man would doff his hat to my mother. It was something I could never have imagined. The impossible was possible.

I subsequently discovered that this was quite consistent with Trevor Huddleston's theology: that every person is of significance, of infinite value, because they are created in the image of God.' (taken from 'The man who changed my life' by Desmond Tutu 17th June 2013).

The story about the humiliation of Desmond Tutu's father by a younger man bears testimony to the realities of the racial and economic divisions in their society. A society which was out of kilter by God's standards. The story about the dignity afforded to Mrs Aletta Tutu by Trevor Huddleston so inspired the young Desmond that hope for a more just and equitable society took seed in him and he became one of the great harbingers and enablers of change towards a better society in his country. For his part Trevor Huddleston inspired hope in many of his pupils not only through his teaching but by his attitude towards people – he treated everyone as a valued human being made in God's image. He became one of the founder members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, in which he was appointed vice-president 1961 – 1981 and then served as president from 1981 to 1994 and remained a great support to the movement for change throughout his life. These two people from different cultures, with different ethnicities, one from a wealthy family the other from a poor family, both embodied the beatitudes. They recognised that:

- their society was not as God desires – it was out of kilter.
- Whilst some were in deep need others looked only to themselves – the status quo benefitted them – woe to them
- God’s bias was indeed towards those in need – their hope led them to action

Listen to Jesus’ teaching as recorded in Luke 6. How do you think our society measures up? Where do you find yourself in the reading? Maybe you are energised by hope, working and praying for a more level and just society. Maybe you are happy with the status quo.

I finish with the words of a hymn I came across last week. Like the beatitudes it holds in vision a better society. It prays that we may never be content with the status quo until the dream becomes the reality.

“I have a dream”, a man once said,
 “where all is perfect peace;
 where men and women, black and white,
 stand hand in hand, and all unite
 in freedom and in love.”

But in this world of bitter strife
 the dream can often fade;
 reality seems dark as night,
 we catch but glimpses of the light
 Christ sheds on humankind.

Fierce persecution, war, and hate
 are raging everywhere;
 God calls us now to pay the price
 through struggles and through sacrifice
 of standing for the right.

So dream the dreams and sing the songs,
 but never be content:
 for thoughts and words don’t ease the pain:

unless there’s action, all is vain;
 faith proves itself in deeds.

Lord, give us vision, make us strong,
 help us to do your will;
 don’t let us rest until we see
 your love throughout humanity
 uniting us in peace.

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Hymn: StF 713 – Show me how to stand for justice

- 1. Show me how to stand for justice:
 how to work for what is right,
 how to challenge false assumptions,
 how to walk within the light.
 May I learn to share more freely
 in a world so full of greed,
 showing your immense compassion
 by the life I choose to lead.**
- 2. Teach my heart to treasure mercy,
 whether given or received —
 for my need has not diminished
 since the day I first believed:
 let me seek no satisfaction
 boasting of what I have done,
 but rejoice that I am pardoned
 and accepted in your Son.**
- 3. Gladly I embrace a lifestyle
 modelled on your living word,
 in humility submitting
 to the truth which I have heard.
 Make me conscious of your presence
 every day in all I do:
 by your Spirit's gracious prompting
 may I learn to walk with you.**

Martin Leckebusch (b. 1962)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

Lord, we thank and praise you for all the many blessings in our lives.

For food and shelter, for family and friends, for the health we have, and the many comforts we take for granted.

Thank you also for your plain speaking, these blessings are not due to anything we have done, just as the problems of many – of those who hunger, are homeless and sick – are also undeserved.

So Lord in giving our heartfelt thanks, we ask that we might be a blessing to those whom the worldly-wise often curse.

Amen.

Before our prayers of intercession we will sing 518 in StF 'Father hear the prayer we offer.'

Hymn: StF 518 – Father hear the prayer we offer

- 1. Father, hear the prayer we offer:
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.**
- 2. Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.**
- 3. Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would strike the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.**
- 4. Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be there at our side.**

Love Maria Willis (1824–1908)

Prayers of intercession

Gracious God, weary of our own efforts to change ourselves or the world, we come to you in prayer

We hold before you all those for whom we pray this day...

All those who we love and see no more...

All those who have no knowledge of your love for them

And we offer our prayers as a sign of our weakness and of your strength.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought order out of chaos at creation:

Speak again to all those who feel in danger today – in physical danger, emotional danger, economic danger – and send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought freedom out of slavery at the Exodus: Show your power today on behalf of all who are oppressed or abused; victims of human trafficking and domestic violence – send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought community out of tribalism in the Promised Land:

Act today where nations are fractured, where sectarianism causes division, where neighbours cannot accept difference – send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought healing out of hopelessness through the life of Jesus:

Come amongst us again to show us the values of the Kingdom, the upside-down nature of compassion,

the power of love
– send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought life out of death at Calvary:
Pour into our hearts the love which goes the extra mile,
the sacrifice which puts others before ourselves,
the grace which attracts others to you
– send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

We ask all our prayers in the powerful name of Jesus, the Word made flesh and in the power of the gentle, energising Spirit. Thanks be to God.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

We will join together as we say The Lord's Prayer.

**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

Living God, we praise you for all you have done in our lives,
for the rich blessings you have bestowed on us.
We offer you these gifts as our appreciation of your generosity to us.
Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Our final hymn is 'May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day.' StF 504

Hymn: StF 504 – May the mind of Christ my Saviour

- 1. May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day, by his love and power controlling all I do or say.**
- 2. May the word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour, so that all may see I triumph only through his power.**
- 3. May the peace of God my Father rule my life in everything, that I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.**
- 4. May the love of Jesus fill me, as the waters fill the sea; him exalting, self forgetting — this is victory.**
- 5. May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe, looking only unto Jesus as I onward go.**

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859–1928)

Prayer & blessing

Lord as we step into this week help us to not only recognise how blessed we are but also show us ways that your blessing can overflow to others through us.

May the peace of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and those you love now and always.
Amen.

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Hymn: StF 713 – Show me how to stand for justice

Martin Leckebusch (*b.* 1962)

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StF 58 – Lord I come before your throne of grace

Robert Critchley (*b.* 1959) and Dawn Critchley (*b.* 1965)

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StF 244 – Blest are the pure in heart

vv. 1, 3 John Keble (1792–1866)

vv. 2, 4 William John Hall

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StF 518 – Father hear the prayer we offer

Love Maria Willis (1824–1908)

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StF 504 – May the mind of Christ my Saviour

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859–1928)

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Bible Verses

NIV

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