

Worship for 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome: to worship for Sunday 4th July. This week's service is led by Sue Gallacher and the preacher is Margaret Clarke. Thanks to Candy Evans and Margaret Bull for the readings. Also thanks to the Circuit office and those who put the online service together.

Welcome to all this week whether near or far, we all come, connecting together in this act of worship. Thanks to all involved in putting this service together and especially Margaret Clarke for the sermon, who has stepped in at the last minute.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Jesus calls us here to meet him. We have been richly blessed and we come to worship the living God and be filled again with your Holy Spirit.

'Come now is the time to worship' says the first words of the first **Song**. It also says 'come just as you are' and that is how God wants and accepts us.

HYMN Stf 24 Come now is the time

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue
will confess you are God,
one day every knee will bow.

Still, the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship ...

Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

Opening Prayers

Loving God, all-sufficient one,

We acknowledge your presence and we worship you.

We adore you, Lord of all.

We worship you, Lord Jesus Christ, holy and anointed one.

You laid your life down that we might live.

We adore you, Lord of all.

We welcome your authority and influence in our lives, Holy Spirit.

You intercede for us when we have no strength.

You are with us and guide us in our weakness.

We adore you, Lord of all.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are worthy of all our praise.

We adore you, Lord of all.

Amen .

Prayer of confession

Living God, we want to do better, we want to be our best, for you and for the world. Move within us, transform us, change us. Challenge and inspire us, by your Spirit, to fulfil your desires for our lives.

We are sorry for all the times we have turned away from that desire, all the times we have let each other down. Even as we say sorry, we know that you forgive and accept us just as we are. We

see you in the love we wish to reflect into the world – a love that always accepts and hopes for better. May we be reservoirs of that love, overflowing out into a world of need. In Jesus' name. Amen

Let us confirm our forgiveness with the **Song** 'God forgave my sin in Jesus' name'

HYMN 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

1st Reading Ezekiel 2:1-5 (NIVUK)

Ezekiel's Call to Be a Prophet

2 He said to me, "Son of man, ^[a]stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." **2** As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

3 He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. **4** The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' **5** And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious

people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.

Hymns & Psalms 387: Your light, O God, was given to earth (Read Only)

1. Your light O God was given to earth,
The light of truth, your wisdom's flame.
From age to age it grew more clear
And glorious shone when Jesus came.
2. The light of all the world was he;
But men loved darkness more than light;
With evil deeds of pride and hate
They scorned God's love and chose the night.
3. But light, unconquered shone again;
No cross, no tomb its power could bind;
In glory, Love and Life arose
To shine for ever on mankind.
4. Forgive us Lord, if we have spurned
Your truth, your light, your wisdom's way;
And lead our hearts through Christ to find
In love the road to perfect day.

Albert F Bayly (1901 – 1984)

Epistle 2 Corinthians 12:2-10 (NRSVA)

2 I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. **3** And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— **4** was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. **5** On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. **6** But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, **7** even considering the

exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep^[a] me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated.^[b] ⁸ Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, ⁹ but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power^[c] is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Gospel Mark 6:1-13 (NRSVA)

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

6 He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. ² On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary^[a] and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence^[b] at him. ⁴ Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' ⁵ And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief.

The Mission of the Twelve

Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷ He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸ He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹ but to

wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰ He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹ If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' ¹² So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³ They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Sermon

Visions and thorns

These two words seemed to stand out from our readings and form a link between them.

In today's Gospel we find Jesus back in Nazareth where he'd grown up. In the time he'd been away from Nazareth – probably over a year by this time, his ministry had been extraordinary! He been cleansing people who'd been possessed by the most awful evil spirits; healed all sorts of illnesses – even raised a young girl from the dead. By the time we reach Ch 6 he'd attracted a large group of followers from whom he'd selected 12 to be his trusted companions. Then with his new and trusted friends he left the area around Galilee to return for a visit to Nazareth. So the great majority who met him there, certainly saw a man they recognised but when he stood up in the synagogue and addressed them they witnessed something very different - a wisdom and authority they were not expecting.

The person they saw in front of them was Jesus – the ordinary carpenter who'd grown up amongst them. And here he was, taking on the role of a learned professor in front of them all?

Words such as scandalised, indignant, deeply shocked, affronted, spring to mind to describe the reaction of Jesus' former neighbours to his

preaching. They would not, could not accept that this person who'd grown up as one of them could now be someone so different – so much above them.

For him it was like talking to a brick wall! The words, the meaning just wasn't going in. No wonder he wasn't doing any great miracles there. He was only able to help a few who came to him with relatively minor illnesses. (Or perhaps had not known him in the past). His neighbours, even his own family were a hard bunch to deal with. He was astonished but also dismayed. His wonder was as great as his pain. He was already a controversial figure.

And his reaction on the wider scale? He loved them all so much he simply kept on trying until with his death, Resurrection and Ascension, he succeeded once and for all in completing that link, that spiritual link between God his Father, the creator, and his creation on earth. Jesus had that vision – he was that vision in the making – but there would be thorns on the way, symbolised by a crown of thorns.

But then Jesus sent out the disciples to just what he'd been doing – with only mixed success! – But he sent them out in pairs and gave them detailed instructions and his Spirit so that they had every chance of success. They were to go just as they were – no back-up supplies of any kind, no money in their purses – purely in his strength. I believe all those details about no material back-up for the journey are figurative speech for their going in his strength alone – none of their own human self-confidence. They were to be no more than channels of the power & love they'd recently experienced and received from him. They'd seen enough during their time with Jesus to know that it wasn't all plain sailing. They'd seen him tired, worn out, misunderstood and rejected – but they'd also seen his awesome

power and self-giving. They went out perhaps in apprehension (as I do often!) but in his strength and they succeeded. They were his team. And they came back successful.

But what about Ezekiel? We read of his call and of God's warning of the difficulties he would face.

In 597BC King Jehoiachin of Judah had surrendered Jerusalem to the Babylonian army and was taken into exile together with the 'good and great' of the nation of Judah including Ezekiel. Those were difficult times. Some of the exiles longed for their homeland; "By the rivers of Babylon..." Ps 137but others had taken advantage of the relative affluence Babylon offered and they opposed Ezekiel's call, making themselves very much at home in Babylon, embracing the local culture and religions. They were like scorpions, thorns and briars around him. But Ezekiel never gave up and eventually after several visions and directions from God, Ezekiel's final vision was that of the return of the exiles and rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. And so it came to be. In 539BC the Persians under King Cyrus overcame the Babylonians and facilitated the return of the Israelites to their homeland and the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem. For Ezekiel there were visions and thorns

In the epistle we heard St Paul was writing to the Corinthians about 20 or so years after the death and Resurrection of Jesus. As he wrote that 2nd letter to the Corinthians he had already completed 2 missionary journeys and visited almost all the communities for which we have his letters in the NT. And he'd experienced horrendous trials and tribulations physical and emotional in the process. He too had received a vision- on the road to Damascus, and also the one we heard about today, of a life to come, but

in the meantime he was suffering the pains of that persistent thorn – similar to the figurative language that God had used in his call to Ezekiel. Paul’s missionary work was far from easy or comfortable. But it had its rewards: Visions and thorns.

So there we have it. Just part of the timeline of God’s relationship with his people. 600BC to 56 AD. And it’s not difficult to see the similarities with today – perhaps not very evident here, but elsewhere on a scale and of a degree surely similar. Here & now we see little of the actual aggression and antagonism which we know exists elsewhere but we do meet brick walls sometimes. However, we must remember that right at the centre of it all, then and now, lies the death of Jesus, his Resurrection Ascension and return in the living Spirit of the person who, in our Gospel reading had such trouble with his home crowd. But they didn’t know what we know now.

Remember the disciples were told to go with nothing of normal human ‘kit’ or ‘gear’ for a journey as we might call it. They were to go only ‘in the strength of the Lord- even if and when there were thorns, their vision was to be his spirit. That made me feel apprehensive as I began to think of a hymn to end this section of our worship.

“I’ll go in the strength of the Lord in paths he has marked for my feet/ to work he appoints me to do/ to conflicts which faith will require...” Very good tune (Not in StF nor A&M 2013). Awake our souls away our fears, let every trembling thought be gone;

Awake and run the heavenly race and put a cheerful courage on..... ‘thorny road...’

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) based in Isa 40:28-31 – Samson – very appropriate tune adapted from Handel)

God’s Word made the perfect beginning;

Man spoiled the creation by sinning.

We know that the story

Will end in God’s glory.

So let’s live as if our side is winning.

Which leads us to affirm our faith:

We believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life,

The one for whom we exist.

We believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature,

Died for us and rose again.

We believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God

And makes Christ known in the world.

We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen

Vision and thorns, As we look back not just on past year, but on all our past we see good times and bad, with God’s guidance, his hand over us and we can look forward - as on the side that’s winning, we can sing -Through all the changing scenes of life...

The tune is Wiltshire – my home county, where, many years ago, after being away from home for

about 10 years I returned as a newly accredited LP - to find my old Sunday School teacher in the congregation!!

Hymn StF 638 Through all the changing scenes of life

- 1 Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.**
- 2 Of his deliverance I will boast,
till all that are distressed
from my example comfort take,
and charm their griefs to rest.**
- 3 O magnify the Lord with me,
with me exalt his name ;
when in distress to him I called,
he to my rescue came.**
- 4 The hosts of God encamp around
the dwellings of the just ;
deliverance he affords to all
who on his succour trust.**
- 5 O make but trial of his love ;
experience will decide
how blest are they, and only they,
who in his truth confide.**
- 6 Fear him, you saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear ;
make you his service your delight,
your wants shall be his care.**

Nahum Tate (1652–1715) and Nicholas Brady (1659–1726)
Based on Psalm 34

THE RESPONSE

Thanksgiving Prayer

Loving heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come freely and openly to worship you, for you are exalted above all things. Your love and faithfulness surround us and you are always there when we call. We thank you for all the gifts and skills you have given us, that you equip us for the tasks ahead. You entrust your work to us,

that we are your hands, mouth, ears, eyes and feet to spread the good news.

Prayers of Intercession

One God creator of all, who in creation touches the world and through his Son seeks to touch each one of us. Your heart cries out in love for the world you have made. We think of our planet created by you to be our home.

Help us to care for and use its resources wisely.

We think of all the places in the world where people suffer through war, greed and unfair trade.

Help us all to behave more fairly.

We think of those people in any kind of trouble, those who are sick, worried, frail or sad.

We pray that we might be able to help in some way.

Loving creator God thank you for calling us to be your Body the Church in all the world.

Help us to hear this call in a world of need so that we may have eyes to see and hearts to love minds to understand and wills to obey. Come in the power of your Spirit, here, now and everywhere so that your love may be at work with us and that your Kingdom will come in Jesus' name. 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

The Offering & prayer

Offering Prayer

Thank you Lord for all you have given to us and
all we have received. Bless the gifts we bring also
our time and talents. Use them all to further
your Kingdom here on earth. Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

HYMN StF 662 Have you heard God's voice; has
your heart been stirred?

1 **Have you heard God's voice ; has your
heart been stirred ?
Are you still prepared to follow ?
Have you made a choice to remain and
serve, ?
though the way be rough and
narrow ?**

Refrain:

***Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow ?
Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow ?***

2 **Will you use your voice ; will you not sit
down
when the multitudes are silent ?
Will you make a choice to stand your
ground
when the crowds are turning violent ?**

Refrain:

3 **In your city streets will you be God's
heart ?
Will you listen to the voiceless ?
Will you stop and eat, and when
friendships start,
will you share your faith with the
faithless ?**

Refrain:

4 **Will you watch the news with the eyes
of faith
and believe it could be different ?
Will you share your views using words
of grace ?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint ?**

***We will walk the path that will cost us much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.
We will trust in One who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow.***

Jacqueline G. Jones

Final Prayer and blessing

Lord you sent your disciples into the world to
share your word with those in need. May we
approach this coming week with the same
attitude.

The blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be
with us now and always. Amen

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Hymns & Psalms 387: Your light, O God, was given to earth

Albert F Bayly (1901 – 1984)

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StF 24 Come now is the time to worship

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StF 424 God forgave my sin

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StF 638 Through all the changing scenes of life

Nahum Tate (1652–1715) and Nicholas Brady (1659–1726)

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StF 662 Have you heard God's voice

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