

Worship for 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome to all of you joining us for this service. I am Anne Oliver, your worship leader this morning. Our Bible readings will be provided by friends from Tysoe and Stratford churches, and the Rev. Sally Jones will be sharing her reflections on God's Word.

We hope that you will feel that God has spoken to you through this worship, and I thank those whose technical expertise has made it possible.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Come, if your hearts are full of hope,
and know God's affirming love.
Come, if your hearts are full of tears,
and be touched by God's healing love.
Come, whether it is your first or your hundredth
time,
and be filled to overflowing with God's generous
love.
Come and see God's glory.
Amen.

Our first hymn is number 21 in StF "Born in Song!" and I hope that you will feel able to join in.

Hymn: StF 21- Born in Song!

1. Born in song!
God's people have always been singing.
Born in song!
Hearts and voices raised.
So today we worship together;
God alone is worthy to be praised.

- 2. Praise to God!**
For he is the one who has made us.
Praise to God!
We his image bear.
Heaven and earth are full of his glory;
let creation praise him everywhere.
- 3. Christ is King!**
He left all the glory of heaven.
Christ is King!
Born to share in our pain;
crucified, for sinners atoning,
risen, exalted, soon to come again.
- 4. Sing the song!**
God's Spirit is poured out among us.
Sing the song!
He has made us anew.
Ev'ry member part of the Body;
given his power, his will to seek and do.
- 5. Tell the world!**
All power to Jesus is given.
Tell the world!
He is with us always.
Spread the word, that all may receive him;
every tongue confess and sing his praise.
- 6. Then the end!**
Christ Jesus shall reign in his glory.
Then the end
of all earthly days.
Yet above the song will continue;
all his people still shall sing his praise.

Brian Hoare (b. 1935)

Prayer of approach

With hearts full of hope,
minds open to receive
and ears tuned to hear,
we draw near, Lord God, to learn
and to share your all-powerful, guiding truth.

Amen.

Prayer of adoration

Eternal God, hope of the world,
we cannot grasp the immensity of your being,
and yet all around us we catch glimpses of your
power.

You speak to us in nature's blessings.
You speak to us through science and creativity.
You reveal yourself in the love and the care
and the support of those around us.

You show yourself when we most need to see
you.

When we least expect it, we see your hand at
work.

We read your Word, time and time again,
and suddenly, we are amazed by seeing
something new.

Eternal God, we adore you.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Forgive us, Lord, for forgetting so easily:
we forget that you have worked in our lives in
the past;
we forget to be thankful for these things;
We forget that these events show your love for
us,
and should give us cause to hope.
Forgive us for forgetting to hope;
for allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by
despair,
and forgetting our faith in you.

Forgive us, Lord, for forgetting so easily.

Amen.

Declaration of forgiveness

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

This is His gracious word:

"Your sins are forgiven".

Amen. Thanks be to God.

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.**

He said:

*'Freely, freely you have received,
freely, freely give;*

*go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'*

Carol Owens (b. 1931)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Job 42:1-6, Job 42:10-17 (NRSVA)

Job Is Humbled and Satisfied

¹Then Job answered the Lord:

²I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

³"Who is this that hides counsel without
knowledge?"

Therefore I have uttered what I did not
understand,

things too wonderful for me, which I did not

know.

⁴“Hear, and I will speak;

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

⁵I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;

⁶therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.’

Job’s Fortunes Are Restored Twofold

¹⁰And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring.

¹²The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys.

¹³He also had seven sons and three daughters.

¹⁴He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job’s daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. ¹⁶After this Job lived for one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children’s children, four generations. ¹⁷And Job died, old and full of days.

Mark 10:46-52 (NRSVA)

The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

⁴⁶They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ ⁴⁸Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he

cried out even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ ⁴⁹Jesus stood still and said, ‘Call him here.’ And they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take heart; get up, he is calling you.’ ⁵⁰So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹Then Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man said to him, ‘My teacher, let me see again.’ ⁵²Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Sermon

Hello everyone, and my warmest greetings to you all.

Job is a challenging book, isn’t it? I think it’s fair to say that, in the past, I’ve avoided preaching from Job. The story of this man who suffers so much, who seems to be at the mercy of higher powers, is not an easy one. And when the powers seem to be seeking to establish their own authority by involving someone weaker than themselves, it can be a disturbing story. On a purely personal, emotional level, I wonder about my own reactions if I were put in Job’s position. But if two years at theological college have taught me anything, then it’s that we shouldn’t avoid those parts of the Bible that we find difficult, or hard to understand, or that we don’t agree with. The story of Job is there to help us, to teach us more about God and God’s ways, to give us an insight into God’s heart. So maybe a little wrestling is in order, so I can begin to appreciate what God might be saying to me and to us all in the Book of Job.

I ought to set the scene a little, because it explains why I have finally chosen to preach about Job today. Since moving to the South Warwickshire Circuit, a friend of mine has died. She was my age; we were at secondary school

together. We both loved music and became firm friends through it. I have to say that she was one of the bravest people I know, as her life was very challenging. It seemed to me that, like there was for Job, there were more layers of sadness and suffering in her life than there should have been. One of these layers was illness. She developed Friedreich's ataxia in her twenties and used a wheelchair for most of her adult life. She had been receiving treatment for breast cancer for a number of years before she died in September. She had long ceased to truck any form of God-nonsense, but after I told her that I had been accepted for ministerial training she delighted in calling me 'Vicarage' and gave me her boxed set of the BBC series 'Rev', which I realised was her way of giving me her blessing.

To help me look further into the book of Job I bought John Goldingay's book *Job for Everyone*. The parts I have read have been fascinating, and I can recommend it, particularly if you struggle with Job, as I have done. Much of what I am saying about the book of Job comes from Goldingay. Firstly, it's important to remember that this is not a recount, but poetry, and poetry which is alive with poetic devices. So the writing is punchy, and full of intense images. Secondly, the story of Job 'focuses not on God's acts in history but on questions about understanding the world and human life and about living our everyday lives'. As such, it is more akin to Wisdom literature. Job, the God-respecting, faithful, true, upright pillar of the community, gradually loses everything, *everything* that is important to him. This seems even more harsh because Job is such an upright and blameless man. John Goldingay points out that the Hebrew word for evil refers to both the evil that is done to a person and the evil that they do themselves. 'It is neat that both Hebrew and English use the same word for each of these forms of evil. It

points toward the assumption that there is a link between them. If you avoid doing evil, you will avoid experiencing evil'. So it is for Job, until this series of terrible events overtakes his life. He is profoundly affected by these events, and grieves publicly, yet never renounces Yahweh or his faith. Part of today's reading is, of course, the "happy ending". Job 42 verse 10 reads 'the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before'. But does that make Job's terrible story okay? Is that actually *enough* for us?

Goldingay writes that 'Job suffered for us, to make it possible for us to face the reality of suffering that we do not understand, to see how to respond to it, and to see how **not** to try to help someone else who is suffering'. And I find there is much truth in that.

He also writes 'All these insights about suffering and about how to respond to it need to be part of our awareness, not merely when something terrible happens but before it happens so that they can become resources to us if it does happen. It will be too late then to start trying to work out what attitude we take to suffering. Rather, the experience will bring out how we already think'.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for me, Job has been referred to as a 'type' of Christ, where 'type' refers to a prototype, a forerunner. Read this way, Job's story feels a little more understandable, more approachable, more applicable.

Interestingly for me at this time, following the death of my friend, Goldingay compares the experience of his first wife who suffered with multiple sclerosis to that of Job. He talks about his own experience of their suffering as being akin to weight training. If he'd known at the beginning of the diagnosis what the end of his

first wife's life would be like, he would never have coped. But gradually he adjusted, learning to deal with each stage as he went along. He says 'You learn to lift one weight, and you can't imagine you could lift one that was twice as heavy, but gradually you learn to lift heavier and heavier weights'. I'm sure many of us who have cared for a loved one through a long and slow decline will relate to that.

But here's the thing: somehow, living in an age where Jesus has walked on this earth, and suffered all the range of human suffering, suffered the daily heartaches of human living, and the unimaginable depths of divine suffering, this gives us hope. I think about my friend, her suffering, her bravery, her quite determined refusal to contemplate any God-nonsense, and I find I am still hopeful. Circumstances should keep squashing this hope down, but I find it just springing up again, popping up, for reasons I sometimes find hard to pinpoint, because of all those layers of sadness. It's an irrepressible hope, an outrageous hope really, but it's with me, and it's because of Jesus. I think it's closely related to the peace which passeth all understanding. I can't quite rationalise it, but it's there, and it's because of Jesus.

This Jesus knows what we go through, he's been here, done that, got the t-shirt, got the marks on his hands and the hole in his side. He's wept for Lazarus. He's cried out 'My God, why have you forsaken me?'. And he has the power to do far, far more than we can ask or even think. He had the power to heal Bartimaeus. He healed Bartimaeus, in a breath, in the blinking of an eye. And he longs to heal us from our grief with that same power. If we're not ready for that, then he'll walk with us, there beside us for when we are ready. For me, that *is* enough. I pray it is enough for you too.

May God bless us all as we journey on. Amen.

John Goldingay, Job For Everyone (London: SPCK, 2013).

Hymn: StF 628 – Faithful One, so Unchanging

**Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is the anchor,
my hope is in you alone.**

Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

We thank you, Lord, for times of restoration:
for the dawning of morning light after the night;
for the coming of spring after winter;
for light in our lives after spells of darkness;
for rejuvenation when we were weary.

We thank you for restoration to health after illness;

to renewed relationships after brokenness;
to employment after joblessness;
and we thank you for restoring hope
when all seemed hopeless.

We thank you, Lord, for harvests of joy,
after life has been arid and dry.

Amen.

Hymn StF 78 – Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart

**Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One;
give thanks because he's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One;**

**give thanks because he's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.**

**And now let the weak say, 'I am strong,'
let the poor say, 'I am rich,'
because of what the Lord has done for us;
And now let the weak say, 'I am strong,'
let the poor say, 'I am rich,'
because of what the Lord has done for us;**

Give thanks.

Henry Smith (b. 1952)

Prayers of intercession

As we join together in our prayers of intercession, we think about friends who are in need of our prayer; and of the news from around the world this week, and pray that God will be with those who are suffering and in despair.

Let us pray:

We pray...

for those living on the edge, in fear of the future:
bless them with a deepening sense of hope and trust in you;

for those caught up in the ways of the world,
relying on worldly treasures:
give them a blessing of release and joy in you;

for those battling with ill health:
give them the blessing of strengthening hope and healing;

for all who have the responsibility of leading your flock:
give them your blessing of wisdom and strength.

Lord, you watch and protect.
Strengthen all who are in need
with an unshakeable trust in you;
give them a glimpse of the treasures
that are theirs when they put their hope in you.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray together:

**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

Our offerings may be received by our churches in different ways at this time,
but we still offer them up to God today.

Everything in heaven and earth comes from you,
O Lord,
and of your own do we give you.

May you be praised for ever. Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Our final hymn is one of the most famous hymns of all time, written by the slaver turned priest, John Newton in 1779. Newton said, "I can see no reason why the Lord singled me out for mercy...unless it was to show, by one astonishing instance, that with him 'nothing is impossible'."

Hymn: StF 440 – Amazing Grace

**1. Amazing grace — how sweet the sound —
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.**

2. **God's grace has taught my heart to fear,
his grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!**
3. **Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.**
4. **The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.**
5. **And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
a life of joy and peace.**
6. **When we've been there ten thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.**

John Newton (1725–1807) *(alt.)*

Prayer & blessing

Go in hope, and when life is demanding,
trust in God your Father.
Go in peace, and when the way ahead is difficult,
stay close to Jesus the Son.
Go in joy, and when the temptation to give up is
strong,
let the Holy Spirit refresh you.

And the blessing of God,
the Father, Son & Holy Spirit
be among us and remain with us always.

Amen.

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StF 21- Born in Song!

Brian Hoare (*b.* 1935)

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StF 424 – God forgave my sin in Jesus’ name

Carol Owens (*b.* 1931)

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StF 628 – Faithful One, so Unchanging

Brian Doerksen (*b.* 1965)

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StF 78 – Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart

Henry Smith (*b.* 1952)

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StF 440 – Amazing Grace

John Newton (1725–1807) (*alt.*)

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NRSV & NRSVA

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