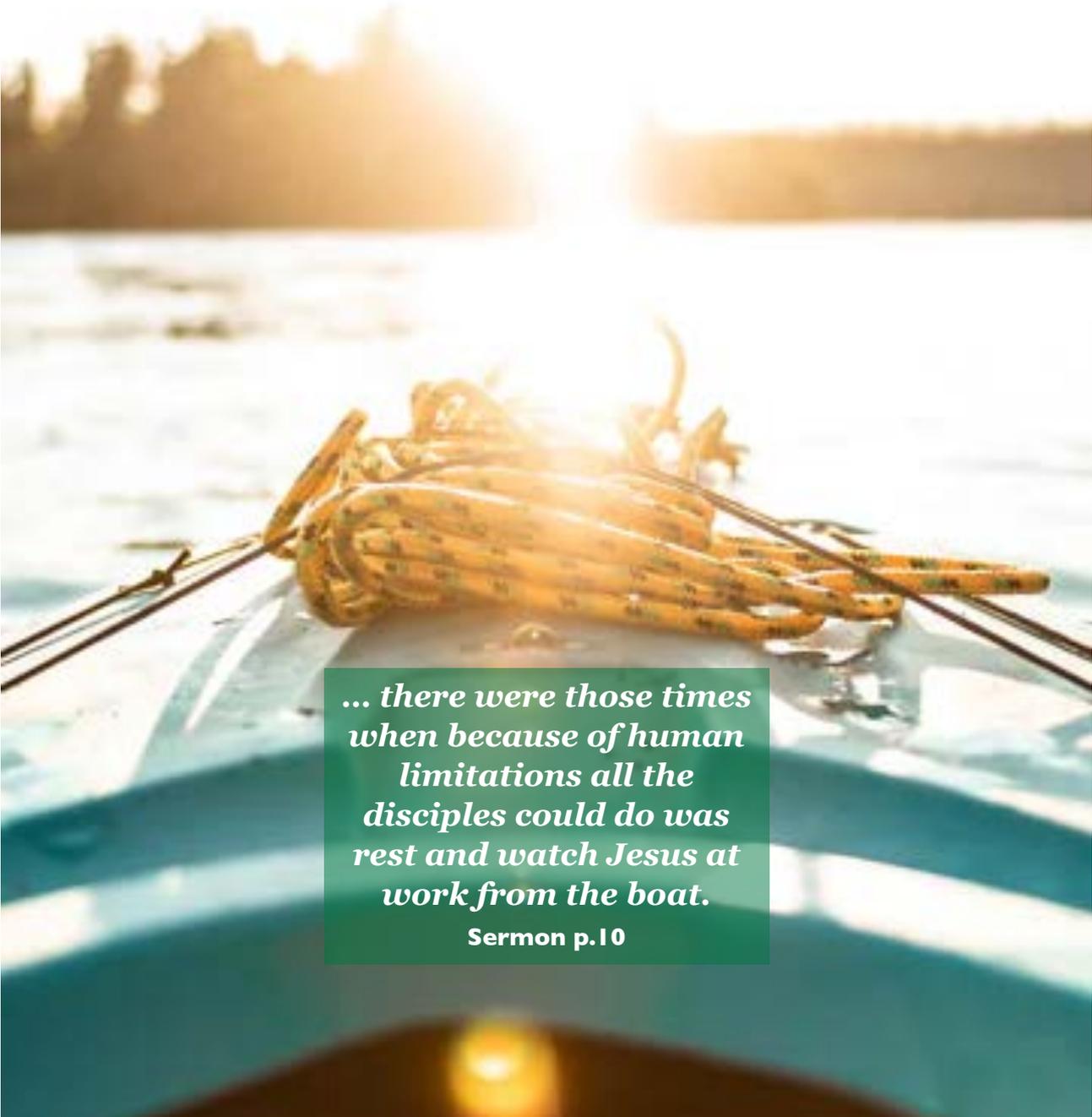

Sunday 18 July 2021
BUNYAN MEETING BEDFORD
MORNING WORSHIP



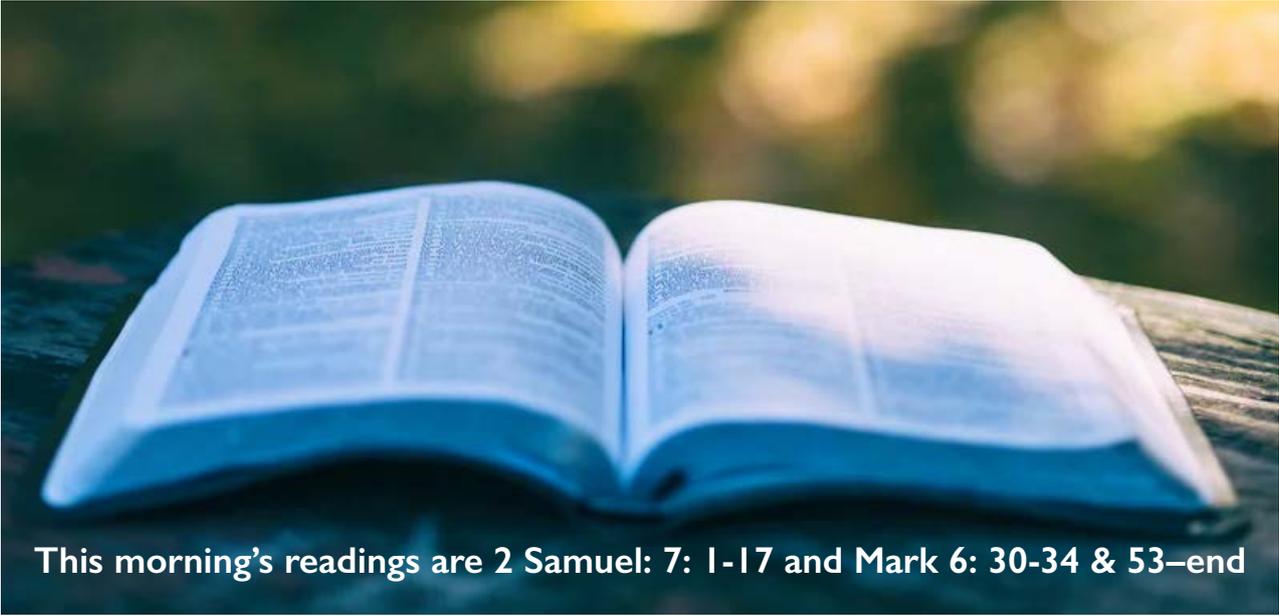
*... there were those times
when because of human
limitations all the
disciples could do was
rest and watch Jesus at
work from the boat.*

Sermon p.10



All-Age Morning Worship this Sunday in the garden
of Bunyan Meeting at 11.00am - All Welcome

Sunday 18 July 2021 - Morning Worship



This morning's readings are 2 Samuel: 7: 1-17 and Mark 6: 30-34 & 53–end

Prayers

Lord Jesus, your work was hard and tiring.
You needed refreshment. And so do we.
Lord Jesus, as we thank you for your work,
we also thank you for rest and recreation.
Help us to recognize that we need it as much as work,
so that we may be refreshed in body, mind and spirit. Amen.

A prayer from Kenya

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.

Click for:
[We love the place,
O God](#)

Hymn - We love the place, O God

We love the place, O God,
wherein thine honour dwells;
the joy of thine abode
all earthly joy excels.

It is the house of prayer,
wherein thy servants meet;
and thou, O Lord, art there
thy chosen flock to greet.

We love the word of life,
the word that tells of peace,
of comfort in the strife,
and joys that never cease.

We love to sing below
for mercies freely given;
but O we long to know
the triumph-song of heaven.

Lord Jesus, give us grace
on earth to love thee more,
in heaven to see thy face,
and with thy saints adore.

William Bullock (1797-1874)



‘Shine, Jesus, shine ... may our lives tell your story’ *

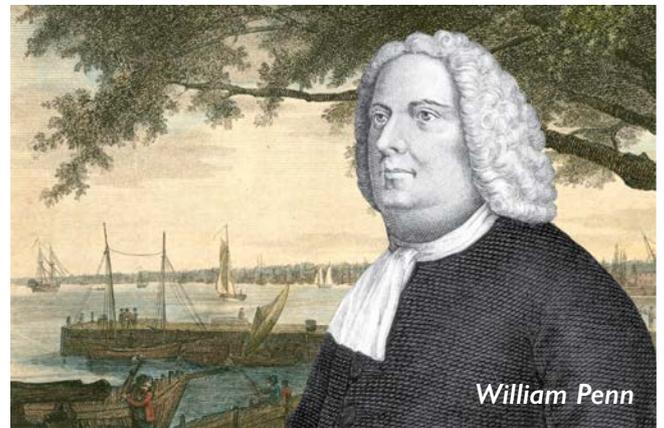


In our reading from 2 Samuel today, God promises King David that: ‘... *I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people shall not oppress them any more*’. Throughout our human journeying there are accounts of peoples who have found a safe haven after years of persecution and discrimination.

Continuing our celebration of those whose ‘lives tell’ of how Jesus Christ shines within our history, we remember two communities that were built on a promise of safety, sanctuary and freedom for all who would dwell there.

Philadelphia, USA

William Penn, a writer and member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), was granted a charter by Charles II in 1681 to found a colony on the east coast of America. Penn purchased the land from the Native American Lenape (Delaware) tribe, making a treaty of friendship with their chief Tammany, as he wished to ensure peace for his colony.



The settlement that Penn founded was named Philadelphia - which is Ancient Greek for ‘brotherly love (φίλος *philos* *beloved, dear* and ἀδελφός *adelphós* *brother, brotherly*).

As a Quaker, William Penn had experienced religious persecution in England, so his dearest wish was that the colony would be a place where all could worship freely. This tolerance, far more than most other colonies, meant that Philadelphia enjoyed good relations with the local native tribes, was a place of welcome and, with its rapid growth, became an important city in America.



The freed slaves in the early nineteenth century established churches and schools in Philadelphia, helped by the Quakers. In the years following the American Civil War (1861-65), Philadelphia became the prime destination for many African Americans; and Puerto Ricans arrived in large numbers between the first and second World Wars.

* from ‘*Lord, the light of your love is shining*’ by Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Freetown, Sierra Leone

Although originally a 'Province of Freedom' settlement for formerly enslaved black people sent from London in 1787, Freetown was truly established a few years later when the Sierra Leone Company enabled 1,100 former American slaves to travel from the harsh climate of Nova Scotia, to settle on the west coast of Africa.

The 15 ships arrived in St George Bay in early 1792 and while the women remained on board, the men cleared the land. They then all disembarked, and under a huge cotton tree they sang 'Awake and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb', as the Rev'd David George, from South Carolina, preached at the first recorded Baptist service in Africa. The land was dedicated and christened 'Free Town'.

Although they helped the settlers with the buildings and infrastructure of Freetown, the Sierra Leone Company was high-handed in its dealings and accused of treating the people more like slaves than freemen. The next few years saw pillaging by the French, a rebellion by the African Americans, and eventually, in 1808, the British took control of Freetown, making it a colony.

This move proved to be beneficial for Freetown, as the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron, based there, enforced the ban on slave trading, and a large number of liberated slaves were brought to Sierra Leone. Freetown became a haven for many: descendants of peoples from all over the west coast of Africa; West Indian and African ex-soldiers who had fought for Britain in the Napoleonic Wars; and, of course, the original freed slaves from London and Nova Scotia, who were collectively called Creoles ... and who played a leading role in the city.

Today, in post-independence Sierra Leone, Freetown is so ethnically diverse that no single group holds a majority in the city.



A 1835 illustration of liberated Africans being welcomed on their arrival in Sierra Leone

Despite good intentions, the idealism and promises that inspired the cities of Philadelphia and Freetown were not always sustainable. Here is a timely reminder of the promise by God of the eternal Heavenly City.



Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. *Revelation 22: 1-5*

Click for:
[Let us build a
house where
love can dwell](#)

Hymn - Let us build a house where love can dwell

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions;
all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.



Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and a symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace;
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Marty Haugen (b. 1950)

Flowers at Bunyan Meeting

The flowers in church *would* have
been provided by **Jean McGall** in
memory of her **husband John**
and **their parents**



Reading - 2 Samuel 7: 1-17

Click for Alistair reading: [2 Samuel 7: 1-17](#)

After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, 'Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.'

Nathan replied to the king, 'Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.'

But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:

'Go and tell my servant David, "This is what the Lord says: are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"

'Now then, tell my servant David, "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people shall not oppress them any more, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.



“The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: when your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings

inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.”

Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.



An artistic impression of The Temple of Solomon - built: 957, destroyed: 586 BCE

Click for:
[Jesus calls
us o'er the
tumult](#)

Hymn - Jesus calls us! o'er the tumult

Jesus calls us! o'er the tumult
of our life's wild, restless sea,
day by day his voice is sounding,
saying "Christian, follow me."

As, of old, Saint Andrew heard it
by the Galilean lake,
turned from home and toil and kindred,
leaving all for his dear sake.

In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than these."

Jesus calls us! By your mercy,
Saviour, make us hear your call,
give our hearts to your obedience,
serve and love you best of all.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)



Reading - Mark 6: 30-34 & 53-end

Click for Mari reading:
[Mark 6: 30-34 & 53-end](#)

The apostles gathered round Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognised them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognised Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried those who were ill on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went – into villages, towns or countryside – they placed those who were ill in the market-places. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.



Anthem - How lovely are Thy dwellings fair by Johannes Brahms

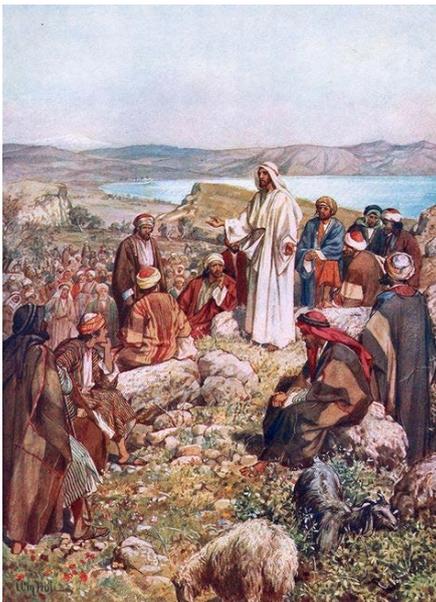
Click for:
[How lovely
are thy
dwellings
fair](#)

*How lovely are Thy dwellings fair, O Lord of Hosts.
My soul ever longeth and fainteth for the blest courts of the Lord:
My heart and flesh do cry to the living God.
O blest are they that in Thy house are dwelling:
They ever praise Thee, O Lord, for evermore.*

Sermon by our Minister - The Rev'd Chris Damp

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” Mark 6 v 31

Life and its various responsibilities can very readily wear us down, making great demands upon our meagre resources of time and energy. There is so much to do in every area of our lives. Jesus also makes demands upon us, sending us out to labour for His kingdom. We readily grow tired and we long for some space and time for ourselves.



The disciples found themselves in this situation, they were exhausted, their energy was spent and their strength was gone. The death of John the Baptist had been a heavy blow which they felt keenly as they returned from their first missionary expedition. They had been sent out by Jesus and having fulfilled their mission they returned triumphant but exhausted.

As the twelve gathered around Jesus to recount the events of the last few days, there was no refuge from the crowds. The multitudes continued to flock to Jesus; the sick and the needy, those who searched for a miracle and the spiritually hungry who longed to be fed. The situation appeared to be getting out of control, there was no time even to eat. The disciples' strength was spent, their energy was exhausted; they simply needed rest.

Jesus was painfully aware that this amount of activity could just not go on for any longer, and so in spite of the constant demands of the crowds Jesus took the decision to depart to a solitary place by boat saying to the disciples, “Come with me to a quiet place and get some rest” (v 31)

Jesus knew the importance of rest and quiet. There are many occasions in the gospel narratives when Jesus Himself withdraws to a quiet place for rest and silence so that He could renew both His physical and His spiritual energy.

This passage reminds us that we cannot exist without rest and relaxation. We all need to recharge our physical stores of energy, but we also need spiritual renewal. In living busy lives, we often fail to be quiet and still before God. We must remember how the psalmist reminds us that those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

How can we carry life's burdens and struggles if we do not have communion with the Lord of life? How can we do God's work unless we do it in His strength? And how can we receive that strength unless we seek in quietness and in stillness before God?

Many Christians, many churches run out of resources or even out of faith because they have not learnt to be quiet in the presence of God. There are times when God finds it difficult to be our strength and help for we refuse to be quiet before Him and we are thus unable to receive that which He desires to impart to us.

But in spending time with God we must not withdraw ourselves from this world. Devotion that does not bring forth action is no devotion at all. Awareness of God and His love should make us proclaim His goodness. Prayer should lead to works. To turn to God is not to turn away from those around us but to prepare us for caring and sharing in a better way. We must not seek the fellowship of God so much that we try to avoid the fellowship of others. As William Barclay says "The secret of the Christian life is one of meeting God in the secret place and then meeting the crowds in the market place."

The boat in which Jesus and the disciples had taken refuge landed on the other shore of the lake and they found themselves surrounded by an even greater multitude. Rest appeared to be impossible for the disciples. Yet here was a crowd who had needs that were as equally pressing as their own. Jesus looked upon this crowd and "He had compassion on them as they were like a sheep without a shepherd." (v 34)



Aware of the disciple's weariness, Jesus eventually tells them to wait in the boat (v 45) whilst He began to dismiss the crowds. The disciples cross the sea again, Jesus joins them in the boat, and the crowds run, hobble or are carried to where Jesus next lands ashore. But from this point on and for the next chapter of Mark, we hear nothing more of the disciples. It is as though they have been sent off for a rest so that they might recuperate.

These men were exhausted and they could do no more. Like Jesus, we are all capable of showing great compassion for others, but the more we see of suffering

in our world, the more we tread the streets, crowded with human sorrow and misery, the we quickly we discover that our own compassion is limited.

Even when the disciples were empowered to teach, and heal as Jesus did, they still could not reflect the constancy of His compassion. It is immediately after their greatest success that the disciples encounter this most persistent human limitation. The disciples were able to offer care, but could not offer it constantly.

It is only God that can extend constant compassion. God is the only one who never suffers from exhaustion in the face of human need. Here in the person of Jesus we see the true nature of God revealed.

Ministry in the name of Christ is an exhausting business. It seems to demand a constancy that is seldom in us. We grow weary, become exhausted and our compassion is worn down.

A minister once resigned from his church saying that “I can no longer meet all the needs of this church.” An old, very wise member of the church said “Who had told you that you were expected to meet all the needs of the church?”

We cannot do everything. The disciples, even after their successful venture into mission as preachers and healers learnt this lesson and they went and waited for Jesus in the boat, knowing and trusting that Jesus would do all that was necessary.

There is a lesson for us here as we live our own lives empowered by the gospel and seeking to act under the influence of Christ's Spirit. The disciples learned that the power of God can be at work through them, and that equally, God can still be at work without them.

When the disciples were weary and had given all that they could, when their compassion was spent and their ability to respond to need was exhausted, people were still fed as if with manna from heaven, healed and restored.

Let us remember that there were those times when because of human limitations all the disciples could do was rest and watch Jesus at work from the boat.



Hymn - Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord

Click for:
[Take time
to be holy](#)

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
abide in him always, and feed on his Word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,
forgetting in nothing his blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.
Abiding in Jesus, like him thou shalt be;
thy friends in thy conduct his likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,
each thought and each motive beneath his control.
Thus led by his Spirit to fountains of love,
thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

William D. Longstaff (1822-1894)



Prayers

Click for Isabelle: [Let us pray ...](#)

Dearest heavenly Father,

We thank you and praise you for your abiding love and care. We thank you that we can know that care, and we thank you that we can show that care to others.



We know that many people are tired and weary. We pray for them, that they may know your strength, that they may rise on wings like eagles. We pray for those who are ill, who are anxious about their health, and ask that they may know your peace.

We pray for those – for all of us – who like David in the reading, know that they have done wrong and are in need of your forgiveness. We ask that we might listen to our conscience, and act to restore situations in thoughtful and sensitive ways.

We pause now to think of those we know who are unwell, in body, in mind and in spirit.

We pray for our community, as we continue to live and work in the shadow of the pandemic. We pray that our leaders may be wise as they dispense their

responsibilities. We pray for those who have lost their jobs, their health, their relationships – that the whole community might be sensitive to their needs, and act in practical ways to help. We pray for our government, that they might work not for their own ends, but to meet the needs of the people they serve.

In a week where we have seen the expression of prejudice in different forms, we pray that Christians and those of faith may work together as ambassadors of love. By our words and actions may we demonstrate that love, and a willingness to learn how we can bring justice to all people in Bedford, in the UK, and throughout the world.

We pray for those who are too easily forgotten, for the people of Yemen, for the people of Afghanistan, and the people of Syria. We cannot imagine the suffering that too many have endured. We do not know the solutions to these situations, but know that with you, and with a will for peace, great things can happen.

We bring these prayers humbly before you and thank you that, as we pray, we know that you listen.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the suffering Saviour, Amen.



Above
A Kurdish Syrian woman walks with her child past the ruins of the town of Kobane



Right People leaving messages of support and solidarity at the vandalised mural of Marcus Rashford. 'Something beautiful out of something negative'.



Hymn - Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy

Click for:
[Lord of all
hopefulness,
Lord of all joy](#)

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy,
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Jan Struther (1901-1953)



The Grace

And 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.

*Hymns in today's service are used By Permission. CCL
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*The texts are from the New International Version (UK)
of the Bible*



**BUNYAN
MEETING**

Bunyan Meeting

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A prayer to my human Christ



In your infancy, you knew nothing ...
nothing of pain and terror,
nothing of uncertainty and danger,
nothing of fear and confusion,
nothing of loneliness and death.

That was for your mother to know ...
as she held you and kept you safe,
as she suckled you with the goodness of life,
as she wept for you, and kept smiling at you
to show you that love mattered above all else.



It was for your father to know ...
as he found new places to hide you,
as he made decisions on how danger could be avoided,
as he wondered if he'd failed to help you survive,
as he offered protection when he had little himself.



But now, in the fullness of your humanity, you know ...
you have heard of their pain and faced your own terror;
you have known of their uncertainty and experienced your own danger;
you have been cast down by their fear and lived with your own confusion;
you have wept in their lonely places and confronted your own death.



My human Christ,
be, now, a mother to me ...
Hold me and keep me safe.
Suckle me and feed me with life's goodness.
Weep if you must, but smile upon me too,
to show me that love matters above all else.



My human Christ,
be, now, a father to me ...
Hide me in your loving arms.
Shield me from present dangers.
Reach out from the fullness of your broken humanity
and offer me the protection of an incarnate God.



My human Christ,
you are near to me in my pain;
you comfort me in my times of terror;
you console me in my uncertainties;
you are beside me in my dangers;
you give me peace in my fearfulness;
you bless me with clarity in my confusions;
you are my companion in my loneliness;
you fill me with hope in the face of my mortality.

My human Christ, I need your humanity to help me make sense of mine.

Tom Gordon