

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 2nd June 2024

Ordinary 9

Prepared by Revd Peter Rayson

We prepare to come before God in worship.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his Glory.

Glory to the Father and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Read, listen to or sing, "Sing of the Lord's
goodness" (StF 65)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLMDEN8Y5f0>

- 1 Sing of the Lord's goodness, Father of all wisdom,
come to him and bless his name.
Mercy he has shown us, his love is for ever,
faithful to the end of days.

*Come then, all you nations,
sing of your Lord's goodness,
melodies of praise and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory,
praise him with your music,
worship him and bless his name.*

- 2 Power he has wielded, honour is his garment,
risen from the snares of death.
His word he has spoken, one bread he has broken,
new life he now gives to all.
- 3 Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow,
Spirit of our God most high;
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,
splendour of the living God.
- 4 Praise him with your singing, praise him with the
trumpet,
praise God with the lute and harp;
praise him with the cymbals, praise him with your
dancing,
praise God till the end of days.

Ernest Sands (b. 1949)

In prayer, let us give thanks to God.

For the love of our Father, the Maker of all,
the giver of all good things:
let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the world's beauty and the changing seasons,
and for the life that we have been given:
let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For Jesus Christ our Saviour,
who lived and worked among us:
let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For his suffering and death on the cross
and his resurrection to new life:
let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For his rule over all things
and his presence in the world:
let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the Holy Spirit, the giver of life,
who teaches and guides us:
let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the grace of the Spirit
in the work of the Church
and the life of the world:
let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Now read Luke 7:1-10 (NRSVA)

7 After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the
hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²A
centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly

and who was ill and close to death. ³ When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." ⁶ And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷ therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and, turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." ¹⁰ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Sermon

We are all prone to making assumptions and it was no different in Jesus' day. Everyone in Judea knew that Jews were Jews and Gentiles were Gentiles. Jews were God's people, Gentiles weren't. At least, this was true until Jesus came along and upset things; until the Jewish elders came along and asked Jesus to heal the Centurion's slave.

Except that that isn't the true. Even if this was Jesus' first healing of a gentile, God was never just concerned with or for the Jews. From the days of Solomon, the Temple had a place especially set aside where gentiles who were seeking God could come to pray.

Had the Centurion been to the temple? We don't know. But we do know that he had recognised that the God of Israel was something special; something

he valued. The centurion felt unworthy to come to Jesus or have Jesus come to him. Was this because he understood that he was a Gentile and therefore not one of God's chosen people? Did he believe that Jesus would refuse to speak to him if he approached? These are both reasonable assumptions. This is, after all what one would expect of a devout Jew. Unknow to him, the Centurion no less worthy in God's eyes than the Jewish elders he sent.

This is because we are all unworthy; unworthy to approach God the Father in the temple or to approach God the Son in the street. However many temples, synagogues or churches we build, we can never make ourselves worthy.

We can approach God only because God makes this possible, only because he calls us into his presence. Only by His grace can we enter. This is one of the key ways in which the incarnation changed our relationship with God for ever. While Jesus was on earth, people were, quite literally, able to walk up to God in the street, something which had not been possible since the time of the fall.

Has the Church learned this lesson from scripture? How many times in our history has the Church claimed that we have exclusive access to God, that we are the worthy ones? Even worse, we have fought among ourselves, declaring others even within the Church unworthy and creating divisions among ourselves. And then we wonder why those outside the Church turn their backs on us.

That is not to say that the Church does not have a God-given purpose and to fulfil this purpose the Church needs organisation, needs structure, needs leaders & teachers & prophets. What we forget is that it does not need these for its own sake nor even principally for the sake of its members. The

structures of the Church should exist solely to support the mission of the Church.

“The Church is the only organisation that does not exist for itself, but for those who live outside of it.”(William Temple, a late 19th century Archbishop of Canterbury). Or the Church does not exist to get ‘bums on seats’ but rather to get ‘bums in to heaven’.

The Christ given purpose of the Church is to spread the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted it. We will rarely find these people inside the church but rather on its fringes or outside the Church. We are called to follow Jesus’ example; to respond according to need, not according to religious affiliation or accident of birth We are called to respond according to need, not according to our assessment of the worthiness of the recipient. Like Jesus, we need to respond to both the spiritual and the physical needs of those outside the Church as well as supporting one another.

We must avoid creating a false division between the spiritually deserving and not deserving because none of us can ever deserve the grace which God offers. Equally, there can be no discrimination between those in physical need based on anything other than the urgency of that need. Anything else is a betrayal of the Gospel. “You will know them by their fruits,” as Jesus said (Matthew 7:16).

Through Jesus, God desires to bring all the world to him but the Centurion was right when he considered himself unworthy to approach Jesus. God’s grace does not mean that we should approach Jesus with the assumption that we have a right to do so. It is only through his grace that we are able to do so. We should always approach God with humility and with gratitude for what he has done and continues to do for us. Our mission is to bring the whole world to do the same.

Read, listen to or sing “At the name of Jesus” (StF 317) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w-tDjIpgk>

- 1 At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of Glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.
- 2 Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed:
- 3 Bore it up triumphant
with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast;
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.
- 4 In your hearts enthrone him;
there let him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true;
crown him as your captain
in temptation's hour:
let his will enfold you
in its light and power.
- 5 For this same Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with his Father's glory,
with his angel train;
all the wreaths of empire
meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him
King of Glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

Now, with all God's people
offer your prayers
through Jesus Christ our Lord
who ever lives to pray for us.

Pray for the needs of the world . . .
Pray for the Church . . .
Pray for all in trouble or distress . . .
Pray for all who make a new beginning today . . .
Pray for your own concerns and needs . . .

God of compassion and mercy,
listen to our prayer.
May what we ask in Jesus Christ your Son
be done according to his word, who said,
'Ask, and you will receive,
seek, and you will find,
knock, and the door will be opened to you.'
To you, merciful God,
through your Son,
in the lifegiving Spirit,
be glory and praise for ever. **Amen.**

With the faithful in every time and place, we pray
as Jesus taught us:

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 us 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 for ever. **Amen.**

Read, listen to or sing, "God has spoken" (StF 157)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoPiKqKTmbg>

1 God has spoken -- by his prophets,
spoken his unchanging word;
each from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
'Mid the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holding fast:
God eternal reigns forever,
God the first, and God the last.

2 God has spoken -- by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time was born;
Light from Light, to earth descending,
Christ, revealing God to all.

3 God is speaking -- by the Spirit,
speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith is standing fast;
God still speaks, the Word unchanging,
God the first, and God the last.

George Wallace Briggs (1875-1959)

The Lord give strength to his people.
The Lord bless his people with peace. **Amen.**

Go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory. **Amen.**

Church Copyright Licence No 30794