

Informal Worship Tuesday 21st April

We stand before the throne of God with countless crowds from every nation and race, tribe and language.
Salvation belongs to our God! Alleluia!

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet; praise him with the harp and lyre.

Praise him with tambourine and dancing; praise him with the strings and the flute.

Praise him with the clash of cymbals; praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

Please take a moment of stillness and silence.

The word of God is living and active. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. All is open and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we give account. And so we confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Almighty God, long suffering and of great goodness: we confess to you with our whole hearts our neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments; our wrong doing, thinking and speaking; the hurts we have done to others, and the good we have left undone.

O God, forgive us, for we have sinned against you; and raise us to newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom which cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Song of Salvation

Behold God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my strength and my song: and he has become my salvation.

With joy you will draw water: from the wells of salvation.

On that day you will say: Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name.

Make known his deeds among the nations: proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing praises to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously: let this be known in all the earth.

Shout and sing for joy, you that dwell in Zion: for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

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

Reading

Acts 4:32-37 New International Version (NIV) The Believers Share Their Possessions

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Pause for Thought

The first Christians had none of the things we consider necessary today: No big buildings, no pianos, they had no pews, no church hall, no car park. Despite this lack of stuff, they prospered—the early church grew explosively. The believers were one in heart and mind. This simple statement tells us that the believers shared a deep inner bond that joined them spiritually and emotionally. No one claimed that any of their possessions were their own, but they shared everything they had. In the early church if you had a need—and I had something that could meet that need—what was mine was yours and vice-versa. When they saw that certain believers had needs, they voluntarily sold possessions and brought the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to the various needy believers in the congregation. This simple plan ensured that many needs were met by the church.

But what made these people act this way? Everything the world teaches us moves in the opposite direction. The very essence of the world's values is to go our own way and do our own thing. Nothing is more "natural" or "normal" than for us to say, "This is mine! Keep your hands off." Isaiah 53:6 reminds us that like sheep we have all gone stray from God and each of us has turned "to his own way." Picture a flock of sheep scattered on the hillside, each one following their own path. If one sheep is hurt or cornered by a wolf, that's too bad because it's every sheep for himself.

Recall for a moment the time when a rich young man visited Jesus and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:16-29). Jesus replied that he should keep the commandments. Being a serious person, he asked, "Which ones?" Jesus listed several and included the commandment to love your neighbour as yourself. The young man felt good about it because he had kept all those commandments from his youth. Is there anything else? Jesus said in Matthew 19:21, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Look at the five key words in this verse: Go ... Sell ... Give ... Come ... Follow. We're probably quite happy with the last two and not at all sure what to do about the first three. We're probably not comfortable with following Jesus by selling all our worldly goods and giving the money away. But Jesus is teaching us that there is an intimate connection between our possessions, the way we treat other people, and our relationship with God. The early Christians took the words of Jesus seriously and literally. That's why they did what they did.

Let's think this!

The early church tried to be unified in the way that it served God in the world and true unity is a central mark of God's work in a local church. As a church we try to love and care for each other, this kind of

selfless love comes from God. Christian unity is seen by the way we treat each other. In the early church they didn't just talk about unity, they practiced it at the deep level of sharing personal possessions.

When we see visible love, the world responds – look at the walk of Captain Tom Moore currently raising £20+million. In the same way when Christians love each other in a visible way, the world takes notice—and wants to find out more about our message. Sharing with the needy is a primary sign of God's love and justice at work. The first Christians considered it a scandal that some of their number lived in poverty. They determined to do whatever it took to help the less fortunate.

Every offering we say, “and of your own do we give you”. How much better to look at all that we have as being loaned to us by God. We are at most the temporary holders of all that we have. Even our life is a gift, one which God can recall at any moment, and this time of pandemic puts this into fine focus. We come into this world with nothing, we leave with nothing, and in between we have temporary custody of a few things. Someday we will give an account of what we have done with what we were given while we were alive. In these uncertain days of lockdown and pandemic what do we hold onto the most, our possession, or our love for and connection with others?

If we follow Jesus, it should change the way we view our time and our possessions. Let's not waste our years trying to hold on to what we can't keep anyway. No one lives forever. The only choice we get is what we do with what we have been given and how we share God's love and his fruits of His spirit to those that need it. That choice matters forever. Everything else passes away.

Prayers

We pray for all those suffering at this time of lockdown, we pray for the church to come together to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Keep our eyes open to look for opportunities to share the good news of Your story, and share our gifts, our time and all the things that you have given us.

We pray for those who are not well at this time and ask that you bring comfort to them, may they know that you are caring and full of love. Bring your healing on all who need at at this time.

We pray for ourselves that we might continue to serve you with all that we have, help us to share your love and be full of joy, peace patience and all the fruits of your spirit as we act as church where you have placed us.

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 us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

The Blessing

God of power, may the boldness of your Spirit transform us, may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us, may the gifts of your Spirit equip us to serve and worship you now and always. **Amen.**

Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ Amen