

## Informal Worship

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 sit down for 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

Matt 7v6, 12-14

Jesus said to the crowds, "Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.... In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

## Pause for Thought

Today's reading come with two teaching points.

One is about Dogs and Hogs

And the other is about wide and narrow roads and gates.

Jesus starts by setting up a principle of not giving Holy things to dogs. To all dog lovers this seems a bit harsh, but when we look at the passage, we see that Jesus is not talking about calm household pets, but a pack of snarling vicious creatures. In this respect it makes sense that to share Gods message of love in such a violent and aggressive environment may not be the best thing to do. In such an environment where Gods word is being rejected our job is to pray that God may soften their hearts to be willing to listen or seek out God at a later date. This links directly to love your enemies and pray for them. They may be violently opposed to hearing about God and they might not be ready to hear at this time, but we need to look for more beneficial times to share Gods love with them.

Jesus moves on to pearls and pigs, Pigs as I'm sure you are aware are amazing creatures, they are highly intelligent, but when it comes to food they will eat anything and everything. Pigs do not appreciate the food they eat, they do not care if it's a gourmet meal that they are eating or a packet of quavers. The pigs in this passage are unable to differentiate between what is holy and what is evil. In the same way we can meet people like this who listen to what we say but it makes no difference in the life they choose to lead. We give them an expensive pearl but to them it is just a round shiny thing.

Jesus reminds us that when we are talking about His love and sacrifice for us, we need to be aware that the message may not make any difference and, in some cases, may make us vulnerable to attack.

Paul in the book of Acts 17v16 tell us of his time in Athens where he was invited to speak about God, but where some made fun of him, he did not continue to debate with them but only spoke with those that were interested in what he was saying.

Jesus warns us that following Him is not going to be easy and that we need to choose the right time that God has prepared for them to be receptive to his word. In the same way Jesus tell us that there are two ways in life the wide road and gate and the narrow gate. The wide way is the populist way, the way of least restriction, the way that allows us to do what ever we want regardless of the consequences to our actions. Jesus tells us that this way is not the way to live our lives because it is focussed on the wrong principles and practices. It thinks about self and not about others, it seeks selfish loves and doesn't show love to others, it serves only itself and doesn't think about others.

Jesus has been teaching us that this is not the type of world that God wants, it is not the kingdom that God seeks to create.

God wants us to show his love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This is the narrow way that our faith in Jesus enables us to travel. Fix your eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.

Following Jesus is more than just a simple prayer of accepting Jesus, that is the start, but the gospel talks about being transformed into Christ. We need to be driven by what is good and pleasing to our Holy God.

Before we all had satellite navigation in our phones and cars, road signs and maps were important. Today we can sit back and listen to the sat nav tell us what to do and where to go. I remember days before sat navs. If you wanted to go somewhere you got out your road map, you find the page where you lived and then you found the place you wanted to go. Then you followed the roads until you had the route all written down. Sometime you might even write down what number of roads it was off the roundabout. As you went on your journey you would have the map and all the notes spread out for you to follow. I remember a number of occasions where I missed a junction and stayed on the nice broad fast motorway, only to need to turn around once I realised I had made a mistake.

Our road map for following Gods ways is the bible, it shows us the standards that God want us to follow. It shows us what His kingdom looks likes when we follow his ways.

The challenge for us today is to share His word with those we meet, but to realise that there will be times when this will have no effect on the lives of others. The reason for this is that they are on the broad way, going through the wide gate that is easy. They are happy looking after themselves as they think best. That's when we need to pray for them to have more open hearts. Let us ask God today to help us to seek out the opportunities to approach our friends and family when they are going to listen and choose the way of life that reflects the joy and love of our God.

### Prayers

Dear Lord God, our heavenly father, we thank you that you care for us with a never ending love. Help us to share this love with those who's hearts you are preparing. Help us to look out for the right opportunities to share this good news with the people we meet. But not get discouraged when it falls onto deaf ears or violent voices. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.**

We pray for our government, health service as they work to protect us from COVID 19, give them wisdom to make the right decisions to understand and work toward overcoming this dangerous virus. We pray for our School, especially St James, as they provide a safe place for keyworker family children. As the schools reopen further we pray that you guide them to do this safely, but in a way that cares for all families that need this support at this time. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.**

As your church in this place, give us the confidence to shine your goodness into the lives of those we meet. Help us to see the many needs that people face day by day, and help us to meet them in those time of needs. In a moment of quiet we lift to you all those that need your touch at this time in body mind or spirit.

Lord God bring your healing, and make them aware of your healing and caring touch.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, Jesus our lord Amen**

### 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.