

# What are you looking for?

Sunday 28 November 2021

## Call to Worship

*Psalm 25*

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

**O my God, in you I trust;  
do not let me be put to shame;  
do not let my enemies exult over me.**

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

**Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.**

Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

**Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your steadfast love remember me,  
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!**

Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

**All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.**

## Love Came Down At Christmas

Love came down at Christmas,

love all lovely, Love divine;

Love was born at Christmas;

star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,

Love incarnate, Love divine;

worship we our Jesus,

but wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token;

love be yours and love be mine;

love to God and others,

love for plea and gift and sign.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

*Based on [https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers\\_Praise.htm#gsc.tab=0](https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Praise.htm#gsc.tab=0)*

This world is yours, planned in eternity,  
created in a moment of sheer exuberance,  
permeated with love,  
well made.

This place is yours, in its simplicity,  
blue sky and countryside, pure creativity,  
painted with care,  
well made.

This day is yours, pure generosity,  
given for moments of gentle reflection,  
in the bustle of a day,  
well made.

This moment is yours in its entirety,  
a drop of time in an ocean of history,  
gifted with joy,  
well made.

Forgive us for those moments, days, places  
When we forget they are yours  
When we forget you made them well  
Teach us to see the well made all around us  
To revel in the exuberant love  
Bask in the gentle generosity  
Gifted in joy and love

We bring our private confessions before you now

Know that God pardons all who truly repent  
And strengthens us through the Holy Spirit  
In Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

[Reflection](#)

[Notices](#)

[The Peace](#)

## In Christ Alone

*Stuart Townend*

In Christ alone my hope is found,  
He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save:  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied –  
For every sin on Him was laid;  
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain:  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine –  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
This is the power of Christ in me;  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand:  
Till He returns or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

## Reading John 1:35-42

### *The First Disciples of Jesus*

<sup>35</sup> The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup> and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup> One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup> He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). <sup>42</sup> He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

### Message What are you looking for?

God of mercy, gift us insight as we peer into your word this morning. Help us to hear the prompting of your Spirit to be encouraged and challenged in our walk with you.

Have you ever lost something and just can't find it? I do that regularly. The women in my life talk about me doing a man look or a dad look. Let's say for example that I am on the hunt for my keys. I will, in my head at least, go through the whole house. I will look in the places I last remembered having them. I will move things with my hands. I will look under things. I will do it all twice. Nothing. So, I ask for help. Usually by phone these days. And unerringly, usually from over a 100km away they will guide me through until I find what I am looking for. It makes me so mad! But I ask anyway, because I know that if I want to find what I am looking for I need help.

Now, I don't want to go casting aspersions, but here's the thing, I would lay bets that pretty much everyone here has had a similar experience, from one side or the other. Lose something, search for it, enlist help, find it. Most galling of all, it is almost always somewhere in plain sight or exactly where you started looking in the first place.

'But I already looked there.'

'You clearly didn't look very hard.'

Grrrrrr.

It puts me in mind of U2,

I have climbed the highest mountains, I have run through the fields, I  
have run, I have crawled, I have scaled these city walls

But I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

It seems to me that everyone is looking for something. It might be a set of keys or piece of paper with a phone number on it. It could be a tool that you lent out or a photo buried on your phone. On a deeper level you could be looking for comfort, for peace, for love, for hope.

It goes even deeper than that.

Blaise Pascal, a well-known 17<sup>th</sup> century mathematician and philosopher once said: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

At our deepest level we are all searching for the only one who can satisfy that God-shaped vacuum.

It is precisely that God-shaped vacuum that John's two disciples are responding to when they follow Jesus. I could be quite wrong, but I suspect that they didn't understand what was going on and why they were following Jesus. They likely could have given a surface answer that would satisfy vague curiosity but dig a little deeper and there is an instinct at play that has not yet formed the words to explain itself. It is certainly true that they would have had some understanding of the place Israel currently held in the world. And they would have known what the term, 'messiah', meant in that context. Yet none of that explains their willingness to simply walk away from John, their rabbi, and follow Jesus.

At this point in the story Jesus is a nobody. To the best of our knowledge, he hasn't performed any miracles. He doesn't yet have crowds of people following him. He is simply a man on the street. All we know is that John has named him as the Lamb of God and the Son of God. Putting aside what we know now, if I was to point to a random person on the street and say they were the Lamb of God and the Son of God, what would your response be? Most likely you would look at me as if I had gone mad and walk quickly in the opposite direction.

What is going on here is clearly a working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these two disciples.

Now, look at their response to Jesus asking, 'What are you looking for?' 'Rabbi,' they say, 'where are you staying?' Not, who are you, or what do you believe or what are you going to do or anything that might identify this Jesus person. But 'where are you staying?' And remember, when he was asked another time, Jesus' answer was, 'Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.' The disciples, in following Jesus

were casting their lot in with a homeless preacher, living with uncertainty and ambiguity. Of course, having followed John for a time they were likely used to that. What they didn't know was that everything they knew and believed was about to be turned upside down. They would learn that this homeless preacher and teacher had deep insights into their very nature. They would learn to perform miracles that would transform people's lives. They would learn too, that their concept of messiah was very different to Jesus' concept of messiah. Most importantly of all, they would learn that following Jesus was a practical exercise in learning to love the lost, the poor, the downtrodden, the sick, the hopeless, the hurting.

Keep in mind that this learning would last for the rest of their lives. I love the story of Peter learning that it was OK to minister to Gentiles when he went to the house of Cornelius. I'm pretty confident it was only one of many learning events he had in the course of his life.

All this learning came back to the realisation that in the person of Jesus they had found the embodiment of God's solution for that God-shaped vacuum in their hearts.

I don't know about you, but there are many things I long for, most of them unobtainable in my lifetime. I would love to fly to the moon and then on to Mars. I would like to climb Mt Everest. I would like to visit every city of more than 10 million people in the world. Achieving those things would be amazing. But it wouldn't fill the deeper longing in my heart that only God can fill.

I think that longing is a healthy thing that prompts us to continue to press into God. The vacuum will never be completely filled until we are face to face with God at the end. In a way, U2's song is an insight into a Biblical truth. We can climb mountains, scale walls, run through fields, but in the end we can only find what we are looking for in Jesus. And that will always be incomplete on this side of eternity. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

So if you sense a continuing longing to know God more than you do, be encouraged, it is how you have been made.

## We Pray

As we come to pray I will leave some space for you to search for God in your own way.

Gracious God, ruler of our hearts, filler of our vacuum, teach us to seek you with all that we are, fill us with longing for you in all our ways. PAUSE.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

## Good, Good Father

*Chris Tomlin*

Oh, I've heard a thousand stories of what they think you're like  
But I've heard the tender whisper of love in the dead of night  
And you tell me that you're pleased  
And that I'm never alone

You're a Good, Good Father  
It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are  
And I'm loved by you  
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

Oh, and I've seen many searching for answers far and wide  
But I know we're all searching  
For answers only you provide  
'Cause you know just what we need  
Before we say a word

You are perfect in all of your ways  
You are perfect in all of your ways  
You are perfect in all of your ways to us

Oh, it's love so undeniable  
I, I can hardly speak  
Peace so unexplainable  
I, I can hardly think

As you call me deeper still  
As you call me deeper still  
As you call me deeper still  
Into love, love, love

## Offering

*<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning>*

Holy God of new beginnings, as we share our tithes and offerings with you, we are filled with hope. We enter the season of Advent with expectation; we have left behind us a time of fear, isolation, and uncertainty; and we raise our heads because we know our redemption is coming near. May our gifts be dedicated to help heal the brokenness of our world and to welcome our Messiah into the world once again. In Christ, we pray. Amen.

## Prayer for Ourselves and Others

*Julie Gvillo: <https://revgalblogpals.org/2021/11/07/sunday-prayer-petitions-inspired-by-ruth-and-naomi/>*

For the gift of faithful friendship, Lord,  
we thank you.

For the burden made lighter  
by the sharing,  
we thank you.

For the journey to wholeness  
nourished tenderly with compassion,  
we thank you.

For the stranger in a foreign land,  
we pray for hospitality.

For the grieving and lonely,  
we pray for comfort  
and companionship.

For those who have no means  
to care for themselves,  
we pray for a caring  
and responsible  
community.

For the saints who have gone before,  
we light candles in remembrance.

For the new life born in our midst,  
we celebrate with joy.

For the church gathered to receive  
both our sorrow  
and our gladness,  
we humbly pray.



May all that we are  
and all that we hope to be  
bring honour and glory to you, O God,  
our Rock and our Redeemer.

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, holy 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 forever.  
Amen

### What Child is This?

What Child is this who, laid to rest  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and Angels sing;  
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate,  
Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.

Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,  
The cross be borne for me, for you.  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,  
Come peasant, king to own Him;  
The King of kings salvation brings,  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.

Raise, raise a song on high,  
The Virgin sings her lullaby.  
Joy, joy for Christ is born,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

### Benediction and Grace

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Love of God,  
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.