

How's Your Credit?

20 February 2022

Call to Worship Psalm 37

Trust in the LORD, and do good;

so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.

Take delight in the LORD,

and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the LORD;

trust in him, and he will act.

Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him;

do not fret over those who prosper in their way,

The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;

he is their refuge in the time of trouble.

The LORD helps them and rescues them;

because they take refuge in him.

All creatures of our God and King

W H Draper

All creatures of our God and King,

Lift up your voice and with us sing

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam,

Thou silver moon with softer gleam,

O praise him, O praise him,

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,

Ye clouds that sail in heav'n along,

O praise him, alleluia!

Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,

Ye lights of evening, find a voice,

O praise him, O praise him,

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,

And worship him in humbleness,

O praise him, alleluia!

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,

And praise the Spirit, three in one,
O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Prayer of adoration and confession

Bethne Dodd

Throughout our opening prayers I invite you to join with me in saying the words

We give thanks for life

God of mountains and molehills, landscape and memory -

We give thanks for life

Its geology and ecology.

Its rich variety and complexity.

Nature's endless novelty, much yet to be discovered.

God of seas and streams, coastlines and creek-beds –

We give thanks for life

The vast Pacific.

The surging Waitaki.

Our region's waterways, both large and small.

God of crops and cultivation, vegetables and vineyards –

We give thanks for life

For seed and harvest.

Farms and livestock.

Gravel roads, gumboots and gateways.

God of joy and delight, our true source of happiness -

We give thanks for life

For people – who laugh and listen, who accept and know us.

For things - that interest and inspire us, bring us rest and refreshment.

For faith – that both grounds and upholds us, no matter what.

God of all life – despite the many blessings there are times we all fail to appreciate and care for the land and the living, so we bring before You our own private confessions, in the sure and certain knowledge of Your forgiveness...

In the name of the One who renews us in love

We give thanks for life

AMEN

Notices

The Peace

Reading 1 Luke 6:27-36

²⁷ “But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.

³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Reflection 1

Imagine you have never met me. I walk up to you and ask if I can borrow \$50. How do you think you would respond?

Now imagine you have known me for a little while and you have discovered that I like to buy lotto tickets and make bets at the local TAB. I ask if I can borrow \$50. How do you respond?

Imagine that you have known me for quite some time. I work hard and if I am asked to help with something I generally say yes and do what I say I will. I ask if I can borrow \$50. How do you respond?

The truth is that most of us would say no to the first two scenarios without giving much thought to it. Someone I have never met or someone I know can't be trusted with money is unlikely to get my direct financial help. I might provide some food or similar, but I am unlikely to hand over cash.

On the other hand, someone who has built up relationship over time, who has proved themselves trustworthy and reliable. That may be a different story. The difference is that in the third example I have done what is sometimes called, putting money in the bank. I have behaved in ways that mean you are likely to trust me and support me.

Let me give you an example from my role as a minister here. Over the last 3 years I have to the best of my ability tried to produce a reliable, for the most part if I can believe what you tell me, enjoyable Sunday service. You trust that if you turn up on Sunday you will get something that is reasonably predictable, scratches the right spots, and leaves you feeling good for the coming week. If I was to turn up next week and be completely off beat and weird you would give me the benefit of the doubt – he's just having an off day – because you trust that in general my behaviour is sound. I may not do everything you would like, but it's good enough. I have put money in the bank. If I need to make a withdrawal for some reason – perhaps I think we need to change some things around – I can make the change and you will allow it, maybe grumble a bit, but allow it because I have done what you needed the rest of the time.

It is true that some dishonest people use this process for their own benefit – we read of scams all the time where lonely people have given money to people who they think have taken an interest in them. We do need to be careful about who we trust! But the idea of building up credit or money in the bank has real benefits as well as the downsides.

I don't imagine any of this is news to you. It is simply an aspect of human nature. The problem with our reading this morning is that Jesus takes it a step beyond where most of us are comfortable. Jesus is saying that you don't get any credit for being nice to your friends. You are not putting anything in the bank of God by loving people who love you back or by helping people who will help you in response.

God's credit comes when you help the people who will lie and cheat and steal from you. Who will take all the help you can give them and walk away without looking back. Who will speak horribly of you to their friends. Who will eat your food and then spit in your face. And let me tell you right now that there are plenty of people in this world like that. Some of them because they don't know any better. Others because that is what they choose.

And Jesus says, 'But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.' I suspect that one of the reasons the church is struggling as it is, is because we have lost sight of this key principle. And so the credit that could be building up in the bank of God has run out and we are left with empty pockets. What do you think?

Open the eyes of my heart

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Open the eyes of my heart

I want to see You

I want to see You

To see You high and lifted up

Shining in the light of Your glory

Pour out Your power and love

As we sing holy, holy, holy

Holy, holy, holy

We cry holy, holy, holy

You are holy, holy, holy

I want to see you

Reading 2

Luke 6:37-38

³⁷ “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Reflection 2

I want to make it clear that I am not in any way disparaging the church, what it has been, what it is now. Have we made some mistakes along the way? Of course we have. Could we have done better? Of course we could. That’s simply not the point. The point I am trying to make is that we are here, now, and here and now is always a good time to evaluate and move on. Philosopher George Santayana once said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” I think it could equally be said that those who do not see the future approaching are condemned to be crushed beneath it. It’s not as good as George’s quote, but feel free to use it 😊. Let’s celebrate our past, those things good and bad that have brought us here. Then without pause look to what is ahead of us and celebrate the fact that in God we are always becoming more like Jesus. Then we decide what that means in our words and actions. I find it interesting that Jesus immediately follows the idea of loving our enemies with these words: Do not judge, do not condemn, forgive, give. All of these are paired with a response. Keep the idea of loving our enemies in mind as we go through these.

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. This is not about sitting in judgement about criminal actions. It is about how we treat other people around us with love and humility. Are they too heavy or too thin or too slow or too short or too tall or too pretty or not pretty enough? Do they wash the dishes wrong, used incorrect grammar, turn up late, forget things,... the list is endless. I suspect we are all guilty of judging others in this way. In a way Ms Adern speaks to the church without realising it when she reminds us to, 'be kind.' Do not condemn and you will not be condemned simply reinforces this thinking. Forgiveness and generosity call us to a different way of thinking and being. When we are forgiving and generous, judging and condemnation become unimportant and fade into the background. Equally, when we fail to forgive and give it is easy to see judgement and condemnation slipping back into our behaviour.

Can you see how this applies to loving our enemies? It is, in the end, a difference of heart. Show me a person blaming the poor for their circumstances and I will show you someone who has lost the arts of generosity and forgiveness. Show me a person whose first response to anything they don't like is to complain and I will show you someone whose heart has become mired in judgement and condemnation.

How many of you remember that song, pressed down, shaken together, running out all over? God wants us to experience that joyful, messy experience of receiving back in abundance that measure of generosity and forgiveness we display for others – those we love, and our enemies, those we trust, and those we trust as far as we can throw them. It's not clean and easy. It doesn't come with a tidy cover and wrapped in a nice bow. This kind of generosity and forgiveness builds credit in the bank of God. And it pays back many times over. Can I invite you to invest in that bank? In doing so I think we remember the past, and invite the future with hope and in faith. That seems pretty exciting to me.

We Pray

God of regular, everyday people. Normal people, with hopes and dreams, mistakes and failures. Help us to live, not in fear of what tomorrow may bring, but in faith that you hold the future in your hand. Gift us the ability to forgive and give with joy and in abundance. We know that it will be messy. We know that it will be uncomfortable. We know that you will celebrate with us in that mess and discomfort. Teach us to be lovers of this world and all the people in it, even the ones we don't like. Through the mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Shout to the Lord

Darlene Zschech

My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord, there is none like You;
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love.

My comfort, my shelter,
Tower of refuge and strength;
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You.

Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name.

I sing for joy at the work of Your hands,
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand,
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth
Will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace

Offering

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

Holy God of light and life that overcomes darkness and death: as we offer our gifts and offerings to you this morning, we pray that we may give the confidence and assurance of those fully convinced in our promise of Resurrection! Help us to experience our generosity as those who have no need to hold back or hedge our bets. May we live our days giving freely with love and grace, not as those who have the hope of salvation, but the promise! In Christ, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for ourselves and others

<https://worldinprayer.org/>

Maker of Heaven and Earth, we do not live as you would wish we would. We are so far from building your Beloved Community. We are more concerned with our own interests, pride and power than the safety and wellbeing of our neighbours, especially those who are neglected and marginalized. Help us to shorten the distance between heaven and earth. May we see the world anew with your vision—your beloved creation filled with your beloved children each created in your own image. Thus, today, we pray for our neighbours, our enemies and ourselves so that peace, justice, and love may be known fully and intimately by all. May we all find hope and healing in you and through you.

- We pray for your children in Russia and Ukraine as tensions mount amidst looming threats of Russia invading Ukraine.
- We pray for young Muslim girls in Karnataka, India who are protesting after being denied entry into their colleges for wearing hijabs.
- We pray for your children in Tunisia as political unrest endures and fears of a return to authoritarian rule grows.
- We pray for our siblings in Madagascar where the death toll has risen to 92 deaths and more than 112,000 people have been displaced by the aftermath of Cyclone Batsirai.

Jehovah Raah, the Lord, our Shepherd we bring our needs, our fears, our hopes and our dreams to you now. Those we love, those we long for, those torn from us through death or separation. Hear our prayers now.

All these things we pray in and through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us how to pray...

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

O for a thousand tongues

Charles Wesley

O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread thro' all the earth abroad
the honours of your name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease,
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean;
his blood availed for me.

Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here may we hold our own importance lightly and love,
forgive and give generously, pressed down and shaken together to the glory of
God.

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.