

# Still Awake?

27 February 2022

Call to Worship Psalm 99

The LORD is king; let the peoples tremble!

**He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!**

Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness.

**Extol the LORD our God; worship at his footstool. Holy is he!**

Extol the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain;

**For the LORD our God is holy.**

When we walk with the Lord

When we walk with the Lord

In the light of His Word,

What a glory He sheds on our way;

While we do His good will,

He abides with us still,

And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey,

For there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus,

But to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise,

Not a cloud in the skies,

But His smile quickly drives it away;

Not a doubt or a fear,

Not a sigh or a tear,

Can abide while we trust and obey.

But we never can prove

The delights of His love,

Until all on the altar we lay;

For the favour He shows,

And the joy He bestows,

Are for them who will trust and obey.

## Prayer of adoration and confession

Apples, tomatoes, melons, strawberries, peaches, pears, boysenberries, plums, cherries, apricots, beans, cabbages, potatoes, raspberries, fruit and vegetables abound. We pause in amazement at your generosity, God.

Daisies and Dahlias, Roses and Daffodils, Flax and Peonies, Kowhai and Bottlebrush, Pohutukawa and Rata, Lilies and Kakabeak, beautiful flowers abound. We pause in amazement at your beautiful creation, God.

We confess that we often rush past without giving thought to the incredible world you have gifted us. We lose our sense of wonder and in doing so our own sense of self-importance grows. Teach us to walk humbly before you and keep our eyes on you lest we become too big for our boots.

We bring our own confessions now.

God does not forgive us out of obligation, but in love. We are forgiven in Christ through God's love. Amen.

## Notices

### The Peace

#### Reading 1                      Luke 9:28-32

<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

<sup>30</sup> Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

#### Reflection 1

What is the last thing you cheered about? Jumped up, punched the air, woohooed, or whatever it is you do when you get excited. Maybe a sports match, or family news, something that made you want to tell the world that you felt good. The adrenaline runs, the blood thunders and your energy goes up. I get it when I sing a great song or when the team I am cheering for scores. I get it jumping out of an aeroplane at 2000m, riding my motorbike fast around corners, hearing that I have a new grandchild, playing with my grandchildren. All sorts of things that give me a buzz. On a different level, but just as energising is watching waves crash against a seawall, seeing a rainbow, walking

through native bush, watching a fantail flit from branch to branch. There is just so much going on in the world that I don't want to miss (FOMO). Sometimes I am tired beyond words and still don't want to go to sleep because something will happen and I won't be there for it. Do you ever feel like that?

With all of that I find it difficult to understand what was going on with Peter, James and John. How could they have been with Jesus with that kind of transformation happening and be weighed down with sleep? What was going on with them that sleep was more inviting than taking in absolutely everything that was happening with Jesus? It got me thinking of the other time when they couldn't seem to stay awake while Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Now it's possible that Jesus in the act of prayer was boring, sleep inducing even. It might even have been a little like when you go on a trip with someone and they see someone they know and engage in a conversation that has nothing to do with you and about which you know nothing. It's not really conducive to maintaining interest. It's possible they had had a long day and were tired. Climbing the mountain to pray was just enough to tip them over the edge of exhaustion.

I find myself wondering if it is something that happens more often than we realise. God begins to do something and we sleep right on through it. It's not that God is boring or uninteresting. It's that our spiritual muscles are out of condition. Let me give you an example. I used to cycle a lot. I was reasonably fit and could put in some fairly impressive times, often racing buses down the road. I thought I would like to train for a biathlon, and that it would be easy to do since I was already aerobically fit. Imagine my consternation when I found that 3 minutes of running had me bent over trying to catch my breath. Yes, I was fit in one sense, but not in the other. I think it might be the same spiritually. Maybe we are good at going to church, and reading our Bibles. Perhaps we pray regularly. But when God calls us out of our comfortable patterns it can be overwhelming and exhausting. Peter and John and James were overwhelmed and exhausted and they very nearly missed what God was doing with Jesus that night. I wonder if we are missing what God is doing because we are not prepared for it.

## Celebrate

*Don Moen*

Celebrate, Jesus celebrate  
Celebrate, Jesus celebrate  
Celebrate, Jesus celebrate  
Celebrate, Jesus celebrate

He is risen, He is risen  
And He lives forevermore  
He is risen, He is risen  
Come on and celebrate  
The resurrection of our Lord

## Reading 2                      Luke 9:33-36

<sup>33</sup> Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” <sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

## Reflection 2

The problem with being unfit and out of condition is that you are more likely to make dumb decisions. I’m sure we all know stories of trampers who have carried on past their best, become lost and in some cases lost their lives because they are too cold, too hungry, too tired to continue safely. The signs along the road that remind us to stop and rest if we are tired are because we make poor driving decisions if we are not alert.

I do feel sorry for Peter in this story. I am quite sure he would have responded differently if the fog of weariness had not descended. What it does show is the natural instinct to hold on to what we have. ‘Hey, this is a good thing that is going on. Let’s keep it.’ I want to unpack this a little.

‘Master, it is good for us to be here.’ The first question that occurs to me is, ‘Is it really all that good?’ Think about it – they have just climbed a mountain. They have no supplies. It is a long way there and back to get supplies. There is obviously no shelter and likely whatever they could build would be temporary. It is decidedly not a good place to be in the medium or long term. It simply

seems that way in the moment. Anyone who has climbed a mountain will tell you that the view is amazing, but they wouldn't want to stay there. And then, 'let us make three dwellings...' To what end? For Jesus and Moses and Elijah to stay on the top of the mountain? Why would they want to stay there?

I wonder if that is the situation we find ourselves in now. We have climbed mountains to get to where we are now. It has been a wonderful experience and the energy that we gained from it has kept us going for a long time. But the mountain is no place to live. It doesn't have the ingredients for a healthy life. And here's the problem that strikes me now. If we don't come down in control, we will end up coming down out of control – we either climb down, or we fall down. And what happens when you fall down a mountain? People get hurt.

Let me illustrate. I suspect that many of those listening grew up in the time of the Bible Class movement – apologies to those of you who don't live in New Zealand. The Bible Class movement was amazing, and a lot of young people came to faith and held on to their faith through the Bible Class movement. The sad thing comes when I hear people in their 70s and 80s harking back to their experience of the Bible Class movement as the height of their Christian story. What has happened since then? I want to ask. What new things has God done in your life? I am deeply aware that I frequently tell stories of things that have happened in the past and I find myself asking, 'Where are my new stories? What can I tell of what God is doing right now?' I don't want to become stuck on the mountain top with Peter, desperately trying to hold onto something that is ephemeral, that will soon pass. I don't want you to be stuck on the mountain top either.

Let's quickly look at what comes next. A cloud comes, a voice says, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" then Moses and Elijah are gone and Jesus is alone with them. Let me suggest this. The past has passed. We may have learned a little and grown a little through our experiences. Jesus is not in the past. Jesus is now. Jesus is alive and dynamic and always calling us on. Taking us down one mountain, through a few valleys, up another mountain. No one is too old to be on the journey. If you are 105 you are still young enough to grow in your experience of Jesus at work in you and those around you.

Be encouraged. The energy that comes from the new and exciting may reduce with time, but it will always be there. The question is whether we hang on to the safety of the past or press in to the future with all its uncertainties and fears, a place where God is at work in many surprising and exciting ways.

## We Pray

Help us to stay awake God. There are so many things that tire us out, often because we are out of condition and underprepared for what you long to do among us. We confess that we are often betrayed by our longing for the mountaintop and try to build shelters so we can stay there, not noticing you have already moved on. Grant us wisdom and insight through your Holy Spirit to be passionate about the mountaintops and passionate about the valleys, to your glory we pray. Amen.

## Everything that has breath

*Parachute Band*

He is our God

Let all creation bow

The sovereign King most holy one

He sacrificed His life

Washed and cleansed within

Portioned by faith

We're destined to win

Everything that has breath praise the Lord

Everything that's in me praise the Lord

I can praise Him on the highest mountain

Praise Him in the lowest valley

Everything that's in me praise the Lord

## Offering

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

Transforming God, we come to your altar this morning, knowing that in our giving and in our living, we have often put “just enough” into living our faith so as not to impact our lifestyle or cause too much discomfort. We have been reluctant to let go of our affinity for the things of this world; and in our attachments, we have often missed the opportunity for the transformed lives you desire for us. May our offering this morning be an invitation to living a life radically transformed by your power, love, and grace. We pray this in the mighty love of Jesus. Amen.

## Prayer for ourselves and others

For refugees, from war, from famine, from climate change, from economic ruin.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

**Just God, work through our deeds...**

For leaders in government, in business, in the church.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

**Just God, work through our deeds...**

For farmers and fishers, workers in factories and offices, homes and schools.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

**Just God, work through our deeds...**

For the house-bound and infirm, those isolated by ill-health or fear.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

**Just God, work through our deeds...**

For ourselves, our families and friends.

Merciful God, work through our prayers,

**Just God, work through our deeds...**

All these things we pray through Jesus, the Christ, 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 worship the king

O worship the King all glorious above,  
and gratefully sing his power and his love:  
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,  
pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

O tell of his might and sing of his grace,  
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;  
his chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form,  
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth, with its store of wonders untold,  
Almighty, our power has founded of old;  
established it fast, by a changeless decree,  
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

O measureless Might, ineffable Love,  
whom angels delight to hymn thee above!  
Your humble creation, with glory ablaze,  
in true adoration shall sing to your praise!

### Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here may we be awake to the Holy Spirit at work in us and through us and ready for new stories to tell of the Glory of God through Jesus in us.

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.