

Doom and Gloom

13 March 2022

Call to Worship Psalm 27

The LORD is my light and my salvation;

whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life;

of whom shall I be afraid?

Though an army encamp against me,

my heart shall not fear;

though war rise up against me,

yet I will be confident.

One thing I asked of the LORD,

to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,

Teach me your way, O LORD,

and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

Jesus is Lord

David John Mansell

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it

For by his power each tree and flower was planned and made.

Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it

Sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!

Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!

Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal

In flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.

Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding

Yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free.

Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror

From death he rose; and all his foes shall own his name.

Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit

To show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

Prayer of adoration and confession

Lord of the years

Of time past, of time to come

You know our beginning and our end

You see the passing of time in our lives
Hair that lightens and thins
Muscles that strengthen then decline
Eyesight that lengthens and shortens
Yet you are unchanged and unchanging
Your strength and love are a constant
Holding us through all our change
Thank you for keeping us in your love.

Pause

We confess that often in our change
We leave undone your call in our lives
And constantly do those things that hurt and disappoint you
Help us to honour you in our actions and our thoughts.
We bring our private confessions before you now.

Pause

Our God, the Alpha and Omega
Who moves through time
Gives us pardon and peace as we bring our confessions
We are forgiven through Jesus Christ
Amen.

Notices

The Peace

Reading 1 Luke 13:31-35

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

Reflection 1

The world is coming to an end. Governments are stealing our freedom. Everyone is being implanted with microchips. Bill Gates is the embodiment of evil. We're all going to die.

Well, the last one is true, we just don't know when it will happen.

It is easy to get caught up on the onslaught of bad news and weird conspiracy theories that are increasingly difficult to untangle from each other. Which is real, which is imaginary. Where is the smoke really coming from? How can we know what to believe and what to file under B for Bin? What can we really know about the war in Ukraine? What do we know about China's intentions? Can we trust the United States? Is it true that supermarkets are milking us for all they are worth? Why is Gib board selling for 3 times its pre-pandemic cost? For the most part New Zealanders just ignore most of it and get on with living. But even there, I have been down the main road in Oamaru a few times this week. It's very quiet. People are staying close to home, unwilling to risk being in the wrong place at the wrong time and catching Covid.

Doom and gloom has become a global pastime engaged in by the young and the old. And look, it's not new to us either. In our reading this morning we see a group of Pharisees coming to Jesus with a warning that Herod wants to kill him. Now it's perfectly reasonable to think that there would have been some Pharisees supportive of Jesus' ministry. So this aspect of the story is unsurprising. What is surprising is Jesus' response to their warning. 'Go and tell Herod I have work to do and he is not going to stop me.'

I think there are several lessons for all of us in this response.

The lesson I want to concentrate on here is the importance of knowing why you are here. I wonder how many people as they get older begin to feel like they are past their use-by date. Like an old pottle of sour cream they've started to go mouldy and are only fit for the waste bin. Or young people who feel as though their hopes and dreams have no value to anyone else and what is the point of even trying. There may be some who hesitate to venture out for fear of Covid. Or for fear of vaccines. Whatever the case you are not past your use-by date. Your hopes and dreams hold real value – to you and to everyone with whom you come into contact. You are here because God still has a plan and a purpose for your life. It may not consist of casting out demons and performing cures. It may not be flashy and exciting. It may be quiet prayer or baking a cake for a neighbour or helping a friend with their homework. No matter what it is,

when you put God's plan into action stuff happens. People's lives are changed. Things get moved around in heaven and on earth.

You could perhaps look at me and ask, 'Why am I still here?' Honestly, I have no idea – that is something between you and God. What I do know is that God's plan for you good. God's plan for you is just right for you. Not too easy. Not too difficult. The chances are pretty good that you won't turn the world upside down. If you find and work on God's plan for your life you will make a real difference in the world.

Jesus knew why he was there. He understood God's plan for his life and intended to work it out to the best of his ability. I suspect that part of his sadness for Jerusalem was that it represented a people who knew God had called them to something special, but they had no desire to understand that specialness or to work on making it real. It was no wonder the people of Israel were full of doom and gloom. They had taken their eyes off God's call on their lives and fixated on themselves. There is a lesson in that for all of us today.

Blessed be your name

Matt Redman

Blessed be your name in the land that is plentiful
Where your streams of abundance flow blessed be Your name
Blessed be your name when I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness blessed be Your name

Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in, Lord still I will say
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name when the sun's shining down on me
When the world's 'all as it should be' blessed be Your name
Blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering blessed be Your name

You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord, blessed be Your name

Reading 2

Philippians 3:17-4:1

¹⁷ Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. ¹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Reflection 2

It can be tempting to revel in doom and gloom. Somehow we find an easy familiarity in the kind of despair the world so easily encourages us to wallow in. Although Paul's language is a little obtuse, he makes a point that is worthy of 21st century psychology when he says, 'their god is the belly.' I hesitate to think how many people, myself included, either comfort eat, starve ourselves or spend inordinate amounts of time focussed on how we look. Instead of food being fuel for what we do, admittedly a potentially pleasurable fuel, it becomes a placebo we use to fix how we feel. I'm stressed, I eat. I'm worried what people think, I work out. I'm in despair, I starve myself. All sorts of variations on the theme. I vividly remember my brother, who for a long time had been concerned that Dad looked after his health, saying to him around his 85th birthday, "Hey, you've been around this long, just eat what you want." I remember it because I was so surprised at the change of pace. Food was no longer a fear bringer but a pleasure to relish. The doom and gloom was replaced with joy.

That is where I think Paul is heading when he reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven. He recognises that we are faced with a huge burden of stress and worry. It doesn't matter whether it is our age or health or finances, or whether it is things beyond us like Covid or Climate Change or War. All these things either individually or jointly can bear down on us and fill us with foreboding and fear. Paul's response is to say, 'Look up. There are better things to look forward to.'

Of course, it could be argued by some that this whole heaven thing is imaginary and of no earthly use. But it doesn't end with simply looking up. This is a call to a change of thinking, a change of habit, a change of action. In

looking up we can see the world differently. It's perhaps a little like how people once thought the earth was flat. Then Yuri Gagarin climbed on a rocket and saw that the earth was round. A total change in perspective that affects everything we do, from travel to communication to economics. Looking up to a Saviour brings a change in perspective with the potential to change how we live and even who we are in terms of how we face the world. Without doubt there are still all sorts of things that cause worry and concern. We are never going to get younger and Covid can't be cured with a positive attitude no matter what the deniers try to tell us. That's not the point. The point is that we see these things differently and as a result we respond to them differently. As we search for God's hand in what is happening around us the doom and gloom is put into proportion next to a God who the Lord of time and who has a continuously updated count of the hairs of our heads.

So, what to do? First, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. This gives us perspective. Then we ask God, with willing hearts, 'What do I do now?' And we keep on asking that question because the answer will change with our circumstances. We don't look to see if our neighbour got the same answer as we did – because they probably didn't – this is not a multichoice quiz. This is God's personal and perfect plan for you. Will it be easy? I doubt it. Will it solve the world's problems? Probably not. Will it help you stand firm in the face of inevitable stress and worry? Definitely.

We Pray

Caring God, who sees our fears and worries and longs to comfort us, thank you for walking beside us along a path we see only dimly. We confess that we are often confounded by concern for ourselves, our families, our world and we take our eyes off you because it seems the only way to be able to step through the morass before us.

Help us to find our purpose in you, and in finding our purpose to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Teach us to rest in your love, even in the face of everything the world throws at us. Through Jesus we pray. Amen.

Way Maker

Sinach

You are here, moving in our midst
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, working in this place
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, moving in our midst

I worship You, I worship You
You are here, working in this place
I worship You, I worship You

You are
Way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper
Light in the darkness, my God
That is who You are

You are here, touching every heart
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, healing every heart
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, turning lives around
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, mending every heart
I worship You, I worship You

You are here, touching every life
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, meeting every need
I worship You, I worship You

That is who You are

Even when I don't see it, You're working
Even when I don't feel it, You're working
You never stop, You never stop working
You never stop, You never stop working

Offering

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

Generous God, as we travel toward Easter, allow us to walk beside Jesus as he makes his journey into Jerusalem. As we offer our gifts this morning, may it be our way of saying we won't turn away from the problems and conflicts of this world; but like Jesus, we will walk toward them. All we take for the journey is the compassion, mercy, and sacrifice that he carried—moving toward what waited in the Holy City. We journey in Christ's steps and pray in Christ's holy name. Amen.

Prayer for ourselves and others

Ukraine and Russia

God of peace,

Russia has invaded the Ukraine and war has come.

God of wisdom,

Rain down your Spirit onto the leaders of the world

That they might find a way where there is no way.

God of comfort,

Wrap the grieving ones in your cloak of consolation.

God of courage,

Be present with all those who are in harm's way.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Our Police

God of justice

Crime, protest, and disinformation

Unrelated yet interwoven. Gift our police insight and wisdom

That they would know how to bring justice where it has been lost.

Our Leaders

God of mercy

Waves of change are crashing all around us

Leaders are called to lead without respite

Gift our leaders space to reflect and to prepared considered answers

For problems and issues that seem intractable.

Teachers and Students

God of grace

Schools open. Schools closed. Teachers and students alike

Afflicted with Covid, with Covid weariness, with exhaustion

Grant them strength to continue and grace to support those who are struggling.

Ourselves

God of Love

We continually struggle to find our way. Missing loved ones, afraid for those

absent, worried about our health, concerned about our future. Help us to rest

in your love and find solace in your presence.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Amen.

O Come to the Altar

Steven Furtick

Are you hurting and broken within
Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin
Jesus is calling
Have you come to the end of yourself
Do you thirst for a drink from the well
Jesus is calling

O come to the altar
The Father's arms are open wide
Forgiveness was bought with
The precious blood of Jesus Christ

Leave behind your regrets and mistakes
Come today there's no reason to wait
Jesus is calling
Bring your sorrows and trade them for joy
From the ashes a new life is born
Jesus is calling

Oh what a Saviour
Isn't He wonderful
Sing alleluia, Christ is risen
Bow down before Him
For He is Lord of all
Sing alleluia, Christ is risen

Bear your cross as you wait for the crown
Tell the world of the treasure you've found

Communion

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.

And God saw that it was good.

God created the sky and the land and the land produced plants of every kind.

And God saw that it was good.

God created the sun, the moon and the stars and filled the waters and the land with living creatures.

And God saw that it was good.

God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Then God rested on the 7th day

But we took the good God had done for granted. More than that, we broke the good relationship God had designed between us and the creation, between each other and between us and God. We set ourselves apart as better than, more than, greater than, all that God had made.

We made ourselves gods in our own image

But God had a plan to restore our broken relationships.

Jesus, God's only Son came to live among us

**to proclaim good news to the poor,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.**

And we spurned him, nailing him to a tree, preferring our brokenness to his promise of wholeness.

So God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
**that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

This Jesus, who gave his life to bring us back into relationship with God, is the Jesus we remember whenever we celebrate communion.

This Jesus taught us how to pray...

**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**

We invite you, Holy Spirit, to transform these elements, the bread and wine, symbols of Jesus' life given for us, that as we share in this meal together we also might be transformed, becoming a little more Christlike in our words and in our behaviour day by day.

The night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said: Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this to remember me.

After supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and said: Drink this, all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins; do this as often as you drink it, to remember me.

Therefore heavenly Father, in this sacrament of the suffering and death of your Son, we now celebrate the wonder of your grace and proclaim the mystery of our faith.

**Christ has died,
Christ has risen,
Christ will come in glory.**

Redeemer God, rich in mercy, infinite in goodness, we were far off until you brought us near and our hands are empty until you fill them. As we eat this bread and drink this cup, through the power of your Holy Spirit feed us with your heavenly food, renew us in your service, unite us in Christ, and bring us to your everlasting kingdom.

O the depths and riches of your wisdom, O God; how unsearchable are your judgements and untraceable your ways.

**From you, and through you,
and for you are all things
To you be the glory for ever
Amen.**

Draw near and receive the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ in remembrance that he died for us. Let us feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.

You may wish to share in communion this morning, you may not. Know that whatever your choice you are loved beyond measure and we are one in the bond of love.

Shine, Jesus, shine

Graham Kendrick

Lord, the light of Your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth You now bring us
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy

Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light

Lord, I come to Your awesome presence
From the shadows into Your radiance
By the blood, I may enter Your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness
Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
Shine on me, shine on me

Benediction and Grace

As we go, may our hearts and minds find peace and strength in the love and mercy 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.