

# New

15 May 2022

## Call to Worship Psalm 148

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

**Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!**

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

**Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!**

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;

**His glory is above earth and heaven. Praise the LORD!**

## All things bright and beautiful

*Cecil Frances Alexander*

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful:  
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flow'r that opens,  
Each little bird that sings,  
He made their glowing colours,  
He made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountains,  
The river running by,  
The sunset and the morning  
That brightens up the sky.

He gave us eyes to see them,  
And lips that we might tell  
How great is God Almighty,  
Who has made all things well.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Creator God,  
from the moment your spirit  
hovered over the waters of this earth,  
we were part of a vision held lovingly within your heart.  
From the moment you spoke and separated darkness from light,  
you created space where we might one day walk.  
From the moment your joy spilled out into green and living things,

your beauty was revealed for us to taste and see.

Creator God, for this world,  
beauty and majesty, passion and artistry,  
a green and pleasant place,  
we praise your mighty name.  
You have given us a world of beauty, and we have spoilt it.  
A world to feed us, and so many go hungry.  
A world of riches, and we are unwilling to share.  
A world to care for, and we think only of ourselves.

Forgive us, gracious God,  
for those times your heart is saddened by our selfishness.  
For those times we have no thought for others, no cares but ours.  
Enable us to see this world anew as a gift from you,  
to be shared and nurtured,  
and those who live upon it to be loved and cared for.  
We ask this that your name may be glorified,  
through the beauty of this world,  
and the service of our lives  
Amen

## Reading 1                      John 13:31-35

### *The New Commandment*

<sup>31</sup> When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup> Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ <sup>34</sup> I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

### Reflection 1

We are bouncing around a little in John at the moment. Last week we looked at Jesus on the beach with Peter and the other disciples. This week our theme kind of follows on from that, but reads from a few days earlier.

Jesus had washed the disciples feet and then shared the Passover with them. Judas had left to betray him to the Chief Priests.

I want to take a moment to pause here and invite you to get a feel for how this is for Jesus. As usual Peter had been a prat when Jesus came to wash his feet and Jesus had to explain what was going on. Then the emotionally charged sharing of the Passover. This commemoration of how God had set the Israelites free from the Egyptians was replete with symbology both to the past and to the future. Jesus knew he was sharing his last meal with his disciples before he died. Stop. Think.

This is my body. I'm going to be arrested tonight, mocked, beaten and given to the Romans to crucify.

This is my blood. I will be hung on that cross next to two criminals and suffer an agonising death.

Remember me. I will be taken down from the cross and be buried in a hole in the rock.

I cannot impose my imagination on that story to be able to understand how he did that. After three years his disciples were still clueless about what was going to happen next. I can imagine being angry, sad, disappointed, despairing, and any of a whole other range of emotions. Yet he continues on. 'I am glorified. God is glorified in me. Then this:

Little children.

Imagine for a moment children clustered around a parent as they tell a story. Utterly absorbed by the story they listen for the tone, for the speed and rhythm of the telling. They watch the teller intently, searching for clues about what will come next. They don't know this story well, but they have heard variations on the theme. It's like Jesus looks at them and says, 'Come and give me a cuddle.' He knows they don't understand the implications of what he is saying to them. He knows that all they hear is the glory of the story without any of its moral or ethical underpinnings. And he continues to love them and care for them through it.

All of which means that when he says to them that he is giving them a new commandment there is a depth that is easy to miss. Right now, in this moment, they have no idea what he means when he says, 'Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.' It sounds like he is telling the kids they need to behave and look after each other. But this love he is talking about is so much more than not fighting over their toys and learning to share the cake fairly. This love Jesus is talking about is on a different level altogether.

Let me expand on that a little. The love a person has for their spouse or a close sibling. Does that love show you are Jesus' disciples? Answer: Not really. How about the love for a friend or an activity? Generally not. This love is different. It is a love that comes with a price. It is a love that includes. It is a love that sees beyond the dumb and the stupid and the difficult and understands the heart as it longs to be rather than as it is. It is a love that stands out because it is different. It is a love that new because it is generated by the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. We cannot manufacture it. We can only receive it and pass it on. It really is NEW. Let's take a few moments to ponder that.

## Glorify

*Parachute Band*

Lord I come into your Holy place.  
Stand in awe, of your cleansing grace.  
Who am I, that you would care for me?  
I glorified the one who died for me.

Glorify, glorify  
Let your name be lifted up and glorified  
Let the earth tremble at your name  
Let your name be lifted up and glorified

Into your hands, I commit my life  
Day by day as a living sacrifice  
Who am I that you would care for me?  
I glorify the one who died for me

## Reading 2                      Revelation 21:1-6

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them as their God;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

<sup>4</sup> he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.”

<sup>5</sup> And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

<sup>6</sup> Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

## Reflection 2

I want to invite you to think about Revelation from a slightly different perspective to what is traditionally taken. What if the Revelation of John is not a descriptive text of how the world will end? What if it is a love letter from God to a people who are being ground down by a society that has taken the attitude that Christians are the enemy? What if all the apocalyptic imagery is a way of acknowledging their pain and fear and enabling them to think differently about what is happening around them?

And what if heaven isn't a place we go, but a place God comes from? And what if hope isn't found in some imaginary neverland, but in God at work in us in the here and now? What if the new heaven and new earth are the result of us learning to love in that profound new way that Jesus revealed to his disciples? What if the bride adorned for her husband is the result of that love working its way into the world in real and practical ways?

What might that look like?

You will likely be aware that I have what some think is a negative view of the future of the church. I get why that could seem to be the case. I talk about churches like Eveline or any one of dozens of others around the country quietly expiring. Of empty buildings and vast quantities of untouched and untouchable money sitting in accounts doing nothing to the glory of God. None of that is a good thing. But what if...

What if we, that's you and I, learn to love in the way Jesus talked about and demonstrated? What if we learn to love in a way that tells the world we are Jesus' disciples? What if we learn to love in a way that accepts the cost? What if we learn to love beyond the dumb and the stupid and difficult and into the heart as it longs to be? What if our love was genuinely different to anything the world has to offer?

And there is the key point. We have become so habituated into being and doing like everyone else does that we have lost the ability to love like Jesus calls us to do. Which brings us to a rather steep mountain to climb. How do we

regain that ability? Without question, that love is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We can never generate it out of our own good will or good intentions. It truly is a NEW way of being.

I don't think that a world where churches are empty and accounts untouched is necessarily a bad image. Perhaps, with the practice of Holy Spirit inspired love it is an image full of hope. The early Christians didn't have buildings and large bank accounts. They did have love. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that this alternative way of thinking about what God is doing is pain free or easy. But what if, as God comes to dwell with us, in love, that pain is assuaged and given an alternative meaning? What if, in seeing a different kind of love at work among us people in our community begin to ask how they can have a part of this thing? What if this love is the water that comes as a gift from the spring of the water of life?

What do you think?

### We Pray

Love is hard, God. It's hard enough loving the people closest to us. It's so much harder to love in this NEW way. It's costly and it's messy. We complain and we moan about other people, even the ones we are supposed to be loving. Still you call us to a different way of being. A different way of loving. Would you transform us into people who are a part of the spring of the water of life, bringing life-giving love into this busted up world of ours? Grant us courage to be NEW lovers, sharing Christ through our love for each other. In 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

Generous and giving God, we offer gifts this day as those who have received so much more. You gave yourself to us and asked only for devotion, yet we get distracted by the world. You offered all of creation to meet our needs for food and shelter, yet we decided we wanted more. You offered your love to all, yet we decided some were more worthy and valuable than others. So, you gave us “the repentance that leads to life,” and all our giving pales by comparison. Dedicate us, we pray, in Christ’s holy name. Amen.

## Prayer for Others and Ourselves

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocC/C32east5.htm>

We bring you, Holy Friend, the concerns we hold in our minds, and the heartaches we carry deep within our being. Please sift out these prayers, and let all that is good align itself with your love for humanity.

We bring before you those unfortunate people featured in the news: the victims of accident, war, disease, violence, greed and natural disasters.

Let there be hope;

**Let there be love, let there be peace.**

We bring before you those who are ignored by the mass media: the forgotten minorities suffering oppression, the humble people who suffer constantly and die obscurely.

Let there be hope;

**Let there be love, let there be peace.**

We bring before you the church where there is persecution; church leaders who confront evil authority, and simple folk who stay faithful through hardship and death.

Let there be hope;

**Let there be love, let there be peace.**

We bring before you the political parties we don't vote for, leaders we do not trust, high profile people we dislike, and work colleagues who exasperate us.

Let there be hope;

**Let there be love, let there be peace.**

We bring before you neighbours whose sorrows we don't know about, friends with secret wounds and sorrows, relatives with temptations and anxieties that they hide from us.

Let there be hope;

**Let there be love, let there be peace.**

We bring before you church members we do not really know, those we can't understand, some who annoy us, and others whose beliefs and values dismay us.

Let there be hope;

**Let there be love, let there be peace.**

Through Christ, for Christ, and with Christ,  
May love deepen, spread and rule through all things.

Amen!



## 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

## To God be the glory

*Fanny Crosby*

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,  
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,  
Who yielded His life our redemption to win,  
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
Let the earth hear His voice;  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
Let the people rejoice;  
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God;  
The vilest offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,  
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
But purer, and higher, and greater will be  
Our wonder, our transport when Jesus we see.

## Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here may we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us with courageous love, NEW love, that speaks hope into our world.

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.