

Order of Service for 8th May 2022 podcast

Visions for the Future

Call to Worship

This is the place, and this is the time.
Here and now God waits
To break into our experiences,
To change our minds; to change our lives,
To change our ways,
To make us see the world and the whole of life
In a new light,
To fill us with hope, joy and certainty for the future.

This is the place, as are all places.
This is the time, as are all times.
Here and now, let us praise God.

We praise God now with our first hymn, *Come, Now is the Time to Worship*.

Song (WT 64) **Come, Now is the Time to Worship**

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God,
Come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God.
One day every knee will bow.
Still, the greatest treasure remains for those
Who gladly choose You now.

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God,
Come, come, come.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Confession

O God whose love cannot be measured, whose blessings cannot be numbered, we thank You for all your goodness to us.

In our weakness You are our strength,

In our darkness You are our light

In our sorrow You bring us comfort and peace and You are always our God.

We thank You for the sacrifice of Jesus who broke the power of death to bring us back to God.

Forgive us our unreliability.

Give us courage to stand up for You and enthusiasm to tell others the good news of Jesus.

Help us to listen to You as we worship, not just by words that are said, but in the music and the silence too. Lord, help us to act on your words by being the people You want us to be – loving and serving You and telling others of The Good News that Jesus has for them. Amen

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed 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.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Amen.

And now we join together in two worship songs.

Two Worship Songs: **You Are The One** and **Building a House**

Song **You Are The One**

Chorus

*How I love You, You are the One,
You are the One.
How I love You, You are the One for me.*

Verse 1

I was so lost, but You showed the way
'Cause You are the Way.
I was so lost, but You showed the way to me.

Chorus

Verse 2

I was lied to, but You told the truth
'Cause You are the Truth.
I was lied to, but You showed the truth to me.

Chorus

Verse 3

I was dying but You gave me life
'Cause You are the Life.
I was dying, and You gave Your life for me.

Chorus

You are the One, God's only Son.
You are the One for me.

Song **Building a House**

Verse 1

Isn't it good to be with friends;
Isn't it good to speak their names
And be a friend of Jesus?
Isn't it good to all belong,
Different voices in one song,
Singing our love for Jesus;

When everyone has a psalm, a prayer,
And everyone comes to give, to share?

Chorus

*God's building a house,
God's building a home,
Come fill it with glory.
You're building us strong,
You're making us one,
To shine out Your glory.*

Verse 2

Isn't it good that we can bring
Every good gift and offering
And lay it at the feet of Jesus,
Meeting Him here in every face,
Multiplying acts of grace,
Sharing the love of Jesus?
Isn't this the true bread and wine;
The other's needs, not me and mine?

Chorus

Bridge

And isn't it true we're joined in one
Chosen and precious cornerstone
Upon the Rock of Ages?

Chorus

So what have I got to give today?
What have I brought to give away,
All for the love of Jesus?

Offertory Prayer

Father, You give us so much in Your wonderful world. We give these gifts to
You; may they be used to show others how much you love them. Amen.

Our Bible readings today come from Isaiah and from Acts.

Bible Readings

Isaiah 42:1-9

The servant of the LORD

42 'Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.

² He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.

³ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.

In his teaching the islands will put their hope.'

⁵ This is what God the LORD says –

the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it:

⁶ 'I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.

I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,

⁷ to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

⁸ 'I am the LORD; that is my name!
I will not yield my glory to another
or my praise to idols.

⁹ See, the former things have taken place,

and new things I declare;
before they spring into being
I announce them to you.'

Acts 11:1-18

Peter explains his actions

11 The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticised him ³ and said, 'You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.'

⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ⁵ 'I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance, I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. ⁶ I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. ⁷ Then I heard a voice telling me, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

⁸ 'I replied, "Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth."

⁹ 'The voice spoke from heaven a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." ¹⁰ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

¹¹ 'Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. ¹² The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, "Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. ¹⁴ He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved."

¹⁵ 'As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: "John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?'

¹⁸When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, 'So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.

In our next hymn we sing of the blessings of trusting in God and seeking his Kingdom on earth.

Hymn (BPW 357) **Seek ye first the Kingdom of God**

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,
and His righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you;
allelu – alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu – alleluia!

Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of God;
allelu – alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu – alleluia!

Ask and it shall be given unto you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock and the door shall be opened unto you;
allelu – alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu – alleluia!

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,
he shall direct thy path,
in all thy ways acknowledge him;
allelu – alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu – alleluia!

Praise to the Father, praise to the Son,
praise to the Spirit too,
and to the Godhead, three in one;
allelu – alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu – alleluia!

Sermon

Visions for the Future

I expect that most of you know the person who started an important speech by saying “I have a dream”. Yes, it was Martin Luther King talking to the people of America. This is what he said,
“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed - We hold these truths to be self-evident – that all men are created equal”

This was his dream, his vision for the future.

In the passage we have read from Acts 10, we have Peter’s vision for the future. Luke, who wrote Acts, thought it was very important, as he wrote it again in Chapter 11. He didn’t print it out on his computer, but laboriously wrote it on papyrus scrolls. This story was the turning point in the history of the church. Without it, Christianity could have remained just another kind of Judaism. The first Christians were all Jews, and it would be very tempting for them to think that Christ had come just for them.

The story of Cornelius changes everything. He was a Roman centurion in Caesarea, equivalent to a sergeant major of today. He was a good leader of men, courageous, and would die, if need be, for his country. He worshipped God and was possibly attached to a synagogue. He was charitable and kind and his search for God made him love his people. And he too had a vision – his vision was to meet Peter.

Peter was staying at Joppa at this time. Like all strict Jews, he had been brought up to believe that God had no use for Gentiles, anyone who was not a Jew. But he was beginning to change his mind. We know this because he was staying with Simon the tanner. Tanners worked on dead bodies of animals and therefore he would have been a very “unclean” person. No strict Jew would have stayed there. Simon the tanner was a Christian, so Peter knew that Christ broke down barriers between people.

Let’s look at Peter’s vision - it starts with Peter being invited to eat all kinds of food, much of which was regarded as unclean by Jewish standards. The Jews

had strict rules laid down many years previously. We find them in the Book of Leviticus. “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you should eat. You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. There are some that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof. You must not eat them. They are unclean.”

When Peter has his vision, he sees many unclean animals, so will not eat them. But God’s message is different now. God says to Peter, “Do not consider anything unclean that God has declared clean.”

This whole vision is preparing Peter for his Gentile (unclean) visitors. Jews thought that other nations were quite outside the mercy of God. They never would have them as guests in their homes. Visitors only came to the door. But Peter invites them in, and later goes with them to see Cornelius. Christ breaks down barriers. God has no favourites.

Peter tells Cornelius and his friends all about Jesus. Christ came to give us all that new relationship with God. Jesus’ ministry of healing, love and forgiveness gives us new life.

Peter, Cornelius and Martin Luther King all had visions and acted on them. Have we got a vision for the future, as individuals or as a church?

A vision for the future is not just a wish – we must act.

But we must also pray. Our prayer should not be an attempt to persuade God to do our will, rather it is an activity in which we approach God, our Heavenly Father, in sincerity, to place ourselves in line with His will.

Then our vision will be God’s vision.

Peter wasn’t too happy at first. This change was very difficult, but it was God’s will; God’s vision for the future – all coming to know His love through His Son, Jesus Christ.

What is our vision? - for our ourselves, for our society, for our church?

God’s vision for us is told in Isaiah and in The Book of Revelations —God’s dwelling place is among his people, and He will dwell with them. They will be his people.

We have on our church wall the words, "Jesus changes death into life." How true this is. In today's society many folk are not really living. Many are living in fear. How many times do we hear of youngsters stabbing and killing others? Many people, young and old, are lonely, without a friend to confide in or laugh with.

Our Vision for the future should be a society where we love one another as Christ has loved us. What a change that would make.

As I have already said, vision must be followed up by action.

Coventry City Mission, based at Wood End, spent some time working at Olney Prison – teaching the inmates skills, giving training and friendship.

St Columba's Church, which has sadly now closed, spent much of their time working with the homeless and those with learning disabilities. I remember when Derek and I went to their Christmas party. At the end of the evening, mattresses were put down on the floor ready for the homeless to rest their heads at night. They were a wonderful fellowship.

We at Hearsall have an Al-anon Group dealing with the problems of alcohol.

We need to act on the vision that is given to us by God.

Peter went to Cornelius. He didn't wait for Cornelius to come to him.

Do we have gentiles that we do not want to include in our fellowship?

How about drug addicts, prostitutes, those living on the streets? I'm sure there are many others.

God's love is inclusive; our love needs to be the same.

There are still many issues we need to pray about, personally and as a church, and then we need to act. It won't be easy, but the Christian journey is not an easy one. Christ showed us that. Our vision needs to be based on the law of love.

May God help us to act on that vision, showing God's love to all whom we meet.

Our prayers of intercession today are brought to us by Denise Rée.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, as we walk around going about our daily lives, we see the world around us and wonder at its beauty. We also look at the devastation that is happening all over the world; damage caused by greed and hunger for power and countries destroying each other over sometimes trivial things.

We think of all the conflicts that are going on around the world and pray for a peaceful resolution for all involved.

We see the impact of global health issues and food shortages for some, while others have plenty and are not even thinking of those who go hungry.

We look at governments of our countries, cities and towns; please guide those who make decisions on our behalf.

We see all this through our own eyes but do we ever think about looking afresh as if through your eyes, Lord? If for a moment we were to do this, we may look at things in a different light, with kindness, compassion, with understanding and with renewed insight of the trials and tribulations of the wider world.

Please help us to look through your eyes, Lord, looking for ways to heal humanity and your wonderful creation.

Finally Lord, we pause to offer up our personal prayers for those around us in need of your love.

We pause now to think of those we know in the local community and those known to us personally, who need your love and support at this time, Lord.

Lord, hear our prayers and heal those who are sick and suffering, and give insight to those who need it.

Amen

We join in now with our final hymn, *Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my Heart.*

Hymn (BPW 521) **Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my Heart**

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Be all else but nothing, except what thou art;
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;
Be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
Be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
Be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower;
O raise thou me heavenward, great power of my power.

Be thou my true riches, not man's empty praise;
Be thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Be thou and thou only the first in my heart;
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys, after victory is won;
Great heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Closing Prayer

As we close this service come with us through the day and week ahead. May we feel your presence guiding us and protecting us in all we do. We ask this in Your holy name Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;
And the love of God;
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all, evermore. Amen

Sung Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you

Wherever he may send you;

May he guide you through the wilderness;

Protect you through the storm;

May he bring you home rejoicing

At the wonders he has shown you;

May he bring you home rejoicing

Once again into our doors.