

Order of Service for 21st August 2022

Holy Communion

“What HE said!”

Welcome

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home for 21st August 2022. Amongst the noise of all the voices we hear in the world, how vital it is to learn to tune into the still small voice of God, and to base our lives on what he says, rather than on the opinions of others.

Call to Worship

²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel...

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’

Hebrews 12: 22 - 24 & 28 - 29

Our opening hymn reminds us that we can only come to God on the basis of his grace and mercy, and not on the strength our merits. We come to him, *just as we are...*

Hymn (BPW 346) **Just as I am**

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that your blood was shed for me,
And that you will me to be free,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
All that I need in you to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, you will receive,
Will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because your promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, you love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now, to be yours, yes, yours alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
Here for a time, and then above,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Communal Reading

- 1 In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
- 2 In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me;
turn your ear to me and save me.
- 3 Be my rock of refuge,
to which I can always go;
give the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.

4 Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel.

5 For you have been my hope, Sovereign Lord,
my confidence since my youth.

6 From my birth I have relied on you;
you brought me forth from my mother's womb.
I will ever praise you.

Psalm 71: 1 - 6

Prayers

We begin our prayers with a reflection from Ivaleen Amanna of India.

Who is like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus talked with a Samaritan woman.

He took water from an outcast woman.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus forgave the prostitute woman.

He gave justice to the sinner.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus taught the word of God to Mary a woman.

He made known to her the love of God.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus was touched by the unclean woman.

He healed the woman who was bleeding.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus consoled the widow from Nain.

He wiped her tears away.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus appreciated the widow at the temple.

He paid attention to a poor woman.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus liberated the woman who was bent over.

He gave her health and happiness.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus took women in his ministry.

He called them to follow him.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Who is like Jesus?

Jesus comforted the women at the tomb.

He commanded them to preach the Gospel.

Are you like him?

Won't you do like Jesus?

Our Prayer

Father God, sometimes I am not like Jesus.

Forgive me.

We thank you for his example.

Help me to follow him. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Offering

Lord, make us a sharing people! Receive our gifts today and let us be a gift-giving church, so that your kingdom of shared prosperity may be sampled among us all.

Amen.

Well, the world often does seem dark. Let's celebrate the unquenchable light of Jesus as we sing, *Lord, the light of your love is shining...*

Song (WT 280) **Lord, the Light of your Love is Shining**

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.

Chorus

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.

Chorus

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.

Chorus

Our prayers this week are led by Nick Leonard.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving Lord, we pray for our church and all those who work so hard to keep it going, that it may shine as a light in Hearsall, Earlsdon and further afield. May we all think more about following your lead than about our own wishes, so that your kingdom may come, and your will may be done on earth. We pray today especially for our Minister, David, as he takes time to refresh himself whilst on holiday. May he come back to us with renewed vigour, strength and vision.

Loving Lord, we continue to pray for the world, your world, and for all those who live and work in it. We pray with confidence and ask for an end to war and famine. Lord, bring about change that will see the worlds resources distributed

in a fair and just way, so that human greed and power will be overcome, and the world will be a fairer place for all.

Loving Lord, we pray for our country, and for the decision to be made about a new prime minister. We pray for the many challenges we face as we think of the recent lack of rain and intense heat. We pray for farmers, whose crops are being spoiled through lack of water, and those whose health is under threat because of the heat. Lord, we pray for all those in financial need seeing, stretching before them, increases in food and fuel prices. May we all be aware of our use of fossil fuels which contributes to the warming of our planet.

Lord, we remember those who are ill, at home or in hospital. At this time, we lay before you those who are known to us. Meet with those who find themselves in darkness and wrap your healing arms around them. Please show us what we can do if there is anything practical to alleviate their suffering.

We pray for those in the prayer book, on the prayer chain, and for those who are known to us as individuals.

Lord, in gratitude for this moment, this place, this world, we give ourselves to you.

Take us out, to live as changed people because we have been touched by the living Lord and cannot remain the same.

Ask much of us, expect much of us, enable much by us, encourage many through us.

Living Lord, accept our lives and accept our prayers this day and every day.

You have the words of eternal life and in you we trust.

Merciful God, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Many thanks Nick for those prayers.

Let's hear two thought-provoking readings from our inspired scriptures. We hear first the call of the prophet Jeremiah who was minded to see himself as only a boy. And then, in our gospel reading from Luke, Jesus encounters a woman crippled for 18 years.

Bible Readings

Jeremiah 1: 4 - 10

The call of Jeremiah

⁴ The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁵ 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.'

⁶ 'Alas, Sovereign LORD,' I said, 'I do not know how to speak; I am too young.'

⁷ But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, "I am too young." You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the LORD.

⁹ Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.'

Luke 13: 10 – 17

Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath

¹⁰ On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, ¹¹ and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.' ¹³ Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

¹⁴ Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, 'There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.'

¹⁵ The Lord answered him, 'You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? ¹⁶ Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?'

¹⁷ When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

It's Jesus who opens the door to heaven's glory for us all. Let's sing, *Jesus, holy and anointed one.*

Song (WT 232) **Jesus, Jesus, Holy and Anointed One**

Jesus, Jesus,
Holy and Anointed One,
Jesus.

Jesus, Jesus,
Risen and Exalted One,
Jesus.

Your name is like honey on my lips,
Your Spirit like water to my soul,
Your Word is a lamp unto my feet.
Jesus, I love You, I love You.

REPEAT FROM THE START

Jesus, Jesus.

Sermon

“What HE said!”

Perhaps we are all at risk of being a bit confined by the opinions of others. We may find ourselves internalising the expectations of the wider world, embodying the stereotypes others may have for “people like us”.

What are those voices as they apply to you? What false expectations and burdens might the world place on your life?

Many of us are getting a bit long in the tooth! How important it is **not** to picture ourselves as helpless old ladies or decrepit old men - shuffling along a corridor and quite incapable of using new technology or understanding the modern world.

Some of us are still a bit wet behind the ears. How vital it is not to view ourselves as incapable because of our lack of experience or our youth.

It's easy for an adult to feel controlled by the voices heard long ago in childhood. We are no good at art, can't sing, are ugly, thick, silly or vain. Decades later, these attitudes, like evil spirits lodging in our psyches, can exercise a controlling influence on our day-to-day life and even on our destiny.

The labels people stick on us - we are clumsy, gay, bookish, dull, flighty, not from round these parts, posh, common, fat, thin...

And labels come with other labels... Most of us here would rejoice to be called Christian, but lament how people then slap on other labels they think go with the word 'Christian', labels which most of us here would reject out of hand: intolerant, fundamentalist, anti-gay, judgemental...

* * *

Jeremiah had internalised the voices of his surroundings. *You are too young; only a boy. You can't speak confidently. Everyone's out to get you. You should be afraid.*

The unnamed woman of our gospel reading was confined by the voices and expectations of others. She was perhaps written off as a disabled old woman... In the synagogue that day, her concerns should wait till tomorrow, the authority figures asserted.

Jesus, we read elsewhere in the gospels, was himself subject to attempts to confine and restrict him through the expectations and voices of others. He was from Nazareth. A northerner. An artisan. He had no theological training.

So many voices... So many opinions, prejudices and expectations... So many things that other people say about us... But there are some opinions that really matter: the views of those who love and care for us and understand us best. And then there's the view of God himself: what does HE say about us?

Jeremiah was told not to echo the tiresome voices of his world. Do **not** say, “I am too young”. Do not be afraid of them - of the things others say and expect.

The woman in Luke 13 had been confined by a spirit for 18 years, but Jesus comes and speaks a different, authoritative word: “Woman you are set free from your infirmity.”

And Jesus knew that his identity was not defined by the categories of this world: carpenter, Nazarene, northerner; but by the words his Father God spoke to him at his baptism: “You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.”

In all the slew of voices, is there a true voice that has spoken to you? Will you trust **his** voice, and **his** call, above all the voices and calls others may batter you with?

* * *

God’s voice reaches to the core of our identity. Jeremiah is told that he was **known** or called **before he was formed in the womb**. Prior to his birth, he was set apart. God’s call comes **before** all the other voices that we might hear.

Jesus calls the synagogue woman a **daughter of Abraham**. She was a treasured child of the founding father of their race.

And, as we’ve already heard, Jesus’ call from God goes right to his heart: he is **God’s beloved and pleasing Son**.

And so, if we really hear God’s voice, it will tend to resonate with a pure sense of who we most deeply are. Underneath all the things people put on us, there is that reiteration of our identity: see who we really are in him. It’s as if Jesus holds up a mirror. In this mirror we see not all the labels others see. In Jesus’ mirror, we see a beloved child; we see, in an important sense, a reflection of God himself.

Of course, some of the other labels people give us may carry some truth for us. For example, someone may be a disabled woman, like the woman in the gospel story. Being disabled would have shaped her experience and character in many ways. Even after the healing miracle, her experience of disability would always remain a part of who she was. But a disabled person is not only a disability. She is most of all a person!

* * *

And God's voice **transcends** all the world's voices, which tend to restrict us. *Do not say, I am only a boy*, Jeremiah is told. What command do you need to hear?

Do not say, I am only a Coventrian, only a retired engineer, only a young student. Do not say I am only anything. In Jesus' mirror, we are so very much more than all the 'only's others may speak about us.

And now we notice: Jeremiah is **given a voice** with which to speak. He finds his voice and goes to speak God's words to the nations. The woman in Jesus' ministry **finds a voice** too. She is unnamed, which is a crying shame, but at least she finds her voice - and hers is a **voice of praise**.

* * *

The voice with which Jeremiah speaks is a voice to **challenge** other voices. There will be uprooting, tearing down, destroying, overthrowing... An authentic voice cross-examines the constraining voices of the world. In John's gospel, the Holy Spirit is called the *paraclete* - meaning the advocate. If other voices condemn, the Spirit's voice protects what is best in us, sticks up for us, and brings strength and hope. And in our reading today, Jesus speaks authoritatively to challenge the religious leaders of that synagogue. They would have postponed this woman's healing till after the sabbath.

I confess that a part of me follows their reasoning. This woman had been ill for 18 years; why would one more day make a difference? But Jesus is having none of it... All the promises of help tomorrow had accumulated into 18 years of neglect and suffering. The synagogue leader was play-acting! He was pretending to be holy and righteous.

Why? Well, when it comes to the welfare of his ox, he was more than happy to take it to water on the Sabbath day; yet when a woman needed help on that holy day, he protested. Jesus has seen the need at the heart of this woman and will not tolerate a single day of further constraint to kowtow to religious rules. She deserves freedom **now!**

So, like Jeremiah's, Jesus' voice cuts through the sham voices that would fail to bring relief to those who are suffering.

* * *

These thoughts may seem deeply personal. Perhaps God speaks to you through them, as you reflect on who you are. You are a beloved child of God, made in his image and destined for glory. And Jesus would have you hear that now.

And perhaps God gives you your voice too. What kind of a voice would God give to you? A voice of praise, like the woman healed and set free? A voice of challenge like Jeremiah? A voice of hope and liberation, even like the voice of Jesus? What is the voice that God would give to you?

But today's message has wider implications. Wealthy politicians wrangle over party leadership, when so many people in the country are fearful of the coming sharp fall in living standards exacerbated by levels of inflation not seen for years.

What would Jesus say to our national leaders today; leaders in all parties; and also business leaders and community leaders? Perhaps a bit less ideology and a bit less argument and a bit more practical action is called for. All of us, including the church, need to put aside our differences and work out what we can all do, together, to bring relief to the needy in the coming months.

* * *

And what can we do at Hearsall? We are only a small church. We are only a group of people with a rather old demographic profile.

But do we hear God saying *do not say I am only this or only that or only the other*. Do not be afraid. Does he reach down and touch our mouths? Does he put his words into our waiting hearts? Does he give us a voice?

We may hear scores of other voices drawing out the voice of God. We must listen carefully. It's what HE says that really matters in the end.

Earth - a meditation by Kate Compston

*Old woman, broken backed
and barren hearted,
who will hold your calloused hands
and tend your sores,
look deep into your rheumy eyes
and kiss your dribbling mouth
and say 'Stand tall because I see you
youthful, beautiful,
not just as once you were
but as you are
and will be now I have come home
to give my love'?*

*O who but I, your driven daughter,
flesh of your flesh,
I who once abandoned you for other fickle loves, destroying you to run amok,
and pirating my own heart
in that peevish separation?
- who but I must leave this unbrave newer world
this glittering babel,
which has crushed, abused and silenced you
until you nearly died -
and ask you to forgive
and hold again the prodigal returned?*

Before we take Holy Communion, we sing that little and lovely song, *To be in your presence*.

Song (WT 432) **To be in your Presence**

Verse 1

To be in Your presence,
To sit at Your feet
Where Your love surrounds me
And makes me complete,

Chorus

This is my desire, O Lord,

This is my desire;

This is my desire, O Lord,

This is my desire.

Verse 2

To rest in Your presence,

Not rushing away,

To cherish each moment,

Here I would stay.

Chorus

Repeat whole song.

Holy Communion

Invitation

Here is the table of the Lord:
we are gathered to his supper,
a foretaste of things eternal.

Come, when you are fearful,
to be made new in love.

Come, when you are doubtful,
to be made strong in faith.

Come, when you are regretful,
to be made whole.

Come, old and young,
there is room for all.

The Peace

The kingdom of God is justice and peace.
Let us then pursue the things that make for peace.

Where lies abound, you call us to speak truth:
we will speak truth.

Where greed takes all, you call us to act justly:
we will act justly.

Where violence consumes, you call us to live peacefully:
we will live peacefully.

Where death mocks us, you call us to live in Christ:
we will live in Christ.

We set aside our wisdom, our will, our words.
We empty our hearts and bring nothing in our hands.

We yearn for the healing,
the holding, the accepting, the forgiving,
which Christ alone can offer.

So may the peace of the Lord rest within us and remain with us today and always.
Amen.

Please share a sign of peace with someone at home or send a message of peace
via phone or email.

The Story and the Thanksgiving

The tradition which I hand on to you comes from the Lord himself. For on the night of his arrest, Jesus took bread, gave God thanks and then broke it, saying, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this and remember me.'

For the bread we eat day by day,
God be blessed forever.

For the bread of the great day
that feeds us for new life:
God be blessed forever.

Jesus, true and living bread: touch all our days
and fit us for your new day's dawning.
God be blessed forever.

Nourish us with bread for the journey,
disciples in your way this day and always.

Come Holy Spirit;
feed us with your love
and renew us with your life.

In the same way, Jesus took the cup after supper and said, 'This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, and remember me.'

For the wine that makes our hearts glad.
God be blessed forever.

For the wine that seals the covenant.
God be blessed forever.

Jesus, true and living vine, make hearts glad and lives safe.
God be blessed forever.

Enliven us with the wine of the kingdom, this day and always.

Come Holy Spirit;
fill us with your love
and renew us with your life.

As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Dying you destroyed our death,
rising you restored our life:
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Sharing

Please share bread and wine together and commune with Christ and with one another.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, we thank you that you have nourished us at this table.

We pray for those who hunger and thirst - may they be filled.

And may we, with them, feast at the table of your eternal kingdom.

This we ask through Jesus Christ, who was and is and is to come, and who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus said: As the Father sent me, so I send you.

Come, Holy Spirit:

empower us with your love and

inspire us with your life.

In our closing hymn we pray to find the bliss, strength, love and peace of God throughout the course of our days.

Hymn (BPW 517) **Lord of all Hopefulness**

1. Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no care can destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

2. Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

3. Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

4. Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

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.

Acknowledgement

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