

5th July 2020

## ***Hearsall at Home***

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home.

We hope that you listen to this service either on a Sunday morning, or at another time, and you will worship, sing, pray and reflect on the scriptures along with all of us.

A written copy of the service is also available as a download on our website, so if you know anyone who would like that please let us know.

If you can get online you'll find me in my Whereby room after the service: Bring your cup of coffee to [whereby.com/sutcliffechat](https://whereby.com/sutcliffechat) and see who's there. There's still room for more!

So sit down, be still, and prepare yourself to worship God with us.

Order of Service 5 7 2020

Invitation to Worship (Song of Songs 2: 8 - 13)

8 The voice of my beloved!

Look, he comes,  
leaping upon the mountains,  
bounding over the hills.

9 My beloved is like a gazelle  
or a young stag.

Look, there he stands  
behind our wall,  
gazing in at the windows,  
looking through the lattice.

10 My beloved speaks and says to me:

'Arise, my love, my fair one,  
and come away;

11 for now the winter is past,  
the rain is over and gone.

12 The flowers appear on the earth;  
the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtle-dove  
is heard in our land.

13 The fig tree puts forth its figs,  
and the vines are in blossom;  
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one,  
and come away.

God both gives love for humans to enjoy and also shows us his love through human love.  
We worship him by singing *the King of love is my delight*.

Hymn (WT 397)

The King of love is my delight,  
His eyes are fire, His face is light,  
The First and Last, the Living One,  
His name is Jesus.

And from His mouth there comes a sound  
That shakes the earth and splits the ground,  
And yet this voice is life to me,  
The voice of Jesus.

And I will sing my songs of love,  
Calling out across the earth;  
The King has come,  
The King of love has come.  
And troubled minds can know His peace,

Captive hearts can be released;  
The King has come,  
The King of love has come.

My Lover's breath is sweetest wine,  
I am His prize, and He is mine;  
How can a sinner know such joy?  
Because of Jesus.  
The wounds of love are in His hands,  
The price is paid for sinful man;  
Accepted child, forgiven son,  
Because of Jesus.

And my desire is to have You near,  
Lord, You know that You are welcome here.  
Before such love, before such grace  
I will let the walls come down.

#### Prayers

Lord increase  
My zest for living  
My vision of glory  
My hearing of your call  
My grasp on reality  
My response to your love  
My sensitivity to others  
My gentleness to creation  
My taste for wonder  
My love for you.  
(David Adam)

O Christ my Beloved  
Each day you embrace me,  
Each hour you honour me,  
Each moment you cherish me.  
I do not deserve it,  
But through your grace  
I accept that I am,  
In your eyes,  
lovely and beloved:  
So fill me with your Holy Spirit,  
That I may take  
each present moment, hour and day  
To embrace, honour  
And cherish others.  
(Julie M. Hulme)

And we speak to God now in the words our Saviour taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as it is 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 forever. Amen.

Let's continue our worship with George Herbert's hymn, *King of glory*.

Hymn (BPW 53)

King of glory, King of peace

I will love you;

And that love may never cease,

I will move you!

You have granted my request,

you have heard me;

you have helped me when oppressed,

you have spared me.

Praises with my utmost art

I will bring you;

songs of triumph from my heart

I will bring you.

Though my sins against me cried,

you did clear me:

and alone, when they replied,

you did hear me.

Seven whole days not one in seven

I will praise you;

in my heart though not in heaven,

I will raise you.

Small it is, in this poor sort,

to enrol you;

all eternity's too short

to extol you

*Now, Behind Closed Doors this week was written by our dear technical supremo and friend,  
Andy Thompson*

## Behind Closed Doors

Hello, Andy Thompson here, for those who don't know the name I'm one of the two chaps who sit at the back during the service and press the buttons to make things happen, I'm the older and balder one of the two.

Things have moved on somewhat since we all first locked down, and I feel that this is less of a 'behind closed doors' as a 'the man behind the mask' story, as Anne and I have been able to get out and go places.

So what have we been up to, I hear you ask. Well, now that we are not rushing around so much we are appreciating things more, sitting in the garden listening to the birds, enjoying the sunshine, taking our statutory daily walk come rain or shine and food has become a new pleasure. Growing our own vegetables in the walled garden, making our own bread in the manor kitchens and cooking vats of soup. Anne has baked a batch of rock cakes and it was only when we ate them that we discovered she had forgotten to put the curraents in. I have no doubt that she will be progressing to main meals in the near future.

We have been going out for long walks. This reminded me of my childhood when my dad would take my brother and me out for a walk along the A45 on a Sunday morning, from our home in Allesley all the way up to the junction with Broad Lane, a distance of about 3 miles, we would collect 'treasure' along the way, which consisted of bits that had fallen from passing vehicles, nuts and bolts, hubcaps, etc. Now as we walk to church each week to check the buildings we still look for 'treasure', odd bits of useful metal for my workshop and Anne collects elastic bands discarded by the postman. It's amazing how many we find, we'll be able to open an elastic band shop soon.

Our eco-deacon will be pleased to hear that we have for many years supported doorstep deliveries with our local milkman, and currently we seem to be ordering more and more from him, not just milk in real glass bottles but butter, eggs, potatoes and yoghurt. So much so that I think he could afford a new delivery van on the profits from us alone. Since the beginning of the crisis we have also been shopping locally more and I have only been out to the big supermarket twice.

Like so many other Hearsall regulars I am also a cat lover, dogs are okay, but cats win with me every time. At the start of the crisis I made an attempt to befriend the two cats that live next door, I really wasn't sure how long there would be meat in the shops and it is always good to be on the safe side. However, this has so far proved unnecessary. I remember when they first arrived as kittens I had to think of a way to stop them using the gardens as a toilet, I knew that those army surplus land mines would come in handy one day.

We are continuing to enjoy puzzles, Anne likes crosswords and I like Sudoku. As the numbers only run from 1 to 9 I can easily count them on my fingers and I have one left over, I can get stuck with numbers greater than 10 unless I take my socks off. Anne has taken to making huge jigsaws on the dining table and is thoroughly enjoying it. For myself I am not so keen, if I wanted a picture of something I would buy one complete rather than struggle to create one out of a 1000 tiny pieces. The picture on the box lid keeps me happy.

Now contrary to popular belief I am a very quiet person and I do enjoy my own company. I can happily work for hours on my model railway which is out in the garden although I am a bit of a perfectionist, well if God has blessed me a gift I really should use it to glorify Him and I should be doing everything to the best of my ability. All my locomotives have sound, as you can hear one is approaching now. (sound of train passing)

Some of you may know that I have been volunteering at the Albany Theatre for some years now, if you don't recognise the name, it used to be the Butts Theatre at the old technical college. That has been closed from day one of the lockdown so we are not allowed in the building at present. Anne has been busy finding jobs for us to do. We have painted the front of the house, repaired the patio decking and we are now onto other peoples jobs. Currently the garage looks like the Repair Shop on a bad day.

Being separated from people has made me more appreciate the wonders of the Internet, using Zoom and WhatsApp software to contact people and continue bible study and Anne is running virtual deacons meetings each month in order to keep the business side of the church running smoothly. Thursday is taken up with the post production of the audio for this service and I am grateful to all the contributors especially David as he is a producer's dream being able to do all of his audio in one take without hesitation, a true art.

I am, of course, missing meeting up with you all on a Sunday morning, our Wednesdays at lunch club and all my friends at the theatre.

I see myself as blessed at this difficult time, I have my lovely wife constantly at home with me which I think is wonderful, she however may be of a different option. I have also had time to reflect on what my life has brought me over the past sixty-odd years, times of happiness, success, failure, sadness but throughout it all God has been at my side, sharing in the happy times and caring for me in the sad times.

I am looking forward to the time that we can be all together in one place in His presence. Bless you all, stay safe and keep well.

Thanks Andy for your honest, quirky and entertaining article.

### Offering

Well at this point I want to thank you all for continuing to give to church, and a double thank you to those who've managed to increase their giving. That's so amazing and such an encouragement to our work. I know some of you are facing hard times so I do understand it may be difficult to keep up with your giving. Well, whatever you feel you are able to give, thank you.

And now O Lord we thank you for the joy of giving, asking that all the gifts we share may be used to your glory. Amen.

A long Bible reading

*Genesis 24:1 - 33 & 50 - 66 with linking sentence all included below!*

Abraham was now very old, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. 2 He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, 'Put your hand under my thigh. 3 I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, 4 but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.'

5 The servant asked him, 'What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?'

6 'Make sure that you do not take my son back there,' Abraham said. 7 'The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, "To your offspring I will give this land"— he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. 8 If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there.' 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

10 Then the servant left, taking with him ten of his master's camels loaded with all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. 11 He made the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was towards evening, the time the women go out to draw water.

12 Then he prayed, 'Lord, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. 14 May it be that when I say to a young woman, "Please let down your jar that I may have a drink," and she says, "Drink, and I'll water your camels too"— let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.'

15 Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. 16 The woman was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

17 The servant hurried to meet her and said, 'Please give me a little water from your jar.'

18 'Drink, my lord,' she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

19 After she had given him a drink, she said, 'I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have had enough to drink.' 20 So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. 21 Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful.

22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels. 23 Then he asked, 'Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?'

24 She answered him, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milkah bore to Nahor.' 25 And she added, 'We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night.'

26 Then the man bowed down and worshipped the Lord, 27 saying, 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives.'

28 The young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things. 29 Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring. 30 As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. 31 'Come, you who are blessed by the Lord,' he said. 'Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels.'

32 So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet. 33 Then food was set before him, but he said, 'I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say.'

'Then tell us,' Laban said.

*So the servant explained to Laban and his family how he had met Rebekah, and how the Lord seemed to have found a wife for his master's son Isaac. We continue from the text at verse 50...*

Laban and Bethuel answered, 'This is from the Lord; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. 51 Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has directed.'

52 When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before the Lord. 53 Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewellery and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother. 54 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there.

When they got up the next morning, he said, 'Send me on my way to my master.'

55 But her brother and her mother replied, 'Let the young woman remain with us ten days or so; then you may go.'

56 But he said to them, 'Do not detain me, now that the Lord has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master.'

57 Then they said, 'Let's call the young woman and ask her about it.' 58 So they called Rebekah and asked her, 'Will you go with this man?'

'I will go,' she said.

59 So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

'Our sister, may you increase  
to thousands upon thousands;  
may your offspring possess  
the cities of their enemies.'

61 Then Rebekah and her attendants got ready and mounted the camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

62 Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. 63 He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. 64 Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel 65 and asked the servant, 'Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?'

'He is my master,' the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself.

66 Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. 67 Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

And now we are going to hear a new song - a song about finding joy in the changing fortunes of life.

Song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDiETOLBvxA>

We're choosing celebration  
Breaking into freedom  
You're the song  
You're the song  
Of our hearts

We cast aside our shadows  
Trust You with our sorrows  
You're the song  
You're the song  
Of our hearts

We're dancing to the rhythm of Your heart  
We're rising from the ashes to the stars

You're the joy joy joy lighting my soul  
The joy joy joy making me whole  
Though I'm broken, I am running

Into Your arms of love

The pain will not define us  
Joy will reignite us  
You're the song  
You're the song  
Of our hearts

The dark is just a canvas  
For Your grace and brightness  
You're the song  
You're the song  
Of our hearts

We're dancing to the rhythm of Your heart  
We're rising from the ashes to the stars

You're the joy joy joy lighting my soul  
The joy joy joy making me whole  
Though I'm broken, I am running  
Into Your arms of love  
[x2]

You're the joy  
The song in my heart  
The hope of my soul

In the shadows  
In the sorrows  
In the desert  
When the pain hits  
You are constant  
Ever-present  
You're the song of my heart  
[x2]

You're the joy joy joy lighting my soul  
The joy joy joy making me whole  
Though I'm broken, I am running  
Into Your arms of love  
Into Your arms

Our prayers this week are led by Jan Clemons.

#### Prayers of Intercession

There is a response in our intercession prayers today. When I say 'Lord in your mercy' the response will be 'hear our prayer'

Loving Lord, as we pray in our individual homes, our towns & cities, our nation and all those nations around the world we give thanks that we are all one united family in your love. Strengthen our innermost being under the weight of this global pandemic, as we continually watch for symptoms and patiently wait for this to pass and to keep our gaze fixed on you and to look out for family, friends and neighbours near and far.

**Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer**

As the Covid 19 virus has now reached more than 170 countries we pray especially for those people in countries that are really struggling to cope with the pandemic such as war-torn Syria, Iran, Russia, the USA and especially the vulnerability of the indigenous Amazonian tribes in Brazil. We pray for those in authority to do right for them and for medical workers around the world where resources and protective equipment is in short supply.

**Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer**

As we live through these extraordinary times, we pray that we can come to appreciate and become more aware of how precious this Earth is and how the physical and living world are so interdependent on each other. May this lead us to understand more deeply our responsibility for creation care, clean air and water and the complexities of healthy ecosystems and environmental issues. Awaken us to the reality of this connectiveness so we can all work together to create the community and world we all want to be a part of.

**Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer**

We pray and give thanks for:

- All the health workers tending the seriously ill
- Those immune suppressed and with underlying health issues who are most at risk
- Those who must go out to work as their income stream has dried up
- Supermarket workers, postmen & woman, the police, the teaching profession
- The scientists working on finding a vaccine
- Statisticians analysing data and identifying trends
- Media outlets working to communicate reality
- For the internet, telecommunications and technology that connects us
- The realisation that isolation does not mean loneliness
- Making us more aware of what is profoundly important

**Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer**

Lastly, we pray for the responsible lifting of yesterday's lockdown restrictions and that all of us will follow the advice given by the decision makers with patience, calmness and toleration. Help us Lord to remember that love never fails and that even in our darkest moments, love gives hope even from a safe 1 – 2 metre distance. AMEN

Thanks Jan for the knowledge and insight you packed into those prayers.

And now a shorter Bible reading.

A short Bible reading

Matthew 11: 16 - 19 & 25 - 30

16 'To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others:

17 “We played the pipe for you,  
and you did not dance;  
we sang a dirge,  
and you did not mourn.”

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon.” 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.’

25 At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

27 ‘All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’

*No burden on my back too hard to bear...* Let us sing Holy Overshadowing.

### Song

O spread Your wings of mercy over me  
And guard my heart with true humility  
No shadow of the darkness pressing in  
Only the holy overshadowing  
Underneath Your wings, overshadowing

No refuge will I seek but God alone  
No hiding place save only at Your throne  
Only the cross, the blood to wash my sin  
Only the holy overshadowing  
Underneath Your wings, overshadowing

*You are my shield, and my glory  
You are the lifter of my head  
And though the storms may rage around me  
I'll be safe within  
Beneath the holy overshadowing*

No burden on my back too hard to bear  
Only the easy load You bid me wear  
Until these troubles pass, my heart will sing  
Praise for the holy overshadowing  
Underneath Your wings, overshadowing

Ending:

Underneath Your wings  
Overshadowing, overshadowing

O Lord, as I have prepared this sermon earlier this week we pray that now, as we all listen, you will inspire us, encourage us and challenge us according to our needs. Amen.

### Sermon

*The good, the bad and the holy*

Last Saturday was my middle grandson Orion's 3rd birthday, so I drove down to Bristol to see him and his little 8 week old sister Sapphire. That evening I returned to Coventry and spent the evening at my daughter's house. I was greeted with the most luscious hugs and kisses by my two local grandchildren, Asher aged 7 and Iriana aged 5. The next day I went to complete the full set of grandchildren and saw my 1-year-old granddaughter Joanna Ruth in Sheffield. It was the first time I'd seen all my five grandchildren in the same weekend. What a lovely treat!

On the way home I remembered the Walk where we had scattered my wife's ashes a couple of years ago - Ruth's Walk, which is only 20 minutes from Sheffield in the Peak District. So I drove up to the Ladybower Inn and pondered the missing grandma of all these little children. I was simultaneously sad and happy as I did the walk, and FaceBook friends will have seen some of the photos I took. I was laughing and crying in the same weekend.

As we come out of lockdown right now, or as lockdown is eased somewhat, are you happy or sad; laughing or crying? Are you embracing renewed freedoms or lamenting the costs of the lockdown and the risks involved in starting life up again?

And after the death of George Floyd in America, we have seen numerous demonstrations and actions supporting the slogan, Black Lives Matter. Whatever your race, should we get involved in the movement to bring a proper balance of power among the races - or should we watch carefully from the sidelines, keep our powder dry and see which way things turn?

Jesus said his generation were like children playing a game in the marketplace. One lot of kids play a merry tune on the pipe. Then they sing a dirge. But whatever they do, their fellows - other children in the marketplace - well neither laugh nor cry.

Jesus explains. Austere John the baptist fasted so they were like - *ooh - he must have a demon!* Jesus comes eating and drinking and he's accused of being a drunkard and a glutton. Whatever was going on, this generation of people, says Jesus, held themselves aloof. They didn't engage heart and soul. They sat at the edges like wallflowers silently judging the great dance of life rather than immersing themselves in its flow.

The implication is clear: Jesus thought that they should have responded to John's ministry of repentance with tears and lamentation. They ought to have greeted Jesus' showing up with joy and celebration. But they did neither. They were... Aloof. Critical. Detached.

Wisdom is proved right by her deeds - or by her children - means that in time, Jesus' approach to life will be proved correct. And so those who don't engage will be proved wrong. Sitting above the cares and joys of the world is not the way of Jesus as recommended here.

Well I hope you enjoyed our long reading from Genesis as we met Isaac again, now a single man in possession of a good fortune, very much in want of a wife. The previous chapter has seen the death of his mother Sarah. He is in mourning.

Well I love this Bible story. I love the way that Abraham commissions his servant to find a wife for Isaac from his own people. The way that, as an old man, a widower, all he has is one legitimate son, Isaac, yet he holds on to God's promise - to your offspring I will give this land. I love the way the servant prays for guidance when he arrives in Abraham's home country - *when I ask that woman for water if she says I'll water your camels too, then let her be the one!*

A lovely conditional prayer. And I love the way the narrator innocently says, before he had finished his prayer Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was a stunner, a virgin, and the servant rushes on down and acts in accordance with the prayer. And then there's an awkward moment in the text. Sure, she gives a drink to the servant and, we're all thinking, *now the camels, now the camels...* but she waits until after he's drunk and only then says, I'll draw water for your camels too... Phew... The prayer has been answered as we had all been hoping. This must be the girl.

The servant watches her intently as she does what his prayer requires... Waters the camels. And he's thinking, *she's the one, she's the one!*

And after those blessed camels had drunk - apparently a camel can drink about 200 litres of water in three minutes flat - he gets out his bling - a gold ring weighing about 6 grams and two gold bracelets weighing 115 grams - four ounces - and puts them on this astonished young woman. She tells him she is from Abraham's family and he bows down low and praises God for so stirring the pot of life that - bingo - he's met the right girl, first time! He bows down and worships just where he is, out in the field.

But Rebekah runs excitedly back to her family - they see the flash jewelry and hear her breathless tale. Abraham's servant comes in and they offer him dinner but before he can eat he must explain his mission. So the family learns all about Abraham's wealth and Isaac's need for a wife.

So, the question comes, *will Rebekah go with this man to meet her new chap?* Well Laban and the family realise - you can't argue with God. Unlikely, even bizarre, as it might have seemed - God himself has engineered this pairing, and they can't refuse to cooperate. So, *go Rebekah, go!*

But surely she'll want to stay home for a couple of weeks and get her head round the idea? They ask her - *Will you go with this man?*  
*I will go, she says.*

So the next day Rebekah is blessed and off she heads into her astonishing new future. But then we hear the story from the other end. Isaac is out in the field one evening to meditate or something, and he sees camels approaching! And Rebekah looks up and sees Isaac. *Who is that man?*

*He is my master! Your husband!* She veils her face.

And the chapter ends with these words: Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

I love the romance of this tale. In the time of sorrow for losing his mother, Isaac mourns. He tastes the sorrow. Approaching the end of his life, Abraham remembers God's promise and takes action that springs from his faith and remembering. I love the way God works through the whole lot - through the patriarchy that many of us might frown upon, through the prayer, through the incidental details of drinking camels and family life, through a woman in a faraway land. I love the romance of the two lovers meeting each other's gaze in the evening in the field. I love the way that Isaac is comforted by his new wife after the death of his mother. He loves her. God's promise to Abraham to make his descendants like stars or grains of sand - it's still on!

And, back in the gospel reading, I love the way that Jesus says *"I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children."*

What does he mean? Well children cry when they're sad. They giggle when they're happy. So the way of Jesus is not to stand apart from human highs and lows, and try to analyse it and work it all out like a so-called wise man, but to experience them to the full.

And by doing that we take on his yoke, which is easy, and his burden, which is light. We find him gentle and we rest. What is this resting in the context of our readings today? It's a resting from a critical spirit. It's a resting from having to always be in control. It's a resting from being poe-faced and inhuman and over-intellectual. His yoke is easy because it's the yoke of living life aright. His burden is easy because it's the burden of being true to who we deeply are, and of reflecting the reality of our experiences. Of weeping with those who weep and laughing with those who laugh. Of taking life by the scruff of the neck and just going with it.

So. Black lives matter. If people of other races tell us they experience prejudice on a daily basis, we'd better listen and be willing to lament and weep and pray and work for change. If we fear the rose of covid 19 again, we pray, *How long Lord, How long must this go on?* If we experience delight in seeing loved ones, we pray, *thank you Lord* and smile and laugh in delight.

And if you seem to have lost your way in life.. If you've had too many lows... If you've lost sight of the promises of God's kingdom... Well come back to him now... Take his easy yoke on your shoulders and his light burden on your back. Weep and lament the things that have gone wrong. Laugh and rejoice at the things that have gone right. Pray through your fears.

And trust that none of these things can separate you from God's loving presence, and none of them can frustrate God's purposes in your life. In ways that transcend human logic, God works through the warp and weft of life to achieve his purposes for his kingdom, and therefore for you if you belong to that kingdom, as in fact we all do.

As Paul put it so famously and beautifully: *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship and daughterhood, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

*And we know that in all things - all things, the highs and the lows and the joys and the sorrows, in all those things, in the warp and the weft of life - God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

I did my theological training at Luther King House in Manchester. That building houses the Partnership for Theological Education, and ministers in formation from various denominations learn together there. The writer of our next hymn, Pam Pettitt, trained there, and she wrote this hymn for the renaming of the building as Luther King House. Pam was a Methodist Minister who died from cancer in 2005. Her hymn, of course, draws from the words of Martin Luther King's famous speech which dreamt of a world where everyone may be included in peace. But Pam's words do not let us rest in the dream, but call us to struggle and work for enduring peace and love.

#### Hymn (BPW 625)

"I have a dream", a man once said,  
"where all is perfect peace;  
where men and women, black and white,  
stand hand in hand, and all unite  
in freedom and in love."

But in this world of bitter strife  
the dream can often fade;  
reality seems dark as night,  
we catch but glimpses of the light  
Christ sheds on humankind.

Fierce persecution, war, and hate  
are raging everywhere;  
God calls us now to pay the price

through struggles and through sacrifice  
of standing for the right.

So dream the dreams and sing the songs,  
but never be content:  
for thoughts and words don't ease the pain:  
unless there's action, all is vain;  
faith proves itself in deeds.

Lord, give us vision, make us strong,  
help us to do your will;  
don't let us rest until we see  
your love throughout humanity  
uniting us in peace.

#### The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
the love of God;  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all  
now and always. 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.