

12th July 2020

## ***Hearsall at Home***

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home. Don't forget that next week is communion Sunday, so prepare some bread and wine or juice beforehand.

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.

## Morning Worship 12 7 20

### *The Fruitful Word*

#### Invitation to worship

*Isaiah 55: 10 - 13*

10 As the rain and the snow  
    come down from heaven,  
and do not return to it  
    without watering the earth  
and making it bud and flourish,  
    so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,  
11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth:  
    It will not return to me empty,  
but will accomplish what I desire  
    and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.  
12 You will go out in joy  
    and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and hills  
    will burst into song before you,  
and all the trees of the field  
    will clap their hands.  
13 Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,  
    and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.  
This will be for the Lord's renown,  
    for an everlasting sign,  
    that will endure forever."

#### Hymn

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
Forgive our foolish ways;  
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,  
In purer lives Thy service find,  
In deeper rev'ence, praise.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,  
O calm of hills above,  
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee  
The silence of eternity,  
Interpreted by love!

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire  
Thy coolness and Thy balm;

Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,  
O still, small Voice of calm.

In simple trust like theirs who heard  
Beside the Syrian sea  
The gracious calling of the Lord,  
Let us, like them, without a word,  
Rise up and follow Thee.

The hymn we've just sung was requested by Iris Carr, and, since it was her birthday last Sunday, I thought we'd include it. Of course, many of us have had a birthday during lockdown and I'm afraid my system hasn't been quite good enough to remember them all, though I noticed from the beautiful new messenger magazine that Audrey Ree, Barbara Bremner, & Ray Ball all have birthdays coming up this week. But I must mention Joan Cobb who is 96 today. Congratulations Joan; you're an inspiration to us all, and we wish you a very happy birthday.

### Prayers

Loving Lord we bless you for the fellowship at Hearsall, and especially all who have had birthdays recently or have birthdays coming up. Thank you Lord today for our dear sister and friend Joan and we pray for your special blessing on this her 96th birthday.

And now O Lord we bring all our burdens to you.

Heavenly Father, you call us to come and enter your rest:  
to lean our whole weight upon you  
and find a restorative stillness at the core of our being.  
We lay some things down as we draw near:  
The self-imposed load of having to be right;  
The expectations others have placed on our shoulders;  
The idea that your favour must be earned...  
Lord we confess the weight of our sins:  
Of judging others by standards we ourselves cannot meet  
Of making our own comfort our top priority  
Of allowing fears to run riot in the night  
Of thinking the worst of others  
Of speaking to give the right effect rather than convey truth.  
These, and all our sins, we confess.  
Take our guilt from us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

And now, held in your loving embrace, we praise your holy name. Amen.

### 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.

### Behind Closed Doors

Satta Nyama

Hello everyone. I hope you're all ok. Well one word to describe this current situation for me is Interesting. For example, normal school time is between 9 and 3; our school time now is between 3 and 5. When I come from work, that is when we start school, we have our dinner, we have our supper, so the dining table is actually our school desk and chairs. And there's painting all over the place, so a very interesting time I would say.

And also taking little things for granted like giving cuddles to loved ones, even shaking hands, even having that freedom of going anywhere that you want to travel. It's so interesting that we cannot even do it, even when we have our freedom. I remember listening to the news one day and someone described the situation as like fighting a ghost enemy in a war; it just seems like that. And hopefully, with our faith, we will see through it.

And I keep on saying, *Thank God for technology*. At least I can keep the kids occupied, do my normal routine stuff and obviously having that technology of FaceTime so at least I can see my family members in the UK and also abroad. Anyway I just want to say I thank God, and it is an interesting and challenging time, especially because I work in the financial sector, and hearing different stories about how people are emotionally affected and financially affected, people losing their jobs or being furloughed, and even being made redundant as well.

Yes, quite interesting and challenging times and as I said, with our faith we will definitely see through it and we will definitely see each other and give each other cuddles. There have been a few birthdays that we have not been able to celebrate, like my nephew Tom Paul's birthday and Maddie's birthday and my birthday as well in April and hopefully when everything is done and when we go to our so-called normal, we will be able to celebrate and give each other cuddles; that is the main thing; give each other cuddles. So thank you!

Thanks Satta; it's so lovely to hear from you and to receive your challenge to see this through with our faith. And, like you, many of us are awaiting those cuddles!

In this time of waiting we become still and wait on the Holy One. In our different homes, he draws alongside us all now and comes close to minister to us.

### Hymn

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here  
Come bow before him now with reverence and fear:  
In him no sin is found - we stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned:  
How awesome is the sight - our radiant King of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;  
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace -  
No work too hard for him. In faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

### Offering

Lord the love of your generous heart knows no bounds. Help us to reflect something of that love in the gifts we offer to church and charity, and use all our gifts to your honour and glory. Amen.

### Intercessions

Peter Fearn

There is a response in our prayers of intercession.

When I say "Lord hear us"

Please respond with "Lord graciously hear us"

Let us pray.

Father God

In this time of uncertainty and distress we cry out to you for help. We ask you Lord to lift up all those who are brought low, and sustain and support the vulnerable, lonely, anxious and fearful.

We entrust to your tender care those who are ill or in pain. Comfort and heal them and restore them to health and strength.

In your mercy grant consolation to all bereaved families.

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who care for the sick and give your wisdom to those searching for a cure to disease. Strengthen them with your Spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health.

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those who are guiding our nation at this time, and shaping national policies, that they may make wise decisions.

We pray for the relevant governments and health authorities throughout the world, that they take appropriate steps for the good of the people.

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our homes, and the families who have been kept apart in these past months.

For our schools and young people deprived of education and friendships,  
and for all in any kind of need or distress:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Thank you Lord for all those who help our community to run smoothly because of their jobs, voluntary work or neighbourliness. We bring to you those who work in care homes and social services, teachers, postal workers, refuse collectors, shop workers and food supply, communication engineers. Bless our neighbours and may our neighbourhoods be places of trust and friendship where all are known and cared for. Help us to be supportive and encouraging and to step in to situations where we can serve.

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for all victims of intolerance and those oppressed by their fellow humans whether through colour, race, religion, gender, age, or any other reason.

We pray for those whose lives are caught up by tragedy and disaster, storms and flooding, drought and famine.

Look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger;  
those homeless and hungry.

Bless those who work to bring them relief;

inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;

and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice

in your Kingdom of justice and of peace;

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

O Lord, may we find the joy of the Lord even in the midst of our trials. We pray that You would teach us what it means to see beyond our troubles, knowing that You are with us. Help us to become more aware of the wonder, beauty and vulnerability of your creation and to make every effort to cherish and protect it.

May our fellowship at Hearsall be filled with your vision and be bold in mission.

Lord, we believe that we can make a positive difference in the world by our attitudes and our interventions.

Gracious God, grant us the courage not to rush back to our old ways, but to rebuild our world together, creating foundations of justice, with equality and peace for all.

We pray in the name of Jesus

**Amen**

And we thank Peter for those thoughtful prayers.

Our next song is written by Malcom Guite and sung by Nick Leonard. Malcolm's poetry and music can be found at this website: <https://malcolmquite.wordpress.com/blog/>, He is also writing a series of poems on the Psalms. Malcolm notes that Nick's rendition of his song has 'a nice doo-wap feel'. I hope you agree.

Song (Malcolm Guite)

Well the world has changed around us  
Like the shifting of a dream  
And it's left us stranded where we are  
An island in midstream.  
And the tides of time have borne away  
All the goods we counted on  
But we will not be swept away  
If we can just hold on

So here's an arm to reach for you  
And here's a warm embrace  
I know that in the darkness here  
You cannot see my face  
But let us trust each other  
In these hours before the dawn  
Hold on my own beloved one  
Keep praying and hold on

*Hold on to your history  
Hold on to your myth  
Hold on to the one you love  
And love the one you're with  
Hold on through the ecstasy  
Hold on through the pain  
And if you ever lose your grip  
Then hold on tight again*

I know that you are tired now  
I know the wind blows cold  
I know its hard to hold on when  
There's nothing left to hold  
But we can hold together  
Till these dreadful days are done  
And one day Love will set us free  
Till then we'll just hold on

*Hold on to your memory  
Hold on to your hope  
Hold on to these threads of love  
And twist them into rope.  
Hold on through the infamy  
Hold on through the scorn  
I'll hold you, and you hold for me*

Together we'll hold on  
Hold on, Hold on, Hold on....

## Bible Readings

Our main readings today come from the Psalms and from Matthew,

### *Psalm 65: 1 - 13*

1 Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion;  
to you our vows will be fulfilled.  
2 You who answer prayer,  
to you all people will come.  
3 When we were overwhelmed by sins,  
you forgave our transgressions.  
4 Blessed are those you choose  
and bring near to live in your courts!  
We are filled with the good things of your house,  
of your holy temple.

5 You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds,  
God our Saviour,  
the hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the farthest seas,  
6 who formed the mountains by your power,  
having armed yourself with strength,  
7 who stilled the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
and the turmoil of the nations.  
8 The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;  
where morning dawns, where evening fades,  
you call forth songs of joy.

9 You care for the land and water it;  
you enrich it abundantly.  
The streams of God are filled with water  
to provide the people with grain,  
for so you have ordained it.  
10 You drench its furrows and level its ridges;  
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.  
11 You crown the year with your bounty,  
and your carts overflow with abundance.  
12 The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;  
the hills are clothed with gladness.  
13 The meadows are covered with flocks  
and the valleys are mantled with grain;  
they shout for joy and sing

### *Matthew 13: 1 - 9 & 18 - 23*

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his

seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

18 “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

We want to prepare our hearts to be fruitful and so we sing, Purify my heart.

#### Song (WT354)

Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold and precious silver  
Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold, pure gold

*Refiner's fire, my heart's one desire  
Is to be holy  
Set apart for You, Lord  
I choose to be holy  
Set apart for You, my Master  
Ready to do Your will*

Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from within and make me holy  
Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from my sin, deep within

Lord as we ponder your word together, please let each one of us be open to your challenge and your direction. Amen.

#### Sermon

##### *The Fruitful Word*

I have made several visits to people in their gardens over the last week or two. I've seen grand formal gardens with spacious lawns and well-pruned roses. I've seen small gardens artfully divided into separate garden rooms through tall plantings. I've seen quirky gardens

with fairy lights, statues, fountains and signs for visiting angels. And they all are bursting into life abundant at this season of high summer.

The Psalm we just heard pictures the earth as God's beautiful well-watered, and fruitful garden, flowing with streams of living water and crowning the season with bountiful harvests. This is how life should be!

And then I look at my own poor little garden. It's feeling a bit neglected as I've had workmen leaving equipment in it for much of the year. And my little front yard is just so many paving slabs, with one hanging basket of campanula I picked up at Sainsburys. I will try to do better next year!

Well now a healthy life is a fruitful life! If your life was a garden, what sort of garden would it be at the moment? Large or small? Well-watered or arid? Bursting with life or a bit scrubby? Designed with care and coherence or a chaotic wilderness? And what is the fruit that God is ripening in your life right now?

What would fruit you name? It could be personal characteristics as the fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. It could be creativity in some area; or an excellence at work or in some field of study. It might be restored relationships; or simply a sense of tranquillity.

Have a think. What fruit is growing? What fruit would you like to grow? Wouldn't you like to lead a life that is fruitful? To make a positive impact on the world? To create something that leaves the world in a better state?

So, what can we do to make our lives even more fruitful? How can we tidy up the garden of our lives to help the fruit and the flowers to thrive? What needs cutting back? What needs uprooting? What needs feeding or watering? What is ready for harvest.

Take a moment to ponder your life as a garden. What images creep into your mind?

Isaiah 55 teaches that God's word always bears fruit, just as rain falls from the sky nurturing the growth of plants. And this fruit was not merely an airy-fairy wish, but a solid promise of a better future. God had spoken, and those exiles would return to their homeland.

But, as real gardeners know well, things can get in the way of growth. Disease, pests and of course, poor soil. The famous parable of the sower addresses this and describes four different soils representing four different hearts. In fact it might be better called, the Parable of the Soils.

Now all parables are limited. A parable throws a story alongside reality and says, in some respects reality is like this story. But it's only a story, so in other respects reality is different.

The important and obvious difference between the reality of spiritual growth and the illustration of different soils is this: soils cannot change by themselves, whereas people can. So if we think that, regrettably, we may be stony soil, well, as a soil we could do nothing about that, but as people, we can. And that's the point of telling the parable - to help us

reflect - what is helping fruit to grow and flowers to bloom in my life; what is spoiling that growth?

So, are you willing to do what it takes to become more fruitful? You can either listen to this short message and make changes in your life... Or you can just enjoy it and then forget it and move on! Which is it to be today?

So... three pathologies of the human heart represented by three bad soils.

So... some soil is too hard; some is too shallow and some is too narrow.

The hard soil is the path. Don't picture a line of paving slabs; instead imagine the soil worn hard because the farmer always walks that way. The seed on this soil is immediately eaten by the birds; it doesn't even begin to grow.

The shallow soil is the stony ground. Plants can begin to grow, but the soil has no depth for the root to grow into, so the plant is very quickly uprooted.

The narrow soil is the thorny ground. There is some depth here, but the plot was already populated by weeds so there is no space for the plant to grow into, so it dies.

\* \* \*

Well if you think your heart may be on the hard side, there is still hope for fruit and flowers to grow, but God may need to break the ground up a bit first. Typically he does that through suffering, so be on the lookout for your next painful episode in life! Use it to admit something of your need for God. Be willing to be broken. Maybe that's what God has been doing in some lives during the covid-19 pandemic - breaking up some hard hearts. If you don't want to wait for suffering, then cry out to God and ask him to melt your heart with love!

The shallow soil is the stony ground. If this is us, well we may like much of church life and be drawn to Jesus but there's a hidden spot at the depths of our being where we don't allow him to go.

And because we're not deeply rooted, we are vulnerable to opposition. If we encounter mild opposition to our faith, we're more likely to wobble a bit without that deeper root. We lack a deep confidence.

The root of faith needs to grow into our secret and deepest place of existential need: Our fear of dying and our sense of self-worth. Our sense of identity. If Christ reaches into these core parts of us, then we will be utterly secure and genuinely fruitful in our lives.

To get that root deeper some may try silent contemplative prayer. And spiritual authorities have long said that contemplation of our own death is the gateway to a life of fruitfulness and freedom. Once we get past this, we become invincible. You could stay off by writing your own funeral service.

The narrow soil suggests a person whose faith may have gone deep at a personal level, but has not allowed it to broaden into their lives to cover things like their career, their business interest, their attitude to the environment or their politics. Therefore we are still plagued by anxiety because we know that, deep down, our success in life is still founded on our own talents and efforts alone. A great way of responding to this is to conduct an audit of our lives, examining each aspect of our existence, from our investments to our holiday plans, and considering whether Christ is Lord of these things too.

Think about your baptism. Those baptised as a believer, and those wishing to be baptised in our tradition, experience the complete submersion of their entire selves. Jesus is Lord of all, or he is not Lord at all.

Well perhaps none of these soil pathologies applies to you. Maybe your soil is, largely, good soil. Maybe your garden is healthy and beautifully designed. Well that's great, but do keep an eye on it! Protect your soil with the regular disciplines of prayer and Bible reading; wholesome attitudes to rest and work; and a growing commitment to Christian service in the church and the world at large.

Our song from Malcolm Guite urged us to hold on in these difficult times. Seeds take time to germinate and become plants and produce fruit and flowers. Good things have been growing during lockdown. New attitudes. Fresh dreams. But the soil is the key. It takes a willingness on our part and it takes time for our hearts to become deep and broad and soft for God.

Remember, too, that when Jesus spoke of the vine growing in John 15, he said that the vine that bears fruit his Father prunes. Could God be taking something out of your life in order to allow more fruit to grow.

Perhaps you have known for some time what you need to do to become more fruitful. Well we have our one life. Why allow evil to steal away the seeds of something amazing and beautiful for God? Why not do whatever it takes to produce an abundant crop?

God's Word will always bear fruit according to Isaiah. Do you want that fruit to grow in the garden of your life? Do you want your life to be a rich, beautiful, fertile, fruitful and blooming garden for God?

Make a little plan to ensure you do all you can to promote growth. I'm a spiritual director, so I'm used to having one-to-one conversations with people about these things. If you'd like a chat with me about the garden of your life, just let me know.

### Resource Sheet

#### *Methodist Commitment Prayer*

I am no longer my own but yours.  
Put me to what you will,  
rank me with whom you will;  
put me to doing,  
put me to suffering;  
let me be employed for you,

or laid aside for you,  
exalted for you,  
or brought low for you;  
let me be full,  
let me be empty,  
let me have all things,  
let me have nothing:  
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things  
to your pleasure and disposal.  
And now, glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.  
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

#### Retreats & Prayer Houses

General: <http://www.retreats.org.uk/index.php>

Local: <https://www.breathingspacecoventry.org/>

#### Service

Coventry Winter Night Shelter

<https://hopecoventry.org.uk/projects/cwns/>

#### Mechanics for Africa

<https://mechanicsforafrica.com/>

#### Bardsley Youth Project

<https://www.bardsleyyouth.org/>

#### Hymn

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:  
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him,  
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,

hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

#### 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.