

6th September 2020

Hearsall at Home

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home.

It's great that you are joining us today. May God bless you as we read, sing and listen together.

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.

I am listening today from my sister's house up in Ingleton, North Yorkshire. It's a beautiful part of the world, and, God willing, we may go for a walk later, so you might not find me in my whereby room. But it will still be open, so, after worship, grab a coffee and see who might be there.

So for now settle yourself into stillness, and draw near to the God who draws near to you.

Order of Service for 6th September 2020

Responsibility and Accountability

Call to Worship

Psalm 149: 1 - 5

Praise the Lord.

Sing to the Lord a new song,

his praise in the assembly of his faithful people.

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;

let the people of Zion be glad in their King.

Let them praise his name with dancing

and make music to him with tambourine and harp.

For the Lord takes delight in his people;

he crowns the humble with victory.

Let his faithful people rejoice in this honour

and sing for joy on their beds.

We gather together in our virtual church community to celebrate the saving love of our holy, mighty and merciful God. Whether we are on our beds meditating or on our feet dancing, let us praise the name of the Lord with all of our hearts. Our first hymn is, *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation*.

Song (BPW 68) **Praise to the Lord, the Almighty**

1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise Him, for He is your health and salvation:
All those who hear, brothers and sisters, draw near,
Praise Him in glad adoration.
2. Praise to the Lord, above all things so wondrously reigning,
Bearing you high on his wings, and so gently sustaining:
Have you not seen? All you have needed has been
Met by his gracious providing.

3. Praise to the Lord, who shall prosper your work and defend you!

Surely His goodness and mercy shall daily attend you:

Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,

Who with His love will befriend you.

4. Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!

All that has life and breath, come now with praises before Him!

Let the Amen sound from His people again:

Gladly we praise and adore Him.

Prayers of adoration and confession

Let us pray. *Surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.* Look back over the last week. In the quietness I leave now, remember some of the times when you have known the goodness and grace of God...

Lord, we thank you that you are closer than a brother to us, continuously and intimately supporting us through every moment of our lives. We adore you. We lift you up.

Though we are forgetful, you remember. Though we falter, you remain strong. Look back again over the last week. Remember any moments when you have lost the plot and not lived as a beloved child of God.

Lord, we thank you that you are rich in mercy and abounding in loving kindness. Thank you that you forgive us, and take our sins from us as far as the east is from the west.

We receive your forgiveness.

And now look ahead to the coming week. Are there any concerns on your mind? Any joys to anticipate?

Hold my hand as I walk into this coming week, dear Lord. Help me to respond to every situation I meet with an eagerness to love you and love others. 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.

This week's **Door Ajar** feature is from our dear friend, Annie Leonard.

At the beginning of March I looked after my grandson Henrik as usual while my son, Ben, and my daughter-in-law, Caroline, worked. Little did I know it would be the last time I saw them for 12 weeks.

How everything changed, so quickly. I met my daughter, Becki, and granddaughters, Poppy and Theia, a few days later, but already we were being warned not to get too close to others, that were not living in the same household. We hatched a plan! She drove from Birmingham to Coundon Wedge, and I walked there. She arrived and made camp for a picnic and a paddle in the stream for the girls. I arrived the other side of the stream. How the girls giggled to see Nanny, but to be away from her on the other side of the stream. We had a great picnic and chat and the girls got very clever at jumping the stream then quickly jumping back again, laughing as they knew that they were supposed to stay on their own side. Again too quickly that day was over, we said our goodbyes, and I didn't see them for weeks either. For me, that was one of the worst things about the lockdown, not seeing my family, my church family and my other friends.

However, there have been so many unexpected positives. I had time for me and all my outstanding jobs. The fence got painted a beautiful pale green. All the photos of me growing up and my children growing up were scanned into the computer. A joint effort with Nick, he was so patient and now knows every single person from my past! Our wardrobes got sorted out and windows cleaned and so much more time for planning and cooking beautiful meals.

We've got to know our neighbours much better, we looked forward to Thursdays 'Clap for the NHS' when we all got together in our own front gardens, and after clapping, sang and danced in the close, while Nick played guitar. We celebrated V.E. day with them too, setting up snacks and drinks again in our own front gardens, laughing chatting and calling across to each other. People further along the road, partied and dressed up too. Such simple fun, but lovely to mix with others while self-distancing.

I, along with the other Lunch Club members, were sad when we had to close. However, how I always look forward to our phone calls, when we share news of family and tell funny stories. Not as good as the real thing, but we're still staying in touch.

Nick has been printing the church services for those who are not online. I have helped in delivering them. We seem to have invented a new way of seeing others, and call it our 'door step visits' where we post the service through the doors and then stand back to chat for a few minutes. It's a lovely way to still see some of my Lunch Club friends and other church members.

I look forward to the online Sunday Services and with a coffee in our hands, and sitting on the sofa we listen, along with all of you at 10:30 and sing the hymns loudly. We play 'who's reading now' and try to be the first one to guess!
As soon as we were able to go out again we started to use our mobile home, affectionately known as 'Cuckoo the Camper'. We weren't allowed to stay overnight but would pack up for that day, with picnic and books, and umbrellas and walking shoes.

We visited Temple Balsall and looked for the picnic table which Jean Whitlock and Eric and Barbara's Bubble had used during their picnic. It was not to be found, but everyone laughed when we realized it was Eric's portable one that he had taken for one of their days out. Burton Dasset Hills was a great day out too, with a good walk and lots of reading time. We also went to Brinklow and walked around the castle grounds. So handy for us, to be able to use our own loo and brew up whenever we felt like it.

We partied on the evening that 'Hearsall's Fun Night' was on, using the technology available to see and join in the fun with everyone. Nick and I are experts at Jackie's handkerchief dance now! Instead of being on holiday for my birthday, we celebrated by picnicking with the family outdoors, again on the hills.

I am loving walking and, with my lovely friend and neighbour Linda, we can manage 5 or 6 miles in a couple of hours. This is good for making me fitter and we chat as much as we walk. We just love looking at the countryside and watching the seasons slowly change, and of course our coffee outside Mocca Lounge at the end! You all will be amazed to know that Nick is cycling between 15 and 20 miles every day. He's getting fitter too!

So to end, our life has certainly changed, and we look forward to seeing you all again face-to-face but I, for one, have enjoyed the more simple way of life and it does seem to be good for our planet too.

Bye for now, keep well everyone and God bless.
Love from Annie.

Thanks so much Annie for sharing your thoughts with us this morning.

Soon we'll hear from Romans 13 that the Day is almost here, so let us be awake. Let us look for the coming of our Lord Jesus, both in the future and in the present, as we sing, *I looked up*.

Song: Alleluia, He is Coming (I looked up)

Verse 1

I looked up
And I saw my Lord a-coming,
I looked up
And I saw my Lord a-coming down the road.

Chorus

*Alleluia, He is coming,
Alleluia, He is here.
Alleluia, He is coming,
Alleluia, He is here.*

Verse 2

I looked up

And I saw my Lord a-weeping,

I looked up

And I saw my Lord a-weeping for my sins.

Chorus

Alleluia, He is coming,

Alleluia, He is here.

Alleluia, He is coming,

Alleluia, He is here.

Verse 3

I looked up

And I saw my Lord a-dying,

I looked up

And I saw my Lord a-dying on the cross.

Chorus

Verse 4

I looked up

And I saw my Lord a-rising,

I looked up

And I saw my Lord a-rising from the grave.

Chorus

Offering

Lord, we find you in every flower and tree, in every human face and in every moment of our days. Now we praise you and bless you by sharing our gifts with our church. Take our offerings, dearest Lord. They are nothing compared with your gifts to us. And yet we bring them with humility and faith. Use them to bring more light and love into our world. Amen.

We're delighted that our prayers today are led by our dear friend, Linda Wallace.

Prayers of Intercession

Dear Father God,

We thank you for Jesus. We know that you are not our Father until we become members of your family, by putting our trust in you through him. We thank you that through Christ you have made it possible for each of us to begin again in our relationship with you. We pray that he, and he alone, will be the foundation of our life together, in our families and in the family of the church. We ask that he will be the Lord of our lives and our homes and our families. May we place into his hands all that is said, or done, or thought, all that is planned or chosen, or that is wanted. May everything be for his praise and glory.

We pray for the world, your world, Lord. You made it and it belongs to you. You created it to be good, beautiful and an exciting place to live. You gave us eyes to see it, hands to touch it, feet to walk on it and minds to discover and explore its secrets. But Lord, we have spoilt your world, just as we have spoilt so much by our pride and our selfishness. We pray for a new acceptance of your authority over your world, especially in those areas in great need of your control, your power and your loving touch.

We pray for the community in which we live. The community where we long for God to demonstrate his power and his sovereign will. We pray for our neighbours and we remember those who are sad, lonely, grieving or afraid. We pray for those who harbour grudges or anger with another person and who have an unforgiving attitude. We hold up before you, Father, those who love, care and show compassion, and are an example to everyone.

We think of those who are facing times of stress or loss or have important decisions to make. May the authority of Christ's love touch, change and renew the life of our community.

We lift to you now all those who are ill, bereaved or awaiting tests, or the results of tests at this time.

We think especially of the family of Pat Ingle who died peacefully last week. For Peter's cousin, Ian, who is in hospital following surgery. We give thanks that Janet Eaves is recovering from her operation and also that Sandra's nephew has come through his operation successfully and will soon return home. We also pray for Letita, whose husband, Ben, died recently and we pray for Ben's parents also, at this sad time.

Lord, we lift to you also, all the churches who are experiencing tough times, partly as a result of the Covid pandemic. Many will face the prospect of closure and all the good services that they were able to provide for the community will be forced to come to an end.

We lift the church at Hearsall to you and ask that we can remain positive, optimistic, confident and constructive in the coming months regarding the future.

All these prayers I lift to you now in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Thank you, Linda, for those prayers.

Let us proclaim the ultimate sure victory of Christ as we sing our next hymn, *Christ triumphant. Yours the glory and the crown, the high renown, the eternal name!*

Song (BPW 306): **Christ Triumphant**

Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:
*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
Power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:
*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,
victim crucified!

Death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:

*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Priestly King, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!

Sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love:

*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,

ceaselessly upon You gazing,
this shall be our song:

*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Our Bible readings today come from Exodus and from Romans.

Exodus 12: 1 – 14

The Passover

12 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² 'This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbour, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must

slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door-frames of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸ That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹ Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire – with the head, legs and internal organs. ¹⁰ Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹ This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

¹² 'On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

¹⁴ 'This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD – a lasting ordinance.

Romans 13: 8 – 14

Love fulfils the law

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

The Day is near

¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time: the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and

debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Again, we affirm the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as we sing, *Great is the Darkness... Come, Lord Jesus!*

Song (WT 119) **Great is the Darkness (Come, Lord Jesus)**

Verse 1

Great is the darkness that covers the earth;
Oppression, injustice and pain.
Nations are slipping in hopeless despair,
Though many have come in Your name,
Watching while sanity dies,
Touched by the madness and lies.

Chorus:

*Come, Lord Jesus,
Come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit we pray.
Come, Lord Jesus,
Come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit on us today.*

Verse 2

May now Your church rise with power and love;
This glorious gospel proclaim.
In every nation salvation will come
To those who believe in Your name.
Help us bring light to this world,
That we might speed Your return.

Chorus

Verse 3

Great celebrations on that final day,
When out of the heavens You come.
Darkness will vanish, all sorrow will end,
And rulers will bow at Your throne.
Our great commission complete,
Then face to face we shall meet.

Chorus X 2

*Come, Lord Jesus,
Come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit we pray.
Come, Lord Jesus,
Come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit on us today.*

Our dear brother, Roger Woodward, is our preacher today. Let us pray. Dear Lord, take the words of Roger, prepared two or three weeks ago, and by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, speak afresh to each one of us in our hearts. Amen.

Sermon

Responsibility and Accountability

Text. Romans 13:12...the night is far gone and the day is at hand,'

This doctrine of last things occupied a great deal of the thought of the early Christians. They believed that they were living in the last days. That the end would come during their lifetime.

After the financial crisis of 2008 we had come to live with the attitude that looked forward to an endless prospect of assured and largely automatic progress. This was rudely shaken by the coronavirus pandemic. We were reminded of how fragile life is. On a more personal level, you have not been well, tests have been made and the secretary from your surgery rings to say the doctor would like to see you and he suggests you bring someone with you. It's when these things happen that we realise

that we are not immortal and life in this place will come to an end. It is then that this doctrine of the last things, called eschatology, no longer seemed to be an antique locked in the store cupboard of theology, it became instead a living issue of tremendous importance and urgency. And there is no doubt that Jesus expected his disciples to live in anticipation of the end though he expressly said that they would not know when the end would be. On the whole Paul is consistently loyal to both these emphases. In his early letter he not only accepts the view that the present age would terminate with the return of Christ, but he also believed that the day of the Lord was close at hand. It was near enough to affect the decisions people made and the way they lived; but even so he stoutly withstood any suggestion that this relaxed the responsibility they had in their day to day living.

In Paul's latter letters we find him much more concerned with the new life in Christ than with the new age of Christ, - or to put it more plainly, more concerned with the new age that Christ has inaugurated in the life of the Christian than with hopes whose fulfilment lay hidden in an unpredictable future. In fact in Paul we have an interesting example of the way in which the early Christians must have solved one of the great but silent questions, their elephant in the room. They expected Christ to come again in their lifetime but he did not come. This might have shattered the confidence of the new movement but it did not, so we must assume that they found an answer which satisfied the doubts that have risen in their minds. It may be that in John's account of the promise of the Holy Spirit we find one answer: in the gift of the spirit. Christ has already returned to his disciples in the form which most fully meets their needs. A similar answer is possibly found in Paul. His growing emphasis on the fact that Christ comes alive in his disciples, and that they find their own lives taken up into His, places in its true perspective the whole doctrine of the final things. At the same time, it leaves untouched those moral values which a proper emphasis on eschatology should safeguard. Since these are true in every age, they deserve a moment's consideration.

The conviction that our civilization is moving towards the goal of God's purpose, helps to set our lives in the light of eternal values. Our experience is more than a series of casual episodes unrelated to any significant end. Eschatology declares - amongst other things - that God will finally bring all history to that conclusion which

he has designed, as a consequence we find our lives lifted out of the region of the accidental and into the purposeful. Divine judgement becomes a serious reality, and our lives are seen in its light.

In this process the standards we accept are subject to drastic modification. Secular society surrounds us so completely that we are always tempted to accept its relative ways of judging life and its issues. Eschatology means that ultimate God's justice becomes our absolute standard. We may not know how to apply it in daily life, but it proves to be an invigorating force. Our own set of judgements are constantly subject to its scrutiny, and as they are sifted they are also strengthened and purified.

When human life lacks a goal it becomes inconsequential, and all its serious issues are subject to postponement. The sense of a Divinely appointed end introduces an element of urgency which delivers us from aimless drifting. In a much simpler setting Jesus emphasized the need of settling important matters while time permitted and the opportunity was still present. Remember the incident Jesus uses about the man going to court, he suggest you settle the matter while you are on your way to court or the cost will be greater. If you hang around the chance might pass and it would be too late to put things right.

When living in the light of this absolute standard there is no doubt that it exercises a cleansing effect upon the conscience. The irrelevant and distracting drop out of sight. Things which clouded our insight are removed, factors which distort our vision are swept away. The awareness of divine judgement as a reality makes us conscious of eternal values, and even amid ordinary circumstances we see our responsibilities in a clearer light.

In the awareness of living under imminent divine judgement was found to be one of the most effective of all incentives to self-discipline. Though Christians had been told to watch and pray, they found that even a willing spirit could be depressed by the weakness of the flesh. But a slack and careless attitude could never hope to attain that quality of moral earnestness which the demands of discipleship require. To live in the attitude of mind that the end might be limited makes time all the more precious, this makes it much easier for men and women to realize that discipline must be the mark of those who walk by such a light.

In all the issues of daily living a person must be alert and ready to serve. Everything becomes a stewardship for which we must finally render an account. The attitude of mind which expresses itself in the maxim 'He who kills time mortgages eternity' became a characteristic mark of people aware that their lives are being lived in the prospect of judgement must be regulated by watchful self-discipline.

This sense of crisis was inseparable from the outlook of the early church. Christians were faced with fateful decisions, for good or ill. The new life they had found formed such a contrast with the past that only the imagery of a "new birth" could convey its meaning. The sharpness of this kind of demarcation between the life before meeting Christ and after meeting him has over the years become obscure.

One of its sources of this new life is that man was faced with the fact of God's judgement. Because the early Christians believed that it was near at hand it was impossible for them to delay. What gave them such a vivid sense of the critical character was the conviction that they had been brought face to face with God's ultimate purposes. There is still this sense of urgency with the gospel today and we must live and act as if the judgement of God was intimate, for we never know the time or the place when God will demand us to account for ourselves and our actions.

So we thank Roger for his reflections today. Before our closing song, let's take a moment of quiet.... And now we sing together, *O Church Arise*.

Song: **O Church Arise**

Verse 1

O church arise and put your armour on,
Hear the call of Christ our Captain,
For now the weak can say that they are strong
In the strength that God has given.
With shield of faith and belt of truth
We'll stand against the devil's lies;
An army bold whose battle-cry is Love,
Reaching out to those in darkness.

Verse 2

Our call to war, to love the captive soul
But to rage against the captor,
And with the sword that makes the wounded whole,
We will fight with faith and valour.
When faced with trials on every side
We know the outcome is secure,
And Christ will have the prize for which He died,
An inheritance of nations.

Verse 3

Come see the cross where love and mercy meet,
As the Son of God is stricken,
Then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet,
For the Conqueror has risen.
And as the stone is rolled away
And Christ emerges from the grave,
This victory march continues till the day
Every eye and heart shall see Him.

Verse 4

So Spirit come put strength in every stride,
Give grace for every hurdle,
That we may run with faith to win the prize
Of a servant good and faithful.
As saints of old still line the way,
Retelling triumphs of His grace,
We hear their calls and hunger for the day
When, with Christ, we stand in glory!

Let us conclude our worship by sharing in the words of the grace and our sung blessing.

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,
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.

Thank you for worshipping with us today. We're grateful to all who have taken part, and especially to Roger, our preacher today. Have a lovely day, and may God bless you throughout the coming days.