

18th October 2020

Hearsall at Home

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home.

Today we share in Holy Communion, so please take a moment and gather some bread and wine or juice. Our communion liturgy this week includes some words for all to say in bold type. You'll find all the words for the service on the front page of our website.

Our time of fellowship this Sunday is on Zoom from 11:30am.

Please go to:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85454368639>

Meeting ID: 851 6681 8535

No password is required for this session.

And now we wait on God, praying that we may catch a glimpse of his glory.

Order of Service 18th October 2020; Holy Communion

Show Me Your Glory

Call to Worship

And if you have opened the words for the service, do feel free to say the words of our Psalm along with me.

Psalm 96: 1 - 9

Sing to the Lord a new song;

 sing to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Sing to the Lord, praise his name;

 proclaim his salvation day after day.

3 Declare his glory among the nations,

 his marvellous deeds among all peoples.

4 For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;

 he is to be feared above all gods.

5 For all the gods of the nations are idols,

 but the Lord made the heavens.

6 Splendour and majesty are before him;

 strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

7 Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations,

 ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name;

 bring an offering and come into his courts.

9 Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness;

 tremble before him, all the earth.

Hymn (WT372) **Sing to God New Songs of Worship**

Sing to God new songs of worship:

all his deeds are marvellous;

he has brought salvation to us

with his hand and holy arm:

he has shown to all the nations
righteousness and saving power;
he recalled his truth and mercy
to his people Israel.

Sing to God new songs of worship:
Earth has seen his victory;
let the lands of Earth be joyful,
praising him with thankfulness:
sound upon the harp his praises,
play to him with melody;
let the trumpets sound his triumph,
show your joy to God the King!

Sing to God new songs of worship:
let the sea now make a noise;
all on Earth and in the waters
sound your praises to the Lord:
let the hills be joyful together,
let the rivers clap their hands,
for with righteousness and justice
he will come to judge the Earth.

Prayers of praise

Open our eyes to glory, Lord!

In golden sunsets, singing birds and thunderous waterfalls;

In the quiet of the wood at dusk, the beauty of mountain-scapes and the majesty of
the distant stars;

In the gentleness of a kind friend, the faithfulness of volunteers in a foodbank, in the
service of a carer;

In the laughter of children playing, in the scientists' assiduous search for a vaccine
against covid, in the work of teaching assistants patiently explaining to distracted
children;

In the gift of Jesus as a vulnerable child; in his suffering and dying for us on

the cross; in his being raised to majestic glory on the third day.

We see your glory! Alleluia!

Prayer of confession

We confess that we are creatures in need of grace.

You have given us freedom, but we use it selfishly.

You have loved us without condition, but we can find ourselves manipulating others.

You offer us forgiveness, but we can bear a grudge.

In our smallness and in our humanity we err from the path of grace.

Forgive us and renew us again on the pathway of life eternal. 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.

Doors Ajar

I am delighted that our dear friend Anne Bunting is bringing our **Doors Ajar** feature this week.

Good Morning everyone –

During the period of lockdown we certainly had time to pause and reflect.

Once some of the restrictions were lifted it was a real joy to be able to meet up with our family again as they all live out of Coventry. We met up with our daughter and her family some weeks back at a beautiful deer park. After a delightful walk we sat and ate our picnics together in beautiful surroundings. Later we had ice-creams before finally going our separate ways. It was a very special day even though we refrained from our usual hugs. We also met up with our son in more practical ways.

Colin being the good Dad that he is took himself off to Newark on two separate Saturdays to help with decorating. Another weekend I too visited our son's flat to admire their previous efforts and help with more painting. While Colin and I were busy painting, Stuart, prepared a very tasty lunch and cooked us a lovely evening meal. It was great to have time together and chat face to face as well as working.

We are fortunate to be blessed with good neighbours whom we have got to know a lot better during these last months. We also have the bonus of frequent cuddles and fusses with their very fluffy dog, Ellie. If we are out in the garden Ellie will sit patiently in a particular spot by the fence waiting for some attention. It's been interesting watching the birds in our garden and something that makes us smile is our acrobatic blackbird who makes regular visits to the bird feeders. He can't cling on for long, but is able to dislodge enough small portions of the fat-ball, which he manages to eat from the ground.

Colin and I both enjoy gardening, the countryside and appreciate lovely scenery. We were fortunate enough to visit the Lake District for a few days in early September and it was a real treat. Where we stayed was very quiet and day trips out were really interesting and relaxing. There was such a variation of lighting. On one day in particular, driving alongside Derwent water, there were beautiful patches of sunshine on the hills as if someone was shining two huge spotlights on specific areas. On the same road, going into the valley beyond, the mist was so heavy and dark and this was such a huge contrast to what we had just seen. We enjoyed periods of good weather, and on the last day had amazing uninterrupted views of the hills with no mist. Views like that reminded us of our wonderful Creator.

Back at home in Coventry we have been able to enjoy going out with friends for coffee and cake, to a favourite garden centre. We do appreciate the kindness and welcome shown to us by the Hearsall family, both verbally and in practical ways. We have enjoyed the Thursday walks in the memorial park. It seems a lovely opportunity for the family of Hearsall Baptist Church to actually get together in person, if folk have the time. I've only been on the walks a couple of times and it's been good to catch up and chat with various members of Hearsall and David too. I could not manage to do the whole of the walks, but that had its own advantages. Doing part of the walk on my own was an opportunity to absorb the landscape and enjoy the

beautiful trees without being rushed or distracted. This is a particular time of year when we can value the gift of trees. Already the colours of autumn are beginning to appear and soon there will be such wonderful displays of colour before the leaves of many trees will fall. However, with the disappearance of the leaves, we are gifted with images of a variety of silhouettes and shapes showing more evidence of our Creator's handiwork.

I find wintertime quite difficult, but have to remember that dull, cold and grey days can be interspersed with sunshine and even frosty days can exhibit a beauty of their own. God gives us the various seasons and the bleaker days are a prelude to the new colours and the growth of spring bulbs and flowers which can inspire us and give us a new sense of hope.

This may all sound quite simplistic, and I am aware that it might be difficult to appreciate nature's beauty when loved ones are in difficulties or suffering, particularly when visits for support are not allowed because of the covid virus. This must be incredibly hard to cope with, but what we can do is to bring our prayers to God, not only for those who are sick, but also for their loved ones and friends too. Our God is not restricted by the pandemic or distance and he asks us to take our cares and concerns to him.

God Bless you all.

Thanks so much Anne for your thoughts today.

Song (WT 252) **King of Kings, Majesty**

King of kings, Majesty,
God of heaven living in me.
Gentle Saviour, closest friend,
Strong deliv'rer, beginning and end.
All within me falls at Your throne.

Chorus

*Your Majesty, I can but bow,
I lay my all before You now.
In royal robes, I don't deserve,
I live to serve Your Majesty.*

Earth and heav'n worship You,
Love eternal faithful and true,
Who bought the nations ransomed souls;
Brought this sinner near to Your throne.
All within me cries out in praise!

Chorus

*Your Majesty, I can but bow,
I lay my all before You now.
In royal robes, I don't deserve,
I live to serve Your Majesty.

I live to serve Your Majesty.*

Offering

I live to serve your Majesty!
Lord, we love to bring our gifts of money and time to you. Take our humble offerings and use them to show your glory to our world. Amen.

Intercessions

And our prayers today are led by our dear friend Denise Rée.

Morning Lord,

I bring to you the prayers of Hearsall Baptist Church.
We bring to you the concerns for our world; we ask you to be with all affected by the pandemic and ask for wisdom and expertise for those working on treatments and vaccines.

We also ask that those who care for our planet and environmental issues will be able to help us to learn more about how we can lessen the damage modern life has caused your beautiful creation.

We also bring before you the leaders of this country to guide them when making decisions for our future, that they will think carefully and with compassion when making these decisions.

Also guide the leaders of our city and support them as they endeavour to keep our city running smoothly.

Finally we bring the prayers, concerns and thanks of the Hearsall family.

Yours, on behalf of Hearsall Baptist Church.

Denise.

Thanks so much Denise for those prayers.

Bible Readings

Today's readings are from Exodus and from Matthew.

Exodus 33: 12 - 23

Moses and the glory of the LORD

¹² Moses said to the LORD, 'You have been telling me, "Lead these people," but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, "I know you by name and you have found favour with me." ¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favour with you. Remember that this nation is your people.'

¹⁴ The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'

¹⁵ Then Moses said to him, 'If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶ How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?'

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.'

¹⁸ Then Moses said, 'Now show me your glory.'

¹⁹ And the LORD said, 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰ But,' he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.'

²¹ Then the LORD said, 'There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.'

Matthew 22: 15 - 22

Paying the poll-tax to Caesar

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the poll-tax^[a] to Caesar or not?'

¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, 'You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax.' They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, 'Whose image is this? And whose inscription?' ²¹ 'Caesar's,' they replied.

Then he said to them, 'So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'

²² When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Moses wishes to see the glory of God. Through Jesus, we can enter the very presence of God. As we sing our next gentle song, let's open our hearts again to the presence of our Lord in our hearts.

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 from Verse 1

Now, O Lord, shine through my humble words with your glorious presence. Amen

Sermon

Show Me Your Glory

Once, when walking in Scotland, Ruth and I heard a distant rumble. As we approached the source of the sound, it turned out to be a waterfall in spate. The noise was deafening. It seemed to reverberate through our bones! And it reminded

us of the voice of the risen Christ in Revelation, said to be like the sound of many waters. It was a noise that spoke directly to us of the glory of God.

R. S. Thomas' short poem *Via Negativa* takes the opposite tack. God is found not in direct experience, but, as it were, in the gaps between experiences.

Via Negativa

*Why no! I never thought other than
That God is that great absence
In our lives, the empty silence
Within, the place where we go
Seeking, not in hope to
Arrive or find. He keeps the interstices
In our knowledge, the darkness
Between stars. His are the echoes
We follow, the footprints he has just
Left. We put our hands in
His side hoping to find
It warm. We look at people
And places as though he had looked
At them, too; but miss the reflection.*

Thomas' poem opens very starkly. God is the great **absence**. God is the empty silence within. God is about journeying and seeking, more than arriving. God is in the little spaces between the things we know, not in the things we know themselves.

God has been where we are, but has already moved on. We see him by looking back, not face to face. This reflects the strange story we read from Exodus. Moses wishes to see the glory of God, but the closest he can come, in a wild and lonely place, is to see God's back: where God has just been. To see God's face is to die.

I've previously told the children of our church the story of the strange near-encounter Ruth and I had in the Helvellyn range in the Lake District one snowy Easter. We were walking from Thirlmere over to Ullswater, and we needed to cross the range.

Since conditions were so bleak, we chose to go over a mountain pass called Stick's Pass, which avoided any of the peaks.

At one point we got totally lost in a white-out. We were in trouble. A step the wrong way, we feared, might send us hurtling down some ravine disguised by snow. We paused on the hillside and prayed. Immediately after our prayer we noticed some large footprints in the snow leading onward. We followed this trail, and the footprints vanished at precisely the point where we could see the hostel which was our destination.

A walker with snowshoes? A big-footed angel? A sense that God was with us in the remote and extreme and dangerous place? We saw, not him, but where he had just been, and footprints leading just as far as we needed them. Where do you see the glory of God? In extremis? Do we see him most as we look back over our lives? In that case, if we are in trouble now, can we trust that he is here, in the gaps between our footsteps, guiding us with a barely discernible touch on our elbows, supporting us wordlessly in the silence of the night?

One other Easter time, we were again in the Lake District. Mad as it sounds, we were singing a song out on the fell-side. It was *I looked up and I saw my Lord a-coming*. Well maybe it was really just me who was singing!

Anyway we got to the chorus which goes *Alleluia he is coming; Alleluia he is here*. As I sang the *Alleluia he is **here***, we noticed a primrose growing on the fell. We had the sense that God's glory was **there**, in the beauty of that flower.

Is God in such a wild primrose? Or would we say his glory is **evidenced**, because **everything** comes from him, so the primrose is a consequence of his loving goodness? He was not there then, but he had been there an instant before?

Thomas' poem concludes by talking about people and places. He says we look at people *as though* he had looked at them, but miss the reflection.

Our gospel story is, ostensibly, about paying taxes to Caesar. But its deeper concern is about image and belonging. A little coin may bear Caesar's image, so, sure, give

that to him. But people bear God's image. To give to God what is God's is to give our very selves to God. For, indeed, we bear his image.

This is where I find Thomas' poem a touch too negative. Unlike him, I trust that God is indeed looking at the faces I see, and so there I find at least a trace of his glory. After all, those faces in some mysterious way, bear the likeness of God.

Moses' prayer was: Show me your glory! So, where do you see the glory of God? In the next chapter of Exodus we hear of Moses' face shining so brightly after encountering God, that he had to wear a veil to protect the Israelites from being dazzled. So, are there moments when we see, not so much a face shining like the sun, but something subtle and ineffable in the face of another human being, something of the glory of the divine presence?

There's an obscure verse in Matthew's gospel, referring either to little children or to wandering sheep.

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. (Matthew 18:10).

People in trouble, or perhaps little children, according to this quaint tradition retold by Jesus, have their own angel gazing at the face of father God.

Perhaps the face of an infant, looking in trust up to its parent, might give us something of the sense of God's reflected glory. Whether that infant lives a few days or a hundred years, is there something wondrous for that moment, in its gaze of trusting love?

Thomas' poem also includes these lines:

*We put our hands in
His side hoping to find
It warm.*

In John's gospel, Christ is glorified when he is crucified!

The inversion of the worldly norm is obvious. Far from the razzamatazz of a presidential rally; far from the pomp and ceremony of a British state event, Christian glory is seen when a saviour so loves humanity that he will die naked and shamed in agony rather than visit vengeful wrath on those who wronged him.

Perhaps Thomas is a little more hopeful at this point... We put our hands in His side *hoping to find it warm*. The meekness of the crucified Christ is the place where Christians may touch God's glory.

So we see God's glory in our communion, even in the makeshift bread and wine or juice we share together in separate homes today. Where is the glory?

Not in the bread and wine per se, but in the suffering Christ they represent. Not in the separation of our homes, but in the invisible unity we sense one with another.

Where is the glory? In the Saviour who knelt and washed the disciples' feet. Can we glimpse flashes of the same glory in the nurse washing the feet of a neglected patient in hospital? Is there a lingering trace of the divine glory in a husband caring for a wife confused by dementia? In the holding on to hope at a time of national despair?

In the lofty mountain grandeur... In the sunlight shimmering through our local woods at dawn... In the warm smile of a friend...

In the silence of a lake at midnight? In the enduring hope of lovers separated by covid? In the roar of waves at high tide crashing onto rocks? In the cry of flying geese? In the doleful gaze of a faithful old dog languidly wagging his tail?

From heaven you came, helpless babe

Entered our world, your glory veiled...

Was the glory **veiled**? Perhaps it was only with hindsight that we knew the glory of God in an infant in a crib... The hands that flung stars into space were surrendered to cruel nails... Was the glory veiled? Or was the glory *revealed precisely then*?

Christians believe this world is a marvellous place. Nothing mysterious about the phone call of a kind friend... And yet, did we not get that sense that God was almost there as she spoke? As if God hovered in the gaps between her words...

Nothing magical about cooking meals for homeless people. And yet, is there not that sense that the very goodness of God is hidden in the rice grains as they fall into the pan...

The Hebrew word for 'glory' is the shekinah. It means the majestic presence of God, manifested at a particular place and time. The shekinah dwelt in the tabernacle during the Israelite's wilderness wanderings. The shekinah dwelt in the holy of holies when the Jerusalem temple was built. And when that temple was destroyed, Jews believed that the shekinah travelled with them in their suffering...

Theologian Jurgen Moltmann wrote:

If we live entirely in the prayer "Thy will be done", the Shekinah in us is united with God himself... It need not happen once and for all. It can also happen briefly, for a time... If we become one with ourselves, the Shekinah comes to rest... We become sensitive to the Shekinah in us, and equally sensitive to the Shekinah in other people and in all other creatures. We expect the mystical union of the Shekinah with God in every true encounter... We encounter every other created being in the expectation of meeting God. For we have discovered that in these other people and these other creatures God waits for our love, and for the homecoming of his Shekinah.

[Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 47.]

Graham Kendrick's simpler theology expresses a similar idea:

*So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving.*

Show me your glory, Lord. Wherever people give mercy and love, the glory God is not far ahead. For we all bear the divine likeness. So the glory is nothing we can grasp or retain... And yet it is there, giving infinite value and meaning to all our experiences of wonder and to all our sharing of love.

Our communion hymn has been introduced in your sermon.... *From heaven you came.*

Hymn (WT100) **From Heaven You Came**

Verse 1

From heav'n You came, helpless babe,
Entered our world, Your glory veiled.
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live.

Chorus

*This is our God, the Servant King.
He calls us now to follow Him;
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King.*

Verse 2

There in the garden of tears,
My heavy load He chose to bear;
His heart with sorrow was torn,
Yet not my will but Yours, He said.

Chorus

Verse 3

Come see His hands and His feet;
The scars that speak of sacrifice.
Hands that flung stars into space,
To cruel nails surrendered.

Chorus

Verse 4

So let us learn how to serve,
And in our lives enthrone Him.
Each other's needs to prefer,
For it is Christ we're serving.

Chorus

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.

We are going to share some words about the bread and the wine. Then I'll make it very clear when we will actually eat and drink, which will be during some music.

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

And now my friends, we will listen to some music. As we do so, 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.