

22nd November 2020

Hearsall at Home

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home.

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 let us draw close to Jesus Christ, and make ourselves ready
to call him our Leader, our Brother, our Friend and our Lord.

Order of Service 22nd November 2020

Take me to your leader

Call to Worship

Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;

come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving

and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Hymn (BPW 2) All people that on earth do dwell

All people that on earth do dwell,

sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;

him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell;

come now before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed;

without our aid he did us make;

we are his folk, he will us feed,

and for his sheep he does us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,

approach with joy his courts unto;

praise him and bless his name always,

for it is seemly so to do.

Because the Lord our God is good;
his mercy is for ever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.

Prayer (Hugh Dickinson in SPCK Book of Christian Prayer page 34)

Lord of all blessing,
As we walk about your world,
Let us know ourselves blessed at every turn;
Blessed in the autumnal sun and leaves;
Blessed in the winter wind;
Blessed in rain and shafts of sunlight;
Blessed in the moving stars;
Blessed in the turning of the world beneath our feet;
Blessed in silence;
Blessed in sleep;
Blessed in our children, our parents and our friends;
Blessed in conversation and the human voice;
Blessed in waiting for the bus, or train, or traffic lights;
Blessed in music, blessed in singing voices,
Blessed in the song of birds;
Blessed in the cry that pierces the heart;
Blessed in the smile of strangers;
Blessed in the touch of love, blessed in laughter;
Blessed in pain, in darkness, in grief;
Blessed in the desert and the frost;
Blessed in waiting for the spring;
Blessed in waiting and waiting and waiting.
Lord of all blessing, we bless you.

The Lord's Prayer with suggested actions

Today we take our time as we pray the Lord's Prayer, slowly, mindfully and heartfully. I will suggest the actions we sometimes do, so you may like to join in with these

or not. Either way, savour the words as we say them, and ponder what they mean for you, in your world, right now. You may even like to stand.

Our Father in heaven,

You may like to slowly raise your arms

hallowed be your name,

You may like to raise those arms still higher

your kingdom come, your will be done,

Beckon God's kingdom here with your hands

on earth as it is in heaven.

Point to earth and then point to heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Make a bowl for food with your palms.

Forgive us our sins

Brush off sins with one hand from the other.

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Swap arms and brush off again.

Lead us not into temptation

Place one arm diagonally across your chest.

but deliver us from evil.

Place your other arm across your chest to form a diagonal protective cross.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours

Gradually raise your arms higher

Now

Point to where a wristwatch might be

and forever.

Roll your hands around each other.

Amen.

Give a thumbs up.

Let us affirm our Christian faith by singing our next song, *We believe in God the Father...*

Song (WT 441) **We believe in God the Father**

Verse 1

We believe in God the Father,
Maker of the universe,
And in Christ His Son, our Saviour,
Come to us by virgin birth.
We believe He died to save us,
Bore our sins, was crucified,
Then from death He rose victorious,
Ascended to the Fathers' side.

Chorus

*Jesus, Lord of all,
Lord of all, Jesus,
Lord of all, Lord of all.
Jesus, Lord of all,
Lord of all, Jesus,
Lord of all, Lord of all.
Name above all names,
Name above all names.*

Verse 2

We believe He sends His Spirit
On His church, with gifts of power.
God, His word of truth affirming,
Sends us to the nations now.

He will come again in glory,
Judge the living and the dead,
Every knee shall bow before Him,
Then must every tongue confess.

Chorus

*Jesus, Lord of all,
Lord of all, Jesus,
Lord of all, Lord of all.
Jesus, Lord of all,
Lord of all, Jesus,
Lord of all, Lord of all.
Name above all names,
Name above all names,
Name above all names.*

Doors Ajar

*This week our Doors Ajar feature comes from our lovely friend, Patricia Makavore.
Patricia's words are being spoken by Angie Bull.*

I greet you all, my wonderful Hearsall Family, in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

My name is Patricia Makavore, the wife of Paul and the mother of Tompaul, Paul and Princess.

In 2016, we came from London and your church opened their doors and welcomed us as part of your family. We were loved and supported by every member. My children loved all the hugs and kisses from our beautiful grandmums and not forgetting the biscuits, cakes and juices after church. You are always in our thoughts and prayers even though we don't fellowship often with you. But we will visit after lock down.

The children are all grown up and are doing very well.

I am still a support worker but because the children are all grown up, I have decided to upgrade myself by finishing a counselling course I started many years ago.

I am also heading a praying mum group, which by the grace of God, I started 1 year ago. It is doing very well and we have very faithful and committed mums who come together every Friday on Zoom to praise and pray for our leaders, youth, family, church and our aged.

The group has gone to another level by raising funds this Christmas for the aged in Africa, who do not have enough. We are planning to make Christmas hampers for them. We also want to try and support women in refugee centres.

As the group progress we will help widows and orphans. My counselling skills will be very useful for this Group for providing emotional support when needed.

We will need your prayers.

As Christians we are ambassadors for Christ.

The word of God says in John 13 v34 to love one another by doing so everyone will know that we are Christ's disciples.

May God bless you all and protect you. Please keep safe. On behalf of my family I wish you a Merry Christmas in advance and a blessed New Year. Thank you.

Thanks so much Patricia for sharing your thoughts with us today.

Offering

Lord your generosity to us is as boundless as deep space. As we share simple gifts we pray that you will teach us the joy of giving and that our gifts may bring blessings to your world. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Today our prayers of intercession are led by our good friend, Roger Woodward.

Let us sit comfortably, relax our bodies and quieten our minds as we come to God in prayer.

Father God, we come to you as your people seeking your guidance in a changing and challenging world. Open our eyes that we may see people and situations as you see them, people you love and situations that you care about.

As we move from autumn into winter, we are aware that the long dark evenings can be difficult and challenging for many people. Curtains are closed in the late afternoon and for many there lies ahead a long lonely night. Open our eyes to see those around us for whom these are difficult days and open our hearts that we might ease that loneliness. The only window many will have on the outside world in these long evenings is through the medium of television. We pray for those responsible for broadcasting, those who make the decisions about which programmes will be screened and at what time; give to them a wisdom and a moral clarity. We pray for those who prepare news programmes, may the reports they edit and broadcast be honest, factual and without bias.

As we busy ourselves in preparing to celebrate Christmas, open our eyes to those who dread this season. Those for whom it will bring back memories of loved ones no longer here, particularly those who have been bereaved over that last year and for whom this will be the first Christmas without the person who has meant so much to them over the years. For those for whom this season heightens their loneliness. For children who live in the dread of being assaulted, physically, mentally or sexually by those who should be showing them love and giving them security. For those loving parents whose finances will not stretch to buying presents for their children equal to those their peers will be receiving. May they and their children see where real love lies.

Open our eyes to those with no friends and no home, sleeping on our city streets. We pray for the work of organisations in our land who will provide food, shelter, friendship and advice this Christmas time. For those working tirelessly throughout the year that many may leave homelessness behind and have a secure place to live. We think of those in Syria who are refugees in their own country, living under canvas because their homes have been bombed. We pray for all who seek to provide a safe place and security for all people.

We pray for our own Councillors and those involved in social welfare in our own city. Give to them all, open hearts and creative minds that none in our city will have to sleep on our streets.

Teach us, Lord, to be more like you.

Open our eyes to see the people around us as people you love:

all shapes and sizes,

all ages and colour,

the quiet and the loud,

the young and the old.

Open our ears, not only to hear the loud cries but also the silent cries around us.

We know that we should never tire of helping others but we confess that we do get compassion fatigue. Strengthen us in our resolve to be more like Jesus and help us to respond as you would, to love as you have taught us to love. Help us to keep our eyes and ears open to the world around us and give us hearts and minds to respond to each situation appropriately.

Thank you for calling us to this ministry of caring. May we never let you down. Amen.

Many thanks Roger for those prayers.

Readings

Our readings today come from Ezekiel and from Matthew.

Ezekiel 34: 11 - 16 & 20 – 24

¹¹ “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹²As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will

be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and make them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

²⁰ “Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: see, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, ²² I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. ²³ I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.

Matthew 25: 31 - 46

The sheep and the goats

‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ ‘Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

³⁷ ‘Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?”

⁴⁰ 'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

⁴¹ 'Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me."

⁴⁴ 'They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or ill or in prison, and did not help you?"

⁴⁵ 'He will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

⁴⁶ 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'

Take me to your leader! Ezekiel expresses the Lord's longing for a good leader, like a shepherd who will care for a flock. And Matthew gives an image of what our leader, that great shepherd of the Sheep, the Lord Jesus, is looking for in those who follow him. We declare him ruler of our lives as we sing *Jesus, we enthrone you...*

Song (WT 246) **Jesus we enthrone you**

Verse

Jesus we enthrone You;
We proclaim You our King.
Standing here in the midst of us,
We raise You up with our praise.

Chorus

And as we worship, build a throne,
And as we worship, build a throne,
And as we worship, build a throne.
Come Lord Jesus and take Your place.

Repeat Verse, then Chorus x 2

And now may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon

Take me to your leader...

So, if the Martians landed and asked you this question, who would you take them to? Since, happily, we don't live in a totalitarian regime, there is no single person leading all aspects of our lives, is there?

But maybe you have leaders in mind who inspire you, who move you, who energise you... Some might remember a favourite teacher. Some might think of a charismatic politician... A former church minister... A sports coach... A business leader...

So who do **you** see as a great leader? Could you boil down their leadership skills to a handful of qualities?

I actually made a Facebook post about leadership to see who people might come up with as an example of a great leader - and why they might follow them. So, who did people suggest?

A **Chief Tournament Director** of the English Bridge Union who changed the culture from one of authoritarianism to one of helping. A **School Principal** who was not a dictator, but was confident. A **Deputy Head** who could command respect without raising his voice. **Lord Baden Powell**, who had a passion to improve the life chances of young people. A character-of-a teacher called **Mr Gufstafson**, who brought a love of the brass band and taught spelling by mispronouncing complicated words to emphasise their letters, and called his car a Bentley even though it was no such thing.

Great leaders are not bullies or dictators. Great leaders have a ring of authenticity

about them. Perhaps they are sometimes great characters.

Some went for well-known figures. **Nelson Mandela**, showed courage, forgiveness, humility and wisdom in his leadership. **Gandhi** was a peaceful, non-violent, humble man aware of his failings. Some suggested as leaders business people like **Anita Roddick** or **Sir John Harvey Jones** who had the vision to change business in line with what the future was bringing. Cultural leaders like **Sallie Wainwright** were mentioned. Leaders also can see the future, live out the values of that future, show what it may be like to others and inspire us to work for a better world. And I might have picked **Marcus Rashford** who uses his influence as a footballer on behalf of hungry children.

Well our first reading today was from Ezekiel 34 and if you glance through the preceding context you'll see how leadership in Israel had become **unhealthy** and **abusive**. These Shepherds of Israel are called out for some dire aspects of failed leadership.

Their motivation was for **personal gain**. *You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.* The leaders of Israel were condemned for feathering their own nests.

You have not strengthened the weak or healed those who are ill or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.

As they look after number 1, the Israelite leaders also **neglected the general needs of the flock**. And they are especially indicted for **not caring for the weak and the needy**. Into this context of leadership the reading we heard comes. *I myself will search for my sheep, says God, and look after them.*

The extended metaphor talks of God the Shepherd himself leading the flocks to good pasture. Of course we hear echoes of Psalm 23, and it seems God will *place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.*

For Christians, this can only point to Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.

Let's flip Ezekiel's negatives into positives. *Good leadership is selfless, serves the common good, and has special concern for the poor and the needy.*

Now let's consider what Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats might say about leadership... We learn again then that leadership has special concern for the poor and the needy. *I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.* Selflessness is again implied as the focus is on supplying the needs of those at the bottom of the pile by providing food, water, clothing and friendship. And if society works this way, the common good must also be served.

Jesus' parable takes us into a sketch of eternity. The Son of Man sits in his glory and everyone is judged. The true leaders who serve the common good are now ready for eternal life. Those who serve only themselves, well, they are just not ready to fit in with the way heaven is.

A selfless concern for the common good with special help for the needy - who can give that kind of leadership? Well... maybe you can...

Today's world is much more like a web of people all connected together, than a hierarchical top-down structure in which one leader tells everyone else what to do. In today's world, we might talk of **distributed leadership**, recognising that everyone can lead by influencing others.

The model of distributed leadership fits well with the structure of a Baptist church. In our tradition, decisions are made at a church meeting of all committed members of the congregation. Everyone has a voice. The only ultimate leader is Christ himself.

Take me to your leader... Well one response to this instruction is to look in the mirror. A mature person is not told how to think or act by some overlord, but learns to lead herself or himself.

For Christians that means, as we've seen, learning to care for the needy and serve

the common good in a selfless spirit. Well now, I don't think any of us would pretend to be completely selfless. So, by selfless, I mean that looking after yourself is not your primary motivation.

But in fact, when we **do** look after others, we also look after ourselves. If you help out a friend in need, you would be unusual not to take some joy and satisfaction in being able to serve.

So to lead ourselves is to learn to follow Christ; to be more like him. In that sense, *Take me to your Leader* suggests pointing our alien to Jesus.

But in Jesus' parable, well we see Jesus himself distributed, especially amongst the needy. And since he regards us through the eyes of the needy, our leadership is assessed by the experience of the needy at our hands.

So, in a sense, our leader might **be** the homeless person in the night shelter; the dying person on a ward; the prisoner... For they draw from us - or not - the response of agape love.

So... *Take me to your leader...*

Look in the mirror...

Look at the needy...

And also look at individuals who inspire you with true leadership. Find leaders who are **willing to learn**, who are **humble**, and who embody the very thing they are leading us towards. **Leaders of integrity**. Look for people who can tell stories about the future, and live that future out in their own lives today.

Jesus is in all these places. In our own humble hearts. In the cries of the hungry. In people who influence many with integrity and humility. In those able to use art or words to craft a vision of a better world. Those who are able to model how to live that way now.

So a great leader is a selfless servant of the common good who especially cares for

the needy. A great leader goes on learning. A great leader has learnt to lead herself or himself, and shows humility. A great leader casts a vision of a better reality and actually lives by that vision. They inspire trust, passion, commitment and change. Old traditional leaders are perhaps not always like that. Think of the most powerful men in the world today - and I do say men. And think of one such man whose power is waning. Perhaps many a strong-man leader would fit badly with the model of leadership we are developing.

Perhaps some of the great women leaders are nearer to the mark - **Angela Merkel**, **Jacinda Ardern**, and woman's hour power list number one this year, **Caroline Lucas**, who tirelessly advocates for a realistic approach to building a greener Britain. Could it be that women might more naturally understand the concept of servant leadership? Could it be that women are more at home in a world of distributed leadership?

And you, too, are a leader. You lead **yourself** to Jesus. You lead **others** in your relations with family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and in all your interactions online. Are you leading selflessly, for the common good, with a special concern for the needy?

There was a wise and rich king who possessed a beloved, but not a loving wife. She had three illegitimate sons, who proved ungrateful and rebellious to their reputed parent. In due time, she brought forth another son, whose legitimacy was undisputed; and after arriving at a good old age, the king died, and was buried in the royal tomb of his fathers.

But the death of the old king caused great strife amongst his surviving sons, about the right of succession. All of them advanced a claim, and none would relinquish it to the other; the three first presuming upon their priority in birth, and the last upon his legitimacy. So they agreed to refer the absolute decision of their cause to a certain honourable knight of the late king.

When this person heard their problem, he said, "Follow my advice, and it will greatly benefit you. Bring from its tomb the body of the deceased monarch; prepare, each of

you, a bow and single shaft, and whoever hits the heart of his father shall receive the kingdom."

The counsel was approved, the body was taken from its tomb and bound to a tree. The arrow of the first son wounded the king's right hand on which, as if the contest were over, they proclaimed him heir to the throne. But the second arrow went nearer, and entered the mouth; so that he, too, considered himself the winner of the kingdom. However, the third perforated the heart itself, and consequently imagined that his claim was fully decided, and his succession sure. It now came to the turn of the fourth and last son to shoot, but he broke forth into a lamentable cry, and with eyes swimming in tears, said, *Oh! my poor father: have I then lived to see you the victim of an impious contest?*

Those listening were moved by the fourth son's love for his late father and everyone agreed that it was he who should therefore inherit the kingdom.

And we inherit the Kingdom of God if we see our King in every neighbour, friend or colleague in need. We find Jesus is our leader as we care for those in difficulties. And we influence others for good.

And in the Kingdom of God, leadership itself is less about one powerful individual calling all the shots and more about crafting a culture in which all are free to flourish and thrive, and any falling behind receive special consideration, each of us doing our part to lead everyone to good pasture.

Song (WT 397) **The King of Love is my delight**

Verse 1

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.

Chorus

*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.*

Verse 2

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.

Chorus

Bridge x 2

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.

Chorus x 2

*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.*

Ending:

*The King has come, the King of love has come,
The King has come, the King of love has come.*

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.