

Order of Service 31st October 2021

Loving God

Good Morning and welcome to worship at Hearsall Baptist Church. My name is Roger Woodward. I'm a retired Baptist Minister and have the privilege of leading worship this week. David, our minister, is preaching at the United Reform Church on Holyhead Road. So let us be still, make ourselves comfortable and prepare ourselves to worship an almighty and a loving God.

Call to Worship

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

³ though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.

⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.

⁵ God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.

⁶ Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

⁷ The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

⁸ Come and see what the LORD has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.

⁹ He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰ He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.'

¹¹ The LORD Almighty is with us;

the God of Jacob is our fortress.

God says, *'Be still and know that I am God.'* We sing that hymn that speaks of that wonderful love of God at work in the whole of creation, *Sing to God new songs of worship.*

Song (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.

Opening Prayers of Approach and Confession

Still us, Lord God,
quieten our hearts and our minds as we gather in your presence.
Take from us the thoughts that distract, the worries and concerns that pull and cry
out for our attention
help us to concentrate on you.
May your Spirit breathe life-giving breath into us,
working through us as individuals, and among us as your body.
And may your name be praised in the words we speak, in the thoughts we think, and
in the things we do.
To you be all honour and all glory
and praise,
the one, true and living God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Loving God, sometimes it's hard to confess, for all sorts of reasons.
We feel so bad we don't really know where to start.
We're scared to admit our mistakes.
We can't think that we've done anything wrong.
What other people think is wrong, we don't - who's right? We can't let ourselves be in
the wrong.
We're trying - what more can we do?
Loving God, sometimes it's hard to confess.
Instead we'll let you know what it can sometimes feel like being us.
Sometimes we feel angry because we want things to be fair or don't like what other
people are doing.
Sometimes we feel scared of getting things wrong, or being overwhelmed, or of not
being able to keep up.
Sometimes we feel sad that we can't have everything the way we want it to be, or
that things can sometimes go so badly wrong.
Sometimes we feel totally wonderfully happy, when we're having fun or enjoying
doing something.
Sometimes we feel warmly content, when everything is just nicely ticking along.
Loving God, this is us. Thank you that you love us just as we are. Amen

We continue our worship as we sing the hymn, *The King of Love is my Delight*.

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

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.*

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.

Offering Prayer

And now we remember our offering. Let us bow our heads.

Loving Father

All that we have,

All that we do,

All that we are,

We offer to you

In Jesus name. Amen

We will now have our prayers of intercession and that will be followed by our two Bible readings.

Prayers of Intercession Denise Rée

Lord, we come to you in a moment of quiet, amongst the noise of the busy world we live in. Help us to focus on you, Lord, and to ignore the distractions of everyday life.

We think of the world we live in and those who will be meeting in Glasgow to discuss the way forward, for us to hopefully stop climate change and what we are doing to your wonderful creation. It must make you weep at times when you see what is happening.

We ask you to guide our leaders as they not only have decisions on far reaching effects of global warming, but also things closer to home in their individual countries. We bring before you the issues around the world where people do not even have the means to support their families, especially the mother in Afghanistan who felt the only way her daughter had a future was to sell her; it is heart-breaking to even comprehend the anguish that family are going through.

We bring to you those who run our country as they try to find the best ways forward, as we recover from the economic strains of the covid pandemic, and those who work in the NHS, working to offer us what we need with limited funds.

Please guide the leaders of our city, as we continue with our journey as City of Culture, and the running of the city council.

Now we bring Hearsall Baptist church before you, as we continue to look to the future, and ask you to guide us in the way we should go with the development of the site, and as a church family.

We think of all who are ill or receiving treatment and those missing loved ones no longer with us. Lord, graciously hear our prayers. Amen

Bible Readings

Mark 12: 28 – 34

The greatest commandment

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus

had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?'

²⁹ 'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one."³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."³¹ The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.'

³² 'Well said, teacher,' the man replied. 'You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.'

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Ruth 1: 1 - 18

Naomi loses her husband and sons

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. **2** The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem

6 When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. **7** With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

⁸ Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. ⁹ May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.'

Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud ¹⁰ and said to her, 'We will go back with you to your people.'

¹¹ But Naomi said, 'Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹² Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me – even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons – ¹³ would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!'

¹⁴ At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ 'Look,' said Naomi, 'your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.'

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.' ¹⁸ When Naomi realised that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

We sing the song, *I Will Worship*.

Song (WT 200) **I Will Worship**

I will worship (I will worship)

With all of my heart. (With all of my heart.)

I will praise You (I will praise You)

With all of my strength. (All my strength.)

I will seek You (I will seek You)
All of my days. (All of my days.)
I will follow (I will follow)
All of Your ways. (All Your ways.)

Chorus

*I will give You all my worship,
I will give You all my praise.
You alone I long to worship,
You alone are worthy of my praise.*

I will bow down (I will bow down)
And hail You as King. (And hail You as King.)
I will serve You; (I will serve You;)
Give You everything. (Everything)

I will lift up (I will lift up)
My eyes to Your throne. (My eyes to Your throne.)
I will trust You, (I will trust You,)
Trust You alone. (You alone)

Chorus x2

*I will give You all my worship,
I will give You all my praise.
You alone I long to worship,
You alone are worthy of my praise.*

Father, as we come to reflect upon your word, may the words spoken and the words heard reflect to us the living Christ. Amen

Sermon

Loving God

In Mark's gospel chapter 12 and verse 30 we read these words, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength.*

Abraham Lincoln used to go to church regularly. He never however became a member of any church. He once said, 'When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the words of the Saviour, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself*, that church, he said, I will join. If he was implying that most churches have obscured the radical demands of Christ by all sorts of demands of their own, he was perhaps right. To ask more than Christ asked is to ask too much. If we can learn to love God and our neighbour we should have done well. For although these two commandments slip easily off our tongue, it is not all that easy to say what precisely and exactly they mean, far less to obey them.

Christ explained, 'Love your neighbour' unforgettably. To do so He told the immortal story of the Good Samaritan. He could assume that His Jewish hearers knew what the Love of God meant. The difference between those Jews of the first century and ourselves is that they needed a parable to explain love of neighbour, while we could do with one to explain the love of God. Many of us feel rather guilty about the difficulty we have in loving God. Yet it is never easy to love by command, most difficult of all when the person we are commanded to love, we have never seen. Let us admit the difficulty honestly and ask, *Is it really possible to love God, and if so how?*

Let us start by admitting that no two people love God in precisely the same way. It all depends upon who you are. A verb is very much influenced by its subject. Take the verb to sing, does it always mean the same thing, I doubt it. I sing... (some wouldn't think so!), The Rolling Stones sing, Kathleen Ferrier sings. The same word is used for all these activities; and I would suggest, there any resemblance ends.

Here is a young wife and mother. Her husband loves her, her parents, her sisters, her children, her best friends all love her. The verb we use is the same in every case. All of them indeed love her, but each in their own and each in a different way. So surely with our love of God. We are each of us asked to love God according to our capacity and understanding, and each of us in our own way. The child is asked to love God in one way. The scholar in another way. The country man in quite another. We should not reproach ourselves because we cannot love God in the same way as someone else. God never asks us to. On his death bed General Booth of the

Salvation Army said, 'God has had all there was of William Booth'. God asks no more of any man than that. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength.

But if the verb is also conditioned by its object. We use the same verb for many activities, depending upon the noun that follows: we drive a car, a golf ball and a bargain. Drive means something different in each of these contexts. The meaning of the object reflects back in each case into the verb. We shoot goals at Wembley, pheasants in Perthshire and films in Hollywood. Those who do one kind of shooting, do not normally indulge in either of the others.

So with the verb to love, we mean something different by it almost every time we use it— depending on what it is we love. We may love chocolate ice cream, we may love a particular type of car, we may even love a great work of art. In each case we mean a certain sort of fondness, but the emotion we feel, if any, when confronted by a blob of ice cream is very different from that which we feel when we gaze at the girl or boy of our choice and that is different again from that which the artist feels when he gazes at a work of art.

When we speak of loving God, it means something else again. We are asked to love God not only in the way that is possible for us, but also in the way that is also appropriate for Him. Partly this means that we will offer Him the reverence due to the Creator of all things that are. The grandeur of the hills, the restless beauty of the seas, the perfection of the flower, the song of the birds. All these things and many more call forth from us a gratitude for that Being who lies behind all that is majestic and orderly and lovely in nature.

Partly, we shall find God and love Him in the loyalty of friends, in the innocence of a child, in the beauty of an aged face and in the memory of a loved one who has gone before us. Someone is there, we feel, behind all that is tender and gracious and good in our human experience. Yet it is more than this that God asks for, *You shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your strength*. That penetrates the inner most part of our being and it is meant to. It is not a passing acquaintance that God wants, not a nod of approval. He wants a response of total personal commitment - the consecration of our whole lives - a passion so all-

consuming that it will burn up all that is mean and shabby within us and cast self from the throne of our lives.

God in nature, nor God in our own experience, will do that. But only the God whom we meet in Christ. No man hath seen God at any time. Only through our relationship with Jesus can we know God at this depth. After all the critics have had their say, the figure that steps forth from the pages of the New Testament is alive; His life is a consistent whole. His words are words that ring authentically in our ears, and the love that has shone through all that He said and did and suffered demands no less than love from us.

We can give many things to others, admiration, approval, even affection, but we can give ourselves only to those who give themselves to us. This is exactly what God has done in Christ. When we see his glory - the glory of the only begotten of the Father, when we see that glory suffering on the cross for us, then every barrier of pride must go. Face to face with Christ on the cross at Calvary, we can only offer no less than all that we have and all that we are.

Thinking about the cross of Christ, Paul said with awe and wonder, *'The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me.'* If once we know that to be true, we shall not find it hard to obey the first and greatest commandment:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength. Amen

We sing that magnificent hymn, *O Lord my God, when I in Awesome Wonder*

Hymn (BPW 62) **How Great Thou Art**

1. O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed;

Chorus

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!*

2. When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

Chorus

3. And when I think that God his son not sparing,
Sent him to die - I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

Chorus

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home - what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

Chorus

And now let us say together the Grace.

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.