



## Call to Worship – Psalm 85:8-13

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,  
for he will speak peace to his people,  
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.  
Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.  
Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.  
The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.  
Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

**Hymn:** StF 51 *Thomas O. Chisholm (1886-1960)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKIqmdfHSk>

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;  
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!*  
*Morning by morning new mercies I see;*  
*All I have needed thy hand hath provided.*  
*Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

## Opening Prayer

O God, giver of life and truth and grace, I come today in a spirit of thanksgiving for all your mercies. Great is your faithfulness to all your people through the ages. Renew me for life in your beautiful world. Amen.

**Scripture** Amos 7:7-15

**Reflection** *The Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. Amos 7:7.*

While the voice of judgment is unmistakable in this passage, with God promise to set a plumb line in the people's midst and lay waste Israel's religious and political establishment because it is warped and has fallen beyond repair, I want us to hear the good news in this message too. The metaphorical wall that is presently in place is a crumbling wall because the people have not treated each other well, especially through injustice towards the poor and oppressed and their religious arrogance. Amos announces God's promise of reconstructing a straight wall as measured against the plumb line. That hope is for us too, for our nation and for us individually.

Also, note that the plumb line is currently set against the leaning and crumbling wall, but in verse 7, we are told that the wall was initially built with a plumb line. The measure against which God is now measuring the Israelites was not foreign to them, but was integral to them from their start. God had given them the law or commandments at Mt Sinai, and they had not followed it. We are God's people who from our very creation are made for justice and formed for faithfulness.

Athanasius, one of the early church fathers, argues that an essential dimension of Christ's redemptive work is his reformation of God's image within us, which is distorted by our sins. God's image was originally imprinted upon us in our creation, but we have so warped this image that we are rapidly deteriorating into a heap of rubble, much like Amos' wall. Christ's incarnation, then, is not merely have a sketch after which we might pattern ourselves. Rather, this incarnate image itself reforms us and reframes the very construction of our lives. Christ, for Athanasius, plumbs us to our depths.

St. Francis of Assisi and his counselor Clare described themselves as living *lives plumbed by Christ*. Clare said that “Christ is a mirror in which we can gaze on our true selves, so that we can see clearly those aspects of our lives that are out of plumb and repent of them, while seeing the true angle and dimension to which we are called.”

As Christians and as Methodists, we are called to challenge injustice and to care for creation and all of God’s people. We live at a time of huge change when domestic and global injustices are being revealed and intensified. How can our world be renewed so that all God’s creation, people, and planet, can flourish? In June, the Methodist connexion launched a new two-year project called *Walking with Micah: Methodist Principles for Social Justice*. The prophet Micah was another prophet concerned about justice; he reminded people that the worship God wants is for us to act justly, to love as God loves, and to walk humbly with God. This project is asking us to think about what it means for the Methodist Church to be a justice-seeking church. Where are justice and hope to be found? The project will help us to focus on our principles and priorities for justice, and through that increase our ability to seek God’s justice, as a Church and in our own Christian lives. Change is possible and people of faith have a role to play in challenging injustice. May we live lives plumbed by Christ with the walls we construct in line with God’s values.

*Consider:*

- *What part of your life is out of plumb?*
- *What plumb lines has God set in our midst today?*
- *What issues of injustice are you currently concerned about? What are you doing in response?*
- *Where on the world news or local news do you see reconstruction happening?*

## Prayers

*We come now to make our confession...* Lord, you stand beside a wall with a plumb line in your hand — the wall that I have built. What once was a straight, strong wall of protection, a sanctuary against all that might harm me, is now revealed as a bowed, bulging, weak wall of separation that I have used to conceal myself within a dark prison of my own making. I know that your perfect judgment finds me wanting. Free me, Lord; I am my own worst enemy. Level my feeble fortress, and rebuild me in the strength of your love and your forgiveness. Lead me from my darkness into your light. Amen.

(from *Worship Elements* at <http://www.ministrymatters.com/>)

Eternal God, you have set a plumb line from the foundation of the world to lead us into truth. May the house we are building have strong straight walls where Christ’s love can be seen and justice reign. Receive our prayers of hope and healing on behalf of the church and the world. Give wisdom to all leaders and people to resist the earthly powers of fear and violence that destroy our common life. In the face of injustice and oppression, strengthen our wavering wills to stand in the power of Christ. Stir up in us the power to care for your creation, not as resources to be exploited, but as a precious gift to be held in trust as a revelation of your faithfulness. Inspire your church to share Christ’s love beyond the safety of its walls, and fill us with an infectious joy for sharing your gospel as we welcome your coming reign. Bring healing and wholeness to all who are haunted by illness, broken relationships, abuse or terror and trauma of any kind; restore us in your peace. *We lift up now the concerns for others that we have on our hearts.* ... Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray: *Our Father ...*

**Hymn:** StF 255 *Bryn Rees (1911-1983)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqCOgqQhFyo>

The kingdom of God is justice and joy,  
for Jesus restores what sin would destroy;  
God's power and glory in Jesus we know,  
and here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God is challenge and choice,  
believe the good news, repent and rejoice!  
God's love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross,  
our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.

The kingdom of God is mercy and grace,  
the prisoners are freed, the sinners find place,  
the outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share,  
and hope is awakened in place of despair.

God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal,  
in Jesus begun, in heaven made whole;  
the heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call,  
and all things cry glory to God all in all!

## Blessing

Go from here to live lives plumbed by Christ.  
And may God the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with us all, now and always. Amen.