



Call to worship (From Psalm 107)

Let the redeemed of the Lord say this: O give thanks to the Lord, for God is gracious,
God's steadfast love endures for ever.

Hymn StF 34 John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811–1875)

- 1 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim ;
with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him : the Lord is his name.
- 2 Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for you,
comfort your sorrows, and answer your prayerfulness,
showing the pathway your feet should pursue.
- 3 Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth you would count as your own ;
truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to bring to his throne.
- 4 These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear ;
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling, and hope for our fear.
- 5 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim ;
with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him : the Lord is his name.

A prayer (based on Job 38)

Lord, we praise you this day: You who laid the earth's foundations; who placed its cornerstone;
while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy!

Yet we take so much of your nature and your works for granted And for that we are sorry. We ride roughshod over
your creation. We do not love other people as you do and we are careless with the natural order.

You gave orders to the morning and showed the dawn its place; you moulded the earth until it took shape.

You alone know the springs of the sea; You it was who set limits for the sea and said, "This far and no further; here is
where your proud waves stop."

Yet this morning around our circuit we have to pray for those who live in areas threatened by loss of homes and
livelihoods as sea levels rise, storms rage and fertile land is lost. We are complicit in the systems that cause such
chaos and destruction and so we ask...

*Give wisdom to our hearts understanding to our minds and urgency to our actions
as we seek to redeem ourselves and your creation Amen.*

Scripture: Job 1:1, 2: 1 – 10

Reflection

Once upon a time in the land of Uz lived a man called Job. He was a rich and prosperous man and lived happily with
his wife and 10 children. He was loved as a good and righteous soul.

So (in my words) starts the story of Job, for story it is and just as we read Cinderella without wondering why no one
called Social Services, we have to accept that Job's story raises some questions (such as why God allowed such
suffering) which are just not touched on. So let's look at what *is* there.

God and The Satan are in Heaven having a conversation. This is not the demonic Satan of the New Testament but one
more accurately translated as The Adversary. His duty is to go about the earth and to prove the case against human
beings before God - a bit like the Crown Prosecution Service. God is pointing out to The Adversary how blameless and
upright is Job. The Adversary poses the central question of the whole story of the Book of Job: **"What is the motivation**

for Job's righteousness?" He suggests that Job is only a righteous man because there is something in it for him. God rewards him for it.... by bestowing upon him the good life. **God rewards the righteous and punishes the unrighteous. Isn't that how it works?** The Adversary takes one day to removed his blessings. All his possessions and children perish but, though obviously heartbroken Job still praises the Lord.

The Adversary's accusation against Job then becomes more focussed. He maintains that Job will in the end curse God if Job can save his own life by doing so but God, *still* believing in Job, allows The Adversary to inflict Job from head to foot with loathsome sores and he is reduced to sitting in the city rubbish dump, scraping at his itching sores with filthy, broken pieces of pottery, devastated in body, mind and spirit.

Job is left alone, bereft of family, friends, and belongings...is there anything left? Job declares "Yes" because he will not relinquish that which he prizes above all things: his relationship with God. As in all good stories this story poses a question. Here it is **What motivates you to worship God?** Do you say your prayers and try to live a good life because by doing so your life is blessed by God? Or do you say your prayers and live the righteous life because you are *afraid* of God? Job's story shows that neither of these will do.

The deepest love of God comes from the intimate knowledge that God is simply lovable. We see it in God's care for Creation, in God's stooping to speak with a devastated man who lives on a rubbish dump, and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus .

Consider: some of the questions posed above in bold type. Read the hymn StF 41 written in response to the 9/11 attacks and a sad time in the authors' own lives. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnWKehtOXu8>

Prayers Let us pray for ...

A world that needs healing – nations afflicted with the diseases of warfare, injustice, poverty and vaccine shortage.

A society that needs healing – our nation afflicted with the diseases of inequality, frustration and divisions.

A church that needs healing - afflicted with the diseases of fear of the future, tiredness and lack of vision.

Individuals that need healing - of afflictions of body, mind and spirit.

Let us join our prayers to those of Christians round the world as we pray, *Our Father ...*

Hymn StF 518 Love Maria Willis (1824–1908)

- 1 Father, hear the prayer we offer :
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.
- 2 Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be ;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.
- 3 Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay ;
but would strike the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.
- 4 Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide ;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be there at our side.

Final prayer and blessing

Day by day, Dear Lord, of thee three things we pray:

To see thee more clearly, Love thee more dearly, Follow thee more nearly, Day by Day.

The blessing of the God of blessings be with you each day **Amen**