



Call to worship Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God. He has always been alive and is himself God. (John 1:1 The Living Bible)

Hymn StF 175 <https://youtu.be/YXg2ztge8f0>

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You

*Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me*

King of all days
Oh, so highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly You came to the earth You created
All for love's sake became poor

*Here I am to worship.....
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me*

Well, I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross
Here I am to worship.....

Prayers

Father God we exist because you made us, we are here because Jesus calls us and we are together because the Spirit binds us to each other. Without you Lord, where would we be? Who would we be? We come to you in hope and with joy as we come to worship you because you are the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings, our Maker and Redeemer. We come with our weaknesses and failures, our doubts and questions, and we are aware that we are not living the kind of lives that you want us to. You take us as we are but we pray that you will not only forgive us but that by the power of your Spirit you will cleanse us, renew us and help us to be more like Jesus day by day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible reading John 1:35-39, John 6:60-61, 66-69

Hymn StF 363 <https://youtu.be/DIsD1Eslpfl>

My Jesus, my Saviour
Lord there is none like you
All of my days I want to praise
The wonders of your mighty love
My comfort my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have
In YOU

Questions?

I spend as much time as possible with my great grandchildren as they grow up so quickly. Recently I was in the garden with Violet and she was riding her little pink three-wheeler bicycle. I was a little way behind her and she suddenly stopped and looked round and said 'Why are you following me?' That surprised me I must say and I can't quite remember what my response was. Children have a wonderful way of taking you by surprise don't they. I thought it was a very good question and it led me to the reading I have chosen for today.

Jesus was very good at asking questions and I think they are questions that we should ask ourselves. The question in this reading from John's gospel is an interesting and perhaps surprising one too. 'What are you looking for?' Or 'Why are you following me? What do you want?'

John the Baptist was 'the voice of someone shouting in the desert' and he was telling all who would listen about the one who was coming who was much greater than him. People had been listening to John and following him and thought that maybe he was the promised one that the prophets of old had pointed to. But he made it very clear that he wasn't the one and that someone much greater than him was coming. Then on this particular day which really had nothing very special about it John suddenly saw Jesus and said 'Look! there he is. This is the man I've been talking about. There is the Lamb of God'. The one they had waited so long for. The next day two unnamed followers were with John and Jesus walked by. There he is again. Did he stand out, was there something special about him? And why did these two decide to follow him? But not really knowing what to do next perhaps, What should they say to him, should they approach him? I wonder how far they went before Jesus turned round and said 'What are you looking for?' not 'WHO are you looking for?' But 'What are you looking for?'

I'm guessing they were as surprised at the question as much as I was surprised at Violet's question to me. 'Why are you following me?' I wonder if their reply was the first thing that came into their head – 'Where do you live – Rabbi?' In those days disciples followed closely behind their Rabbi's, teachers. And they saw him as a new Rabbi with no name. This man simply said 'Come and See'. What an invitation – but they had no idea what they were being invited to. So they saw where he lived and spent the rest of the day with him – a day that changed their lives.

There are many people, maybe some of us, who are looking for something more than they already have. Perhaps working toward a particular goal. Hoping for financial security, a nicer house, a family, a better job. Hoping for contentment and peace. Something beyond themselves. Some people do extreme things to find fulfilment and some go off somewhere to 'find themselves'. Some are just managing to survive. As they get older they begin to wonder about the meaning of life and thinking about what might lay ahead. What is life all about?

There is a mystery and uncertainty about it all. The natural world that we have taken for granted and abused for so very long is getting more and more fragile by the day. Relationships between nations are so fractured and dangerous, personal relationships can be a struggle and we no longer seem to know who we can trust.

I once heard it said 'Life is like a tin of sardines. – We're all looking for the key' I'm not sure if tins of sardines still have a key but if you're as old as me you will remember them I'm sure.

In the late 80s, the band U2 topped the charts with a song that speaks of the uncertainty of the journey and the nature of searching, The song is called "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." The lyrics speak of climbing the highest mountains, running through the fields, scaling city walls, and more, "only to be with you." The song takes us on a journey, while at the same time indicating that there must be something more than the literal path that they are on. Ultimately, satisfaction will not be found in this world. It must come

from something else, or perhaps from someone else. U2's lead singer and songwriter, Bono, has referred to it as "a gospel song with a restless spirit." Interestingly Bono went on to say their songs are "prayers of a kind."

It's a song about searching for meaning and although deeply Christian he says he is still searching. Are we still searching for that deepest meaning in our own lives?

We might imagine this is the song of those disciples at the beginning, searching and longing for something they can't seem to find. In fact, considering that they never offer an answer to Jesus' question, perhaps they don't even have a sense of what they are searching for. So they see a teacher a Rabbi, hoping that if they stick by his side, they will find the answer.

If we move on to John Ch 6 we find there crowds of people searching for Jesus until they found him, then listening to his teaching and discovering that following him was extremely challenging. They didn't like his teaching, said they couldn't understand it and grumbled that it was simply too hard. So they turned their backs on him and left. Those who stayed were going to need every little bit of help they could get if they were to follow him, to work with him, stay with him, to trust him and then to share His message with others. 'What about you', Jesus said to them. 'Do you want to leave too?' Simon Peter's reply was inspired. 'Lord, where would we go, who would we follow. You speak the words that give eternal life. We believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God'. The Message puts it like this 'We have already committed ourselves. Confident that you are the Holy One of God'

So, questions for us to think about? What are you looking for? Who are you following and why? What do you want?

Especially remembering that following Jesus is very challenging and we can never know exactly where or what it will lead us to. Amen

Prayers of intercession and Lord's Prayer Lord we remember the many places in our troubled world where it is most dangerous to be a Christian, where people can be imprisoned or simply disappear for speaking about Jesus and where churches have to go underground and meet in secret. Please give them strength and courage. **Amen**

Hymn StF 489 <https://youtu.be/09CzdMszUos>

All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

Now my heart's desire is to know you more
To be found in you and known as yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

*Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,
There is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you, Lord*

Oh, to know the power of your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like you in your death, my Lord
So with you to live and never die

Blessing. The Lord bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you and give you His peace.
Amen