



Bible Reading: Psalm 95

Hymn: 51 Great is thy faithfulness <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4ox4es1jo8>

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 forever will be

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

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...

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.

Great is Thy faithfulness...

Prayers:

Eternal God,

We worship you, creator, and Sustainer of the universe, and we praise you for the gifts of life, health, and strength.

Lord Jesus,

We worship you, Saviour, and Lord of the world, and we praise you that you have found us, washed us, forgiven us and given us a place in your church.

Holy Spirit,

We worship you, sanctifier of the people of God, and we praise you that you have renewed us and blessed us with your gifts. Amen.

Prayer by Revd. Aian Ferguson from the Methodist Prayer Handbook 2014-15 p4

A Prayer of Confession

Forgive us Lord those times when we fail to recognise your glory.

Forgive us lord when we do see you in our brothers and sisters.

Forgive us when our words and actions do not point to you.

Forgive transform and renew us we pray by the power and love of Christ.

Amen.

Old Testament: *Exodus 17: 1-7*

Epistle: *Romans 5: 1-11*

Gospel: *John 4: 5-42*

Reflection:

Back in the summer of 1983 I went on a Methodist Guild Holiday to Swanage in Dorset. One blazing hot day, I had put my name down for a walk along the coast to Worth Matravers. I hadn't a clue where Worth Matravers was, but I quite fancied the six-and-a-half-mile walk, clearly other holiday makers had better ways to spend their time because there was just me, one other guest, and two members of staff set out on our walk. All these years later, I can remember very little about the walk itself apart from it being boiling hot and were quite exposed walking along the cliff tops with the vast English Channel to our left and the Dorset hills to our right. I had consumed the water I had brought with me by the time we turned to leave the coast and walk up a valley which we were told had some scary name like "Death Valley!" the sun was at its hottest, we were all sweating as though we had just run a marathon, I had no water left and my mouth and throat felt as though I hadn't drunk in weeks. I remember longing to reach Worth Matravers, I didn't care any longer what was in this mysterious place, so long as there was a shop selling drinks!

I'm sure that it wasn't the best idea, but the first thing I saw when I walked into the little shop, that possibly had about five customers a day, was a two litre bottle of lemonade and a few moments later, I sat on the village green with my friends and glugged the whole bottle down in one sitting, I can't remember another time in my entire life

that I have felt so thirsty as I did that day. I have never been back to Worth Matravers since, apart from this morning, checking it out on Google. It looks like a pretty, little village and may be worth another visit one of these days, but I won't be walking there from Swanage, particularly not on a blazing hot day, with insufficient water.

In our Old Testament reading today we read of the Israelites out in the searing heat of the wilderness, the temperatures would have been far higher than the once I endured on my walk to Worth Matravers and there was no helpful corner shop to provide a means to quench their thirst. I dread to think about how Moses felt with this huge crowd of people demanding that he sort the problem, no doubt his throat was dry, no doubt he was feeling the results of dehydration, no doubt, he could see that having come this far, they were all going to die. The situation wasn't melodramatic, it was real, and I believe that in that moment they were completely reliant on God, they needed God to intervene. In their hour of need God provided them with the fresh, clean water, they so needed, and I guess that water was the most wonderful thing those people had ever tasted.

Our Gospel reading tells us quite an interesting story, we have a practical theme, Jesus and a Samaritan woman drawing water from a well. In the western world we take water for granted, we turn our taps on and have a plentiful supply. In the time of Jesus water was much less easy to come by, but equally essential to life and this apparent chance meeting by the well gives preachers enough material to preach dozens of different sermons about relationships, conflicts, discrimination, and compliance with the law. I want to reflect on the core message, which is that a relationship with God, is as essential to life, as food and drink are to the body. Jesus tries to teach the woman, and later his disciples, that what nourished him, is the word and the work of God.

There was a period of about ten years in my life when Karen and I felt to lurch from one disaster to another, we became professional funeral attenders for close family members, I was made redundant three times, our house was broken into twice, we had the car stolen, and I wondered just how much we could endure. In my ministry, I have stood alongside people who have been faced with a barrage of events and I have marvelled at how resilient people can be. Time and again, I have heard people say "I don't know where I would have been without my faith" and I find it fascinating that as Paul is writing to the Church in Rome, that he is alluding to the same thing.

As I staggered into Worth Matravers feeling like some explorer reaching an oasis in the desert, soaked in sweat, feeling lightheaded and with a raging thirst, I was in desperate need of a drink. In much the same way, there have been times in my life when I have felt spent, worthless, overwhelmed, and not known where to turn next. On those occasions I know that I need the power of God, through his Holy Spirit to work in me. I hope that the words of the next hymn give you some comfort and hope.

Hymn 248: I heard the voice of Jesus say <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74kyfROS4q8>

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast."
I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
and He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
and all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found in Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk,
till traveling days are done.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one, stoop down,
and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in Him.

Take a time to sit quietly and pray:

We pray for the world around us; for the environment; for peace where there is conflict; for racial and social justice to be seen throughout the world.

We pray for our communities; for those who are shielding; for those who are fearful, for those working for the good of others in many different ways in our community. We pray for all who work in the NHS and for all key workers and those on whom we rely. We pray for our church community as we seek new ways of fulfilling our calling as the Church in these times. We pray for our families, friends, and neighbours. We pray for those who are ill and for those who are struggling financially or emotionally at this time. We pray for those who are grieving as we remember those who have died.

In the stillness we take a moment we bring our prayers to God...

The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn 338 **There is a redeemer,** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SG3a7PTSFE>

There is a redeemer
Jesus, God's own Son
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
Holy One

Jesus my redeemer
Name above all names
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
Oh, for sinners slain

*Thank you, oh my father
For giving us Your Son*

*And leaving Your Spirit
'Til the work on Earth is done*

When I stand in Glory
I will see His face
And there I'll serve my King forever
In that Holy Place

*Thank you, oh my father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving Your Spirit
'Til the work on Earth is done*

A prayer of blessing

Dear Lord.

When times are hard, walk beside us.

When we are unsure of which way to turn, dwell within us.

When we need to listen to others, encourage us.

When our lives and work bear fruit, rejoice with us.

So may the blessing of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us all today and forever more. **Amen.**