



**Hymn:** StF 331 King of Kings

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKAQvIEotc8>

King of kings, Majesty  
God of Heaven living in me  
Gentle Saviour, closest friend  
Strong Deliverer, beginning and end  
All within me falls at Your throne  
Your Majesty, I can but bow  
I lay my all before You now  
In royal robes I don't deserve  
I live to serve Your Majesty

Love eternal, Faithful and True  
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls  
Brought this sinner near to Your throne  
All within me cries out in praise.  
Your majesty, I can but bow  
I lay my all before You now  
In royal robes I don't deserve  
I live to serve Your Majesty

Jarrood Cooper

Earth and Heaven worship You

### Prayer

Lord Jesus,

To us, you are our King of Kings. You are our majesty. We wonder and marvel at the truths we have heard sung.

You are the God of Heaven, my Heavenly Father, living in me. You dwell within me through the power of the Holy Spirit and, as I know you, so I know the Father.

You are my gentle saviour. You are the one who died on that cross to set me free from sin and death; that I might be able to exist in your presence free from guilt and shame.

You are my closest friend. You are the one who knows me better than I can ever know myself. You love me as I am, whilst also enabling me to change.

You are my strong deliverer. Mountains are not mountains to you. I can get through all things with you beside me.

You are my beginning and end. You were there at the moment of my creation and you will be there when I draw my final breath, ready to welcome me into my eternal home with you.

Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you today as our creator, our saviour, our sustainer and our forever friend.  
Amen.

**Reading:** Luke 24 v. 1-49

**Hymn:** StF 489 All I once held dear

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Merf00qcQik>

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.

*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.*

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.*

O 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.

*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.*

Graham Kendrick

## Message:

Like many Methodist ministers, I shall be spending the Sundays in January leading congregations in the Covenant Service. This year I felt drawn to a rather different reading from which to draw inspiration. I have been using the final chapter of Luke's Gospel which means that in double quick time I have moved congregations from the baby Jesus born in the manger to the risen Jesus about to be ascended. Why?

The answer to that 'Why?' question is to try to understand how we can get to the point where we can say to God those words that are the nub of the service:

*I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose.* How indeed?

Let's take a journey through that first Easter Sunday, as described by Luke. It begins in wonder. Something is going on that is so much bigger than the participants could have ever dreamed. First, the women are faced with an empty tomb and two angels who tell them that Jesus has risen. The disciples, in turn, respond in disbelief. Their minds are incapable of adapting to the absolutely incredible. Peter himself goes to the tomb. Looking at the empty linen garments lying there, we're told that he 'wondered'.

It's a good example of the dual use we make in English of the word, 'wonder'. It refers to the scene in front of Peter. It is a scene of wonder. It is eye-opening and jaw-dropping. But 'wonder' also serves for us as a verb, as a doing word. It's what Peter now begins to do in order to try to understand what exactly is going on.

Being able to say the words of the Covenant Prayer begin for each one of us with wonder. There is wonder in coming face to face with God and all that he means for us. Take these words, for example, that come earlier in the Covenant service:

*Glory to the Father, the God of love, who created us; who continually preserves and sustains us; who has loved us with an everlasting love, and given us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.*

What incredible wonder there is in being able to say that there is a God who made me, who day by day watches over me and who loves me with an everlasting love.

But then we add wonder on wonder.

- A saviour who had died on the cross for me
- Who is seated at God's right hand in glory
- Who has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all who believe in him
- And a Spirit by whom we are born into the family of God, and made members of the body of Christ;
- Whose witness, wisdom and power are always with us

Never take these facts for granted. Pore over them in your hearts and let the wonder of it all sink in.

We start our journey towards the covenant prayer as the disciples did on that first Easter morning with wonder but incomplete understanding as to all that God was doing.

Enter the risen Jesus. Luke tells us there were two of Jesus' followers who were trudging back to their home in Emmaus. We can only begin to understand what they were feeling. Tired. Dispirited. Broken. Numb. Yet also confused at the message brought by the women of a tomb that was empty and a body that was missing.

As they walk, Jesus comes alongside them without them realising who he is. He lets them explain to him all that is on their minds and then, wonderfully, he makes sense of it all for them. He explains what has happened; why it has happened and that it always was meant to happen. He literally turns them around so that when he leaves them after they recognise him, they head straight back to Jerusalem. They were tired but now they are energised. They were dispirited but now they are reinvigorated. They were broken but Jesus has put them back together again. They were numb but now their hearts are burning within them.

Jesus has walked with them and to that wonder has been added understanding.

So, it is with us. We are led from that initial point of wonder at the immensity of God's actions because Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, walks alongside us. It is he who assures us that our sins are forgiven. It is he who shows us how special and loved we are in God's sight. It is he who gives us confidence that we can trust God for everything we need and that God will never let us down. There are the foundations and building blocks of the Christian life and it is through walking with Jesus that we are led into a deeper and deeper understanding of what they mean for us.

Wonder is a wonderful thing (no pun intended) but without a relationship with Jesus we will always be missing out. If you do not have that relationship right now then ask Jesus into your heart right now. It really is that easy. When Jesus walks

with us, he makes sense of everything for us. He helps us to see that we have a good, good Father in whom we can always put our trust. He prepares us to be able to say 'I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose'.

Let's return to the end of the day on that first Easter Sunday. The two have returned from Emmaus and are with the disciples when the risen Jesus appears in their midst. Prepare yourself for a third word beginning with 'W'. We started with Wonder; we continued with Jesus Walking with us; and we complete the set with Jesus inviting the disciples and us to be his Witnesses.

*You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."*

I don't know about you but when I look in wonder at what God has done and is doing, and after over forty years of walking with Jesus, I want to be one of those witnesses.

I was on a tube train the other day when a man came along the carriage asking for money. I didn't have any loose change or food but I felt the impulse to ask him to stop. The carriage was pretty empty so I invited him to sit down with us and to share his name and something of his story. I did end up giving him a £10 note but I felt God saying that the more important thing was to witness to him that he was cared for as an individual and that he was special and loved. What a powerful thing it is when we know someone by name.

We will all have opportunities to witness to God and his love. Some will seem big; some will feel small and insignificant but in all we are promised that power from on high, the power and strength of the Holy Spirit.

My prayer is that you, too, may feel as I do and look for those opportunities. May we be witnesses who can point people towards the wonder that we find where God is at work and the walk that anyone can enjoy with Jesus in their life. And may we find the words to say to our wonderful God:

*'I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose'*

**Hymn:** All to Jesus I surrender

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSPcuV5Sli8>

All to Jesus I surrender,  
All to Him I freely give;  
I will ever love and trust Him,  
In His presence daily live.  
I surrender all, I surrender all;  
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour,  
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender,  
Make me, Saviour, wholly Thine;  
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit,  
Truly know that Thou art mine.  
I surrender all, I surrender all;

All to Thee, my blessed Saviour,  
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender,  
Lord, I give myself to Thee;  
Fill me with Thy love and power,  
Let Thy blessing fall on me.  
I surrender all, I surrender all;  
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour,  
I surrender all.

Judson W. Van DeVenter; Music: Winfield Scott Weedon

## Prayers

*I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose.*

When I first quoted these words above, I described them as the nub of the Covenant Service. If you look up 'nub' in the dictionary, the meaning is given as 'raised point' or 'protuberance'. The derivation, however, is said to be its original use to describe the silky, inmost section of a butterfly chrysalis in its cocoon. What a glorious truth it is that, as we get to that point in our journey where we are able to say these words, we are ready for flight like a beautiful butterfly doing just what God created it to do!

Pause and pray for all those around the world who are able to say these words back to God and whom God is sending out in flight.

Now, let's pray for the world ...

Lord Jesus, you are the one who accompanied the two on the road to Emmaus. You walked with them and talked with them. You made sense of what was happening in their lives. You restored their hope and, along with the other disciples back in Jerusalem, you empowered them for all that was to come.

We call to mind now those whose journeys are taking them through distress or disillusionment.

For those grieving the loss of a loved one ...

For those who have lost their hope in you ...

For those trying to cope with the end of a relationship ...

For those who can find no peace ...

For those anxious about what the future will bring ...

For those crying out for proper justice ...

For those struggling to make sense of it all ...

For those whose faith brings them into conflict with earthly authorities ...

For those feeling powerless or vulnerable ...

For those enduring exploitation from those around them ...

For those facing ill health or sickness ...

May they know your presence walking alongside them and your healing and helping hand upon them.

We pray for ourselves and for all those you call to be part of your answer to the prayers of the world. Forgive us those times in the past when we have not been good witnesses to your love. We confess that too often we have been reluctant or lukewarm but empower us now by your Spirit for all that the future holds and send us out to fly in your name.

Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

**Hymn:** StF 476 One more step along the way I go

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jhAzbdKq6U>

One more step along the world I go,  
one more step along the world I go,  
from the old things to the new,  
keep me traveling a long with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you.

Round the corner of the world I turn,  
more and more about the world I learn;  
all the new things that I see,  
you'll be looking at along with me:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you.

As I travel through the bad and good,  
keep me traveling the way I should;  
Where I see no way to go  
you'll be telling me the way I know:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;

keep me traveling along with you.

Give me courage when the world is rough,  
keep me loving though the world is tough,  
leap and sing in all I do,  
keep me traveling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you.

You are older than the world can be,  
you are younger than the life in me,  
ever old and ever new,  
keep me traveling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me traveling along with you.

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