



CALL TO WORSHIP

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise.

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS (StF 51) Watch on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLsGGPFsufQ>

“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 wilt 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.

(Refrain)

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!

(Refrain)

PRAYER

Gracious and holy Father, grant us the intellect to understand you, reason to discern you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, a spirit to know you, a heart to meditate upon you. May our ears hear you, may our eyes behold you, and may our tongues proclaim you. Give us grace that our way of life may be pleasing to you, that we may have the patience to wait for you and the perseverance to look for you. Grant us a perfect end—your holy presence, a blessed resurrection and life everlasting. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS:

Merciful Father, I come before you with a repentant heart, acknowledging my sins and shortcomings. I confess my need for your forgiveness and mercy. Wash me clean, O Lord, and create in me a pure heart. I trust in your unfailing love and rely on your grace to restore and renew me. Thank you for the forgiveness I find in Jesus Christ. In His name, I pray.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy 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 thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

ONE MORE STEP (StF 476) Watch on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YquLANPYiRU>

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 travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners 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 travelling along with you.

As I travel through the bad and good,
Keep me travelling 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 travelling 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 travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling 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 travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

READING – Psalm 42

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore, I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.

By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me— a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"¹⁰ My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

ADDRESS : A GOD WHO WEEPS

Once whilst taking an RE session in a primary school the plan was to discuss the Lord's prayer. I was about 5-6 minutes into the session when out of the blue one of the children asked "why does God allow suffering". I swallowed hard at this point; this was not what I was expecting. Anyway, I answered the best I could and thought that would be the end of it, unfortunately they had different ideas and so began the "ah yes but what if...", and "if God does this why can't he do that" and so it went on for over forty minutes.

If I went back to that school to see the children again, I am quite sure I would be hit with the same questions but this time about the awful wars in Ukraine and Palestine.

Now I don't know about you, but I have struggle over this and many other difficult times such as the murders of the little girls in Southport. I cannot say my faith was weakened but I do find myself with questions and I have argued with God many times; heated at times I can assure you.

During my search to understand I found a wonderful article by Janet Dragon; cannot tell you anything about her but some of the things she said about her time of suffering I have used in this address today.

In our reading from Psalm 42 we heard a cry to God for his help in distress and the question asked by the man's enemies which we as Christians are asked more and more these days; "Where is your God"

The questions asked by Janet Dragon are just as direct and have very much the same meaning: -

Who is this God who teases and taunts, who gives and takes like an irrational child? Who is this God who asks for blind faith and then, refusing to accept the faith that we have, keeps on testing it? Who is this God who gives us a free will and an inquisitive mind, then tells us not to use them? Who is He? And where does He fit in our lives?

And these are the questions which are being asked by many today about the killings of innocent people and they are questions we might be asking ourselves.

It is too easy sometimes for us as ministers to stand up here and say that these things are not for us to question, that it is the way of things and that we will one day find out the reasoning. There is no doubt in my mind that we will but that does not help us here today; it does not help those who are searching for answers of God to the situation of so many painful moments.

The other day I discussed this with a Minister friend of mine, and the words he used were "We are not alone in our sorrow, for God is weeping with us."

A God who weeps? A God who cries with us? Toss that idea around in your head for a moment. We all believe in God's goodness and love, so why is it so hard for us to believe He feels our sorrow and pain? Because to do so means that there are no "tests" of faith, no specific "missions" to be accomplished. It means God isn't up there pulling all the strings. To believe in God, is to face the fact that we are vulnerable to every quirk of humanity, every law of nature, and when something goes wrong in our lives, it isn't necessarily part of some master plan.

Things don't always happen for a reason. In Matthew's gospel Jesus gives us the truth plain and simple "the same sun rises on the evil and the good, and the same rain falls on the just and the unjust"

God is not playing games with our lives; he lives them with us. Pain and sorrow; happiness and joy; tears laced with laughter; this is the tapestry of life, woven with faith, edged in hope, and framed with the promise of redemption. Redemption. That's what it's all about. Without that frame our lives unravel.

God cries when we do. We can feel His warmth wrap around us like a welcome friend; our strength comes from knowing He's always there, waiting with open arms.

I have listened to many discussions about people's faith; I have watched on television as people walk into Church and light candles for those who were killed, injured, for loved ones or for anyone caught up in the awful tragedy of Southport; yes like us all they pray earnestly and at times they will feel strong and able to carry the burden and other times they will break; but each time they will go back to Church feeling the love of God and their friends envelop them all enabling each day to be carried through.

There are times of course when we all weaken because evil does that to us; it shows us what human beings are capable of, and it cannot but affect us. But when evil strikes it is not the compassion and love of God we should question, but the evil in those who can do the things they do. Yet when any tragedy happens, the questions are asked of God and not of the evil that has placed people in this awful situation. God isn't up there somewhere handing out crosses. He's standing right next to us, ready to help us carry them.

I don't know what the future holds for the families of the murdered or injured we hear so much about these days. The next turn in the road may erase those questions asked or they may sharpen the edges, but I do know that when evil comes, when lives are torn to shreds we have a God who weeps with us and stands by us; we have a God who only allows us to fall so far before catching us and then holding onto us during the pain that is endured.

So let us pray for all who are fearful or scared at this time:-

Hold our hands, Lord; walk us through the loneliness and the valley of our sorrows.

Hold on to us when we're too afraid to think about the future. Let us lean on you Lord when we're too weary to continue.

Hold our hands Lord through the night until we see the light of dawn. Amen

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Heavenly Father, we come before You on behalf of those who need physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.

We lift their names before Your throne of grace, asking for Your mighty touch to bring restoration and wholeness to their bodies, minds, and souls.

Gracious God, we pray for those who are experiencing grief, sorrow, and loss.

Surround them with Your comforting presence, embracing them in Your loving arms.

Bring solace to their hurting hearts and grant them the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Wise and Sovereign Lord, we pray for those who are seeking direction and guidance.

Illuminate their path with Your divine wisdom and insight.

Grant them clarity of mind and discernment as they make decisions.

May they hear Your voice clearly and follow Your leading. Lord, protect them from the snares of confusion and doubt.

Prince of Peace, we pray for peace to prevail amid turmoil and conflict.

We pray for nations torn by war and violence, for communities divided by strife, and for individuals battling inner turmoil.

Lord, bring about reconciliation, understanding, and harmony.

Let Your peace rule in the hearts of individuals and nations, breaking down walls of hostility and bringing unity.

Lord Set hearts ablaze with a passion for Your presence and a hunger for Your Word.

Revive Your Church, breathing new life into people's faith.

Ignite a fire of evangelism and discipleship, so that many would come to know You and make You known.

Pour out Your Spirit in power, transforming lives, communities, and nations. AMEN

(Prayers taken from Prayersaves.com)

WILL YOUR ANCHOR HOLD (StF 645) Watch on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfmr7kAK4qs>

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift or firm remain?

Refrain:

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?
While the surges rave and the wild winds blow,
shall the angry waves then your bark o'er flow?
(Refrain)

Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past forever more?
(Refrain)

BLESSING : The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen.