



## 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.

### HYMN STF627 - "Mighty To Save"

**Watch on YouTube** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEAcs2B-kNc>

Everyone needs compassion  
A love that's never failing  
Let mercy fall on me  
Everyone needs forgiveness  
The kindness of a Saviour  
The hope of nations

Saviour, he can move the mountains  
My God is mighty to save  
He is mighty to save  
Forever Author of Salvation  
He rose and conquered the grave  
Jesus conquered the grave

So take me as you find me  
All my fears and failures

Fill my life again  
I give my life to follow  
Everything that I believe in  
Now I surrender

*Saviour ...*

Shine your light and let the whole world see  
We're singing for the glory of the risen king  
Jesus [2x]

*Saviour ...*

Shine your light and let the whole world see  
(*Reuben Morgan & Ben Fielding*)

**THANKSGIVING PRAYER - Psalm 100 for giving thanks.** : Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

### HYMN STF 455 - ALL MY HOPE ON GOD IS FOUNDED (Robert Bridges 1844 – 1930)

**Watch on YouTube** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XXqnttNcVU>

All my hope on God is founded;  
he doth still my trust renew,  
me through change and chance he guideth,  
only good and only true.

God unknown,  
he alone  
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,  
sword and crown betray his trust;  
what with care and toil he buildeth,  
tower and temple fall to dust.

But God's power,  
hour by hour,  
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,  
deep his wisdom, passing thought:  
splendour, light and life attend him,  
beauty springeth out of naught.

Evermore  
from his store  
newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty Giver  
bounteous gifts on us bestow;  
his desire our soul delighteth,  
pleasure leads us where we go.  
Love doth stand  
at his hand;  
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal  
sacrifice of praise be done,  
high above all praises praising  
for the gift of Christ, his Son.  
Christ doth call  
one and all:  
ye who follow shall not fall.

## **READING      Mark 12:28-34 - The Greatest Commandment**

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. 'The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'<sup>1</sup> There is no commandment greater than these."

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

## **ADDRESS : Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul mind and strength**

If you had to leave your house in a hurry for whatever reason, and all you could take would be what is most precious to you what would you take. The children obviously! What else would you reach for? Your pets; your computer, wallet (something very close to my heart), what about passport and personal documents? Or perhaps a precious photograph, a watch your grandfather left you, or a stack of letters from someone you love dearly. Think for a moment what you would take if you could never return. Then think of those things you would have left, and you will have discovered where your priorities lie.

The question the lawyer asked Jesus was like that. Faced with the whole volume of Jewish law, which commandment really matters; which one should be grasped onto in a moment crisis.

This religious official wants Jesus to go way out on a limb. It was a kind of set up. There was no way Jesus could answer the question without offending someone. To say one commandment was more important than another would leave him open to a charge of heresy.

The religious teacher asks, "*Which commandment is the first of all?*" Translated for our own time, this question would amount to something like, "*What is the most important thing in all of life?*" Jesus quotes an ancient text from the book of Deuteronomy; the one we read earlier. This verse became Israel's confession of faith - her sacred text for every generation. A devout Jew would repeat this text as a prayer twice a day.

***Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.***

When Jesus was asked what the most important thing in all of life is, he repeated this text. But what does all this mean; what is this loving God with all your heart, soul mind and strength – for a moment let's delve a little deeper into that which makes us who we are and see how it relates to God and us as individuals: -

**1. HEART:** namely our emotional being.

This is not just our "feeling" life, but the seat of our identity. Strength of identity and sense of wholeness comes with the affirmation that, *"God made me. God loves me, I am a child of God. God's love and love of God flows in every fibre of who I am."*

**2. SOUL:** namely our spiritual being

It is important to realise that we are, at the heart of it all, spiritual beings. We were designed to live and function in partnership with God. To love God with all of my soul is to live with a sense of constant, conscious contact with God.

**3. MIND:** namely our intellectual being

Our thoughts, attitudes and thinking patterns are shaped by love *of* God and love *for* God. St Paul wrote that we should not be shaped by the patterns of this world's thinking, but to be transformed by *"the renewing of your mind."* [Rom. 12:2]

**4. STRENGTH:** namely our physical being.

We are physical beings. The Christian faith rejoices in this. Our bodies are not bad things. The earliest church struggled with people who believed that the physical world and physical things are bad, but the Psalmist wrote, *"We are fearfully and wonderfully made."* To love God with all our strength is to love God even with our physical selves. One way we can do that is to *be there for God*. You know what it means to say you will *be there* for someone. When they struggle you become physically present for the person. To *be there* for God is to be God's person in the world around you.

Simply put, Jesus was the first *whole person* physician. He taught that the integration we seek that makes for the sense of being a whole person is grounded in centring ourselves in God. This one verse from our gospel reading is the rock-solid foundation for living.

***"...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."***

Last week I went to a relative's funeral. I was told it was to be a naturalist funeral; Jill heard me wrong and told everyone it was a naturist funeral which conjured up no end of possibilities and laughter, but in fact it was to be a humanist funeral. This was a strange affair as there were no hymns and prayers, but it was held in a church with the cross removed and presided by a Roman Catholic priest. There was music played, one of which was Chris Ria's "Tell me there's a heaven". Finally, we had a blessing and the Lord's Prayer was said. It was a lovely service, and I can only presume because the spouse was religious, they had decided to try and blend the two beliefs into a simple but effective farewell.

Since that time, I have tried to imagine what it must be like to be a humanist and live without God in my life, and to be honest it is an impossible task. Living without God is living without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and without that there can be no thought of forgiveness, no thought of an everlasting peace, no thought of the hope of an eternal life within the love of God, and for that alone I pray those who are yet to find God in their lives will one day hear His word and be alive to the gospel of Christ.

One morning on the radio Rowan Williams, an ex-Archbishop of Canterbury, was being asked some very searching questions about God, and it became obvious that to explain God through words alone to those who do not believe is extremely difficult. It also helped me understand how important the words of Jesus are when he said ***"you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."*** To find God is an experience of the whole body; yes, there must be an understanding of who God is, but then it is absorbing that understanding and letting it flow throughout the body and the soul.

As we experience God in our everyday lives may it flow through our very being so that those, we meet on our journey of faith may begin to know and share the joy we experience in the love of God who sent His only Son to be the Saviour of us all. **Amen**

**HYMN STF634 - FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT****Watch on You Tube** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YppcFC8mxKM>

Fight the good fight with all thy might;  
 Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right;  
 Lay hold on life, and it shall be  
 Thy joy and crown eternally.

Cast care aside; lean on thy Guide;  
 God's boundless mercy will provide;  
 Trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove  
 Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Run the straight race through God's good grace;  
 Lift up thine eyes, and seek Christ's face;  
 Life with its way before us lies—  
 Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

Faint not nor fear: God's arms are near;  
 God changeth not, and thou art dear;  
 Only believe, and thou shalt see  
 That Christ is all in all to thee.

(John Samuel Bewley Monsell – 1811 – 1875)

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION - Praying together** (Mike and Janet Warren, St Marks Bedford)

For healing of the nations where we see war, violence, greed and oppression against your people; for peace and justice to be the mark of all societies, for wisdom in our global leaders and compassion for the innocent victims of war. **LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER**

For healing within difficult relationships; for forgiveness, trust, acknowledgement of past hurts and honesty in sharing differences so that healing can be found. **LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER**

For those whom society finds it difficult to love because of a lack of understanding or the fear of people that are perceived to be different; for the marginalised and vulnerable. **LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER**

For those who are lonely and without the comfort of knowing that they are loved, for those who feel that they have no worth, no future and no position in society **LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER**

For ourselves that we may be ready and willing to show God's love through words and actions in our daily lives. **LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER** ..... **AMEN**

**HYMN STF 83 - PRAISE MY SOUL THE KING OF HEAVEN** (Henry Francis Lyte 1793 – 1847)**Watch on You Tube** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60JgQoJK9J8>

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
 To His feet thy tribute bring.  
 Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
 Who like me His praise should sing?  
 Praise Him, praise Him,  
 praise Him, praise Him,  
 Praise the everlasting King.

Fatherlike, He tends and spares us;  
 Well our feeble frame He Knows.  
 In His hands He gently bears us,  
 Rescues us from all our foes.  
 Praise Him, praise Him,  
 praise Him, praise Him,  
 Widely as His mercy goes.

Praise Him for His grace and favour  
 To our fathers in distress.  
 Praise Him still the same forever,  
 Slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
 Praise Him, praise Him,  
 praise Him, praise Him,  
 Glorious in His faithfulness.

Angels help us to adore Him;  
 Ye behold Him face to face;  
 Sun and moon, bow down before Him,  
 Dwellers all in time and space.  
 Praise Him, praise Him,  
 praise Him, praise Him,  
 Praise with us the God of grace.

**BLESSING** : “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” **AMEN**