



Call: What shall we do now? Come and praise our wonderful God. How shall we come now? Come before him with repentance and humility. How shall we praise him now? With all our energy and love. Father we come before you now, draw us closer, lead us deeper, challenge us more and equip us to live for you now wherever you send us. Amen

Hymn: STF 167 Colours of Day

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

Colours of day dawn into the mind,
The sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
And let's give the message to the people we meet.

Go through the park, on into the town;
The sun still shines on, it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
The people of darkness are needing a friend.
Refrain

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.*

Open your eyes, look into the sky,
The darkness has come, the sun came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
But Jesus is living, His Spirit is near.
Refrain

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Prayer: Psalm 98 (NRSV)

O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things.

His right hand and his holy arm have gained him victory.

The LORD has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.

Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the LORD, for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Readings: Luke 21: 5-19 **The destruction of the temple and signs of the end times** Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ‘As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.’ ‘Teacher,’ they asked, ‘when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?’ He replied: ‘Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, “I am he,” and, “The time is near.” Do not follow them. When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.’ Then he said to them: ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven ‘But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life.

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 "Warning against idleness"

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

Prayer of confession: Gracious and merciful God, we come to confess our many failings and ask you to forgive us. You have given us so many gifts but we have taken them for granted. You have given us the gift of time, but we have let it slip away and wasted it. You have given us the capacity to reason but we have been lazy and let our minds wander. You have given us skills and talents but we have not used them for your glory or the benefit of others. You have given us families, friends and neighbours but we have not cared for them as we should. In your loving kindness, we ask for your forgiveness and that you would restore us that we might use your gifts to your glory and praise, in the knowledge that through Jesus Christ your Son our sins are forgiven. Amen

Hymn: STF 693 Beauty for brokenness

Watch on YouTube : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5_Tvy2gHRg

Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak:

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray;
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
his cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned -
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;
make us content with
the things that we need.
Chorus

Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame
until your justice burns
brightly again;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation
and bring you their praise.
Chorus

Message: “Half full or half empty?”

Are you a glass half full or a glass half empty person?

One of the things I do first thing in the morning is to look online at the news. My husband calls it “doom scrolling” and there certainly seems to be a dearth of good news stories on the news. We hear of wars in Ukraine and Sudan, a fragile ceasefire in Gaza with children dying of starvation, or earthquakes in Afghanistan and hurricanes in Jamaica. A few years ago, we were all living under the fear of COVID.

Jesus spoke of the people having to face wars, earthquakes, famine and pestilence that will come before he comes again. His disciples had been speaking of how beautiful the temple was. This was the second temple of Jerusalem, built 600 years previously, and was an imposing and beautiful building. Jesus predicted that even this beautiful building would fall – It did in 70AD.

Thinking about all this, Jesus could perhaps be described as a glass half empty person, yet he gives words of hope and encouragement even when describing how his disciples would face persecution and imprisonment. He tells them not to worry about how to defend themselves as he will give them the words and wisdom that no adversary will be able to contradict.

Jesus does not promise that life will be easy. Hopefully we will not face persecution or imprisonment for our faith, although there are areas of the world where this is a reality. We will, however perhaps face difficulties even ridicule for our faith.

Paul, in his second letter to the church in Thessalonica, was writing to the early church living under the constant threat of persecution. He felt the need to correct a misunderstanding where the people believed that because of increasing persecution this indicated that the return of Jesus was imminent, and so they were not working out of choice, had laid aside responsibilities and any plans for the future. This had the result of putting extra burdens on the church who were having to support them.

Paul warns the people against idleness, against a refusal to do God’s work in the here and now. He quotes the rule, “he who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” At that time rabbis did not take payment for their teaching and so would need to have a trade in order to make a living – they would often be bakers, or carpenters. Jesus made a living out of carpentry in his younger years.

In today’s society it would be like a group in the church believing that Jesus’ return was imminent deciding they didn’t need to maintain the church building, or visit the sick or lonely, but simply wait in eager anticipation for that day. They could simply be “spiritual”, but this would not help them live now. Time would be wasted in the here and now, when it could be put to good use keeping the building fit for purpose, or caring for the needs of the community.

Paul tells them that those who are not “busy are busy bodies”.

When we are unoccupied there is a tendency to listen to rumours and hearsay, thinking we have all the facts without checking them out. There is then the temptation to gossip which only serves to create disruption and division.

When I am “doom scrolling” online it is very easy to suddenly find I have wasted minutes even hours looking down one avenue after another. One story has links to another and then another. This is idleness, laziness as Paul puts it and serves no useful purpose.

Paul urges us, Jesus encourages us, and even in the words of the Old Testament reading set for today we can see words of encouragement, a glass half full.

Malachi was one of the last Old Testament prophets, and his book comes right at the end of the Old Testament. At first it reads of doom and gloom, or rather the fiery furnace, “surely the day is coming it will burn like a furnace. All arrogant and every evil doer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire. Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays.” (Malachi 4:1-2a)

The days are going to be tough, there will be a time of judgement, but no matter how bad things get, and a fiery furnace is pretty bad, God controls the future and everything will be made right when His Son Jesus Christ returns again and brings healing and restoration to the whole of creation.

As we approach the time of Advent and we are encouraged to consider how we can live in the here and now as we prepare for that day, the timing of which we do not know, when Christ will return, we can obey God in every area of our lives here on earth, seeking to serve his purposes for us here and now.

We can live as people with our glass half empty, we can “doom scroll” and despair at the world, paralysed into inaction, or we can live as people with a glass half full, remembering that even in a glass half empty there is still a glass half full of refreshing water, and with Jesus in our lives the glass is always full to overflowing. Amen

Hymn: STF 566 Take my life and let it be

Watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA9zA7O6bH0>

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my will, and make it thine;
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart—it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from thee.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee

Prayers of Intercession: *In these dark times let us not lose heart, but pray to a faithful God who promises us eternal life.*

Lord, we pray for those whose faith is being battered and for those who struggle to pray, that their faith will be deepened and strengthened.

Lord, we pray for the world and its leaders making tough decisions, for areas of war and conflicts, hunger and suffering. May there be wisdom and courage, peace and wellbeing.

Lord, we pray for the world our children will inherit, that it will be a place of beauty, understanding, maturity and love.

Lord, we pray for all who are suffering, who are crying and those who have no tears left. May we be a source of comfort, and may you bring healing and strength.

Lord, we pray for those nearing death and those who have died; especially those who have died suddenly and unprepared. Bring comfort and peace.

Lord, we give you thanks that you always provide the grace we need to accomplish what you ask of us. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Hymn: STF 526 Lord of all hopefulness

Watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6ztlI8Hlbo>

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no care could destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the
lathe,
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Blessing: Send us out to be your eyes and ears. Send us out to be your hands and feet. Send us out to work and not remain idle. Send us out to live and love for you, here and now. Amen