



Preparation for Worship: StF 551 Giving it all to You Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NswsZbSK45c>

Giving it all to You,
Giving it all to You,
No more hidden agenda,
Giving it all to You.

Laying my burdens down,
Bowing in full surrender,
Kneeling before Your cross,
Giving it all to You.

Hymn: StF 470 Lord for the Years Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd14v0e1RWU>

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for that word, the Word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,
Lord of the world we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, for our land, in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;

Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;
past put behind us, for the future take us,
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Prayers : Let us pray. 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.
Blessed be God for ever.

Glory to Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, though he was rich, yet for our sake became poor, and was tested in every way as we are, yet without sin; who proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross; who was raised from the dead and is alive for ever, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who trust in him; who is seated at God's right hand in glory, and will come to be our judge. **Blessed be God for ever.**

Glory to the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, by whom we are born into the family of God, and made members of the body of Christ; whose witness confirms us; whose wisdom teaches us; whose power enables us; who will do for us more than we can ask or think. **Blessed be God for ever.**

To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be praise and glory for ever. Amen.

Silence

God of grace, through the mediation of your Son, you call us into a new covenant. Help us therefore to draw near with faith and join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law. The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience. In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God. We meet, therefore, as generations have met before us, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God. Let us then seek forgiveness for the sin by which we have denied God's claim upon us.

God of mercy, hear us as we confess our sins.

For the sin that has made us slow to learn from Christ, reluctant to follow him, and afraid to bear the cross: Lord, have mercy, **Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has caused the poverty of our worship, the formality and selfishness of our prayers, our neglect of fellowship and the means of grace, and our hesitating witness for Christ: Lord, have mercy, **Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has led us to misuse your gifts, evade our responsibilities, and fail to be good stewards of your creation: Lord, have mercy, **Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has made us unwilling to overcome evil with good, tolerant of injustice, quick to condemn, and selfish in sharing your love with others: Lord, have mercy, **Lord, forgive.** Silence

Have mercy on me, O God, in your constant love; in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences. Wash away all my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Give me the joy of your help again and strengthen me with a willing spirit.

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore to all who truly repent this is his gracious word: 'Our sins are forgiven'. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Hymn: StF 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

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

Oh, 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

Now my heart's desire is to know you more

Knowing you, Jesus

Message : Last Sunday was Epiphany Sunday when we remembered the three kings (or wise men or magi) arriving in Bethlehem with their gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense. Chances are they hadn't come for spiritual reasons but for practical, diplomatic ones. If they were right about this new born king then, they would have estimated, this should mean an upturn in the fortunes of his country, Israel. Why not get in early and lay the foundations for an agreement between their two countries? It's what nations did at times like this except that this new born king wasn't going to be the kind of king they were expecting nor were the circumstances of his birth quite what they were expecting either. I wonder what thoughts were going through their heads as they laid down their diplomatic gifts in very humble surroundings in no way connected to the present royal family. Had they got it right or had they got it wrong?

The kind of agreement they were looking to obtain is what we talk about as a covenant relationship. In a case like this it would probably have taken the form of a trading agreement and promises to defend one another in the case of either country being attacked by somebody else. Let me tell you about just such a covenant in more recent times – if you count 1778 as being recent!

We are in the time period of the American revolution. In 1776 the American colonies had stated their desire to break away from British rule and had signed the Declaration of Independence. They had declared themselves free even though they were still fighting to make that freedom permanent. France was still smarting from losing what's known as the Seven Years War to Britain and most of their American colonies. They reasoned that it would be a smart move to line up alongside the Americans in common cause against the British. And so, negotiations took place and a treaty was signed on 6th February 1778, a treaty of Alliance between the French king and the American colonists. I won't bore you with all the details but here is probably the most significant sentence within it:

The essential and direct End of the present defensive alliance is to maintain effectually the liberty, Sovereignty, and independence absolute and unlimited of the said united States ...

Put simply, the French king was pledging, in return for a favourable relationship with this newly independent country of America, to put in all the resources needed to maintain their freedom.

Was it a successful agreement? For the Americans 'yes' and it was probably the decisive factor in giving them military success over the British. For France and particularly for Louis XVIth, its king, the treaty was a complete disaster. It cost them a huge amount of money. In modern terms it's estimated to have cost them up to £15 billion. This led to the collapse of the French economy and hardship for the French people which led in turn to the French Revolution and the guillotining of King Louis.

Why am I sharing this with you? Because today we are celebrating the Methodist Covenant Service. We are reminding ourselves that one of the ways the Bible sees our relationship with God is as a covenant relationship. Here's how the wording of our service puts it: *In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God.* God promises us new life in Christ – freedom from sin and death and all that stands between us and God – together with all the resources needed to keep us in that freedom. In return, we promise to give ourselves completely to God.

Why do people sometimes avoid this service? Why do they balk at the idea of giving ourselves completely in this covenant? Because they focus on what they think they're giving up rather than what they're gaining. For the American colonists, that treaty with France should have been a no brainer. They were getting limitless support to maintain their freedom until, of course, it bankrupted France. We are in a similar position. God promises us limitless support and we know that, unlike Louis XVIth, God has limitless resources with which to strengthen and support us.

I don't want to dwell long on our reading today because I think it speaks for itself but here are the headlines from it. God makes us alive with Jesus; God gives us that freedom over our sins; over the Devil; and over those cravings and desires that would lead us back to captivity and death; God raises us up with Jesus and seats us with him in the Heavenly realms; God does this because of his great love for us and out of the incomparable riches of his grace – the undeserved and limitless supply of his goodness; 'We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do'. What that means is that God's commitment to us and to our freedom, is a never-ending one and all part of God's plan to bring goodness and blessing to the world.

You must decide for yourself whether you stand within this Covenant or outside of it but, when we hear it put like that, why would we want to say 'no'? To me it's a complete no brainer!

Hymn: The Goodness of God

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-f4MUUMWMV4>

I love You Lord
Oh Your mercy never fails me
All my days, I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
I will sing of the goodness of God

*All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God*

I love Your voice
You have led me through the fire

In darkest nights
You are close like no other
I've known You as a father
I've known You as a friend
I have lived in the goodness of God

Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now, I give You everything
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me

All my life You have been faithful ...

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Prayers : Sisters and brothers in Christ, let us again accept our place within this covenant which God has made with us and with all who are called to be Christ's disciples.

This means that, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we accept God's purpose for us, and the call to love and serve God in all our life and work.

Christ has many services to be done: some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both; in some we may please Christ and please ourselves; in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us. Therefore, let us make this covenant of God our own. Let us give ourselves to him, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

Eternal God, in your faithful and enduring love you call us to share in your gracious covenant in Jesus Christ. In obedience we hear and accept your commands; in love we seek to do your perfect will; with joy we offer ourselves anew to you. We are no longer our own but yours.

I am no longer my own but yours. Your will, not mine, be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none; when I am troubled and when I am at peace. Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking; when I have all things, and when I have nothing. I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose. Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. May it be so for ever. Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven. Amen. *Silence*

As we have entered this covenant not for ourselves alone, but as God's servants and witnesses, let us pray for the Church and for the world. Loving God, hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church: **make us all one, that the world may believe.**

Inspire and lead all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world: **establish justice and peace among all people.**

Have compassion on all who suffer from any sickness, grief or trouble: **deliver them from their distress.**

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory: **bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.**

Let us pray in silence for our own needs and for those of others . . . *Silence*

Lord our God, you have helped us by your grace to make these prayers, and you have promised through Christ our Lord that when two or three agree in his name you will grant what they ask. Answer now your servants' prayers according to their needs; in this world grant that we may truly know you, and in the world to come graciously give us eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer : Our Father, who art in heaven

Hymn: StF 550 Forth in thy Name O Lord I go Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUVAbXgJyqQ>

Forth in Thy name, O Lord, I go My daily labour to pursue, Thee, only Thee, resolved to know In all I think, or speak, or do.	Thee may I set at my right hand, Whose eyes my inmost purpose see, And labour on at Thy command, And offer all my works to Thee.	And hasten to Thy glorious day. For Thee delightfully employ Whate'er Thy bounteous grace hath given, And run my course with even joy, And closely walk with Thee to Heaven.
The task thy wisdom has assigned, O let me cheerfully fulfil; in all my works thy presence find, and prove thy good and perfect will.	Give me to bear Thy easy yoke And every moment watch and pray, And still to things eternal look	

Postscript: Morning by Morning Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WXi3lGYA6E>

Daily, daily I surrender Grace for today is all that I need Surprised by a mercy that's new every morning Awaken my soul to sing Oh awaken my soul to sing	Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow Awaken my soul to sing Awaken my soul to sing	My Father has spoken And He keeps His every word
I will trust where You lead I will trust when I can't see Morning by morning Great is Your faithfulness to me	I will trust where You lead I will trust when I can't see Morning by morning Great is Your faithfulness to me	I will trust where You lead I will trust when I can't see Morning by morning Great is Your faithfulness to me
Breath by breath overtaken by wonder One step at a time when I'm overwhelmed	I will trust with all my heart You are good, You always are Morning by morning Great is Your faithfulness to me	I will trust with all my heart You are good, You always are Morning by morning Great is Your faithfulness to me
	All fear be reminded My future is secure	Pat Barrett, Mack Brock, Ben Smith, Daniel Bashta © 2022 Capitol CMG, Inc.