



Call to worship : This is the day that the Lord has made, We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Hymn STF91 The God of Abraham praise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvTgzJ2nZGo>

The God of Abraham praise,
who reigns enthroned above;
Ancient of Everlasting Days,
and God of Love;
Jehovah, great I AM!
by earth and heaven confessed;
I bow and bless the sacred name
forever blest.

The heavenly land I see,
with peace and plenty blest;
a land of sacred liberty,
and endless rest.
There milk and honey flow,
and oil and wine abound,
and trees of life forever grow
with mercy crowned.

The great I AM has sworn;
I on this oath depend.
I shall, on eagle wings upborne,
to heaven ascend.
I shall behold God's face;
I shall God's power adore,
and sing the wonders of God's grace
forevermore.

The God who reigns on high
the great archangels sing,
and "Holy, holy, holy!" cry
"Almighty King!
Who was, and is, the same,
and evermore shall be:
Jehovah, Lord, the great I AM,
we worship thee!"

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, We come before You with reverence and joy declaring that you alone are worthy of all praise and honour. You are the Creator of heaven and earth, the King of kings and the Lord of all. Your wisdom is perfect, your mercy is everlasting, and your love never fails. We worship and adore You. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty early in the morning our songs will rise to thee! So, Lord, we come to worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Merciful Father, we also come, humbly confessing our sins before You. We have not always behaved in ways which are pleasing to you, and we are sorry for that. Have mercy on us Lord.

For turning our backs on the stranger. **Lord we are sorry.**

For failing to offer hospitality to those who are in need. **Lord we are truly sorry.**

For our unwillingness to share what we have with those who are desperate. **Lord we are truly sorry.**

For our arrogance and pride. **Lord have mercy.**

For our lack of compassion and care. **Lord have mercy.**

For the times we have failed to reflect Your grace, **Lord have mercy.**

Cleanse us from all unrighteousness and renew within us a right spirit, that we may walk in Your ways and serve You with sincerity and truth. **Lord have mercy upon us.**

(Silence)

And so, we hear again the words of Grace. Our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Yes, thank you Lord for your forgiveness. We thank You for the gift of life, for Your daily provision, and for Your constant care. Thank you for the countless mercies we receive each day. Above all, we thank You for Your redeeming love and for the hope we have through Your saving grace. With grateful hearts, we acknowledge that every good and perfect gift comes from You.

Receive our worship, O Lord, and let our lives be a continual offering of praise and thanksgiving. May Your name be glorified among us and throughout the world.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lords 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 STF161 Speak, O Lord as we come to you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aH1Wn4fTiBs>

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your holy Word
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith

Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory

Teach us, Lord, full obedience
Holy reverence, true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity

Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority
Words of pow'r that can never fail
Let their truth prevail over unbelief

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity
And by grace, we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith, we'll walk as You walk with us
Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory

Reading : Genesis 18:1-15

And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, "My lord, if I have found favour in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So, they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." The Lord said, "I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So, Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

Reflection - Divine Hospitality

Isn't this a wonderful reading! I just love it.

This story reveals something of Abraham's character to us, and what a character it is!

There are some great Characters in the bible. Ruth, Samson, Daniel, David (obviously) Peter, Mary Magdalene, Lidia, and then of course Abraham. A man chosen by God and rightly acclaimed for his deep faith, his trust in God and his obedience.

But in our story today other aspects of his characteristics are revealed.

His Hospitable nature, His Humble heart, And the depth of his Human kindness. It also shows us that he was a man of great spiritual discernment.

The story starts with Abraham sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day; about 3 in the afternoon. It would have been really hot. Nobody would normally be out walking in such heat. But Abraham looks and sees three men standing a little distance away, just in front of him. Scholars believe that Abraham was 99 years of age at this point. An old man. But up he jumped and he ran to greet them. And then next we see his great spiritual discernment revealed, for within seconds he had discerned that these were no ordinary men. And we watch as he bows low to the earth and declares "My lord, if I have found favour in your sight, do not pass by your servant by."

Before moving on it's important to note that there is much debate as to who the three men were and the truth is, we don't know. Many have argued it was God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Andrei Rublev's icon of the trinity

Others say no. It was Jesus and two angels... Either way, Abraham very quickly realized these were no ordinary visitors.

So yes, I say again, Abraham was a man of great Spiritual discernment!

Now the truth is we may not have that same level of discernment but like him, we can offer hospitality and love our neighbour as we love ourselves! *Hebrews 13 "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."*

What does that say to us in modern day Britain? The truth is there are scammers and con men everywhere. Letting complete strangers into our homes would not be wise. But there is nothing stopping us from treating strangers with kindness and dignity just as Abraham did. There is nothing stopping us from helping those in need, even if it costs us, just as it did Abraham that day. It cost him time, energy and resources. There is nothing stopping us from passing the time of day with someone in the street. Just a little human kindness can go such a long way.

Indeed, here we see Abraham's second character trait...Not only was he spiritually discerning, but he was also hospitable. Abraham's third character trait, I would argue, was humility. This 99-year-old man was extremely wealthy and renowned. We see in Genesis 14, for example, that he had more than 300 servants who were there to do his bidding! Which begs the question, why then would he serve these strangers himself?

Serving others wasn't beneath Abraham. Who does that remind you of? Remember that night when Jesus took a towel and washed his disciple's feet? Abraham wasn't too proud to serve, and we shouldn't be either!

How easy it would have been for Abraham to show off that day. "Gentlemen, look at my wealth and power"! But no! That wasn't in his character. This truly humble man had no desire to boast or show off! At no point did he try to impress his guests. He did all the running around sorting out the water and the meal so that his guests could take their rest and refreshment.

Lord, may no service be beneath us. May we like Abraham be willing to get our hands and feet dirty in the service of others. And Lord if the temptation to show off and boast should come, grant us the strength to turn away from it, for all we have, comes from you.

So, there we have it. Food for thought today.

We thank God for Abraham's amazing example, and we pray that we too may learn to become more like him.

May we, like Abraham be able to truly discern the presence of God in our midst.

May we wear the cloak of hospitality around our shoulders at all times.

May we never be afraid to show kindness, dignity and compassion to all.

May we learn to be generous with all that we have been given.

May we be people unafraid to truly serve.

May no act of service be beneath us. If the Lord calls us to clean the toilets for the rest of our lives, so be it!

May we too be truly humble in all things, rejecting all temptations to show off!

Amen

Make me a channel of your peace:
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your healing power,
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

O, Spirit, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace:
where there's despair in life let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light,
and where there's sadness, ever joy.

Make me a channel of your peace:
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving to all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Prayers of intercession

God of Abraham, We pray for your Church throughout the world. Lord, may we be attentive to your presence and ready to serve you with faithful and joyful hearts. May our church communities be places of welcome, kindness, compassion, and respect. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who exercise leadership in Church. Lord, help them to serve with wisdom, humility, and integrity. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for leaders of the nations. May they serve with compassion and selflessness, putting the needs of others before their own. We pray for caregivers, volunteers, hospitality workers, health professionals, and all who meet the needs of others. Strengthen them in their service and bless them in their work. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for the communities in which we live and serve. May we care for one another, show neighbourly kindness, and be generous with the blessings we have received. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are sick, lonely, anxious, or burdened by troubles. May they know your comfort and your peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves. Grant us Abraham's eagerness to serve and his readiness to respond when you call. Help us to offer our time, resources, and friendship generously, reflecting your love in our daily lives. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Thank you, Lord, for those who have died in the faith of Christ. We pray for all who mourn, that they may find comfort in your embrace and rest in your presence. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

Offertory blessing

Hymn STF564 O thou who camest from above

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ6pmSEzJ5A>

O Thou who camest from above,
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
upon the altar of my heart.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work and speak and think for Thee,
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up Thy gift in me.

There let it for Thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return,
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death Thy endless mercies seal,
and make my sacrifice complete.

Blessing

May the God who appeared to Abraham at Mamre fill our hearts with kindness and generosity. As we seek to serve with compassion and humility. May we know the joy of the Lord as our strength. And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. Amen.