

This week's worship sheet has been put together by Caroline Churcher, who is a trainee Local Preacher in this Christchurch and Wimborne Circuit.

Psalm 30 8-12

To you, LORD, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy:

"What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?

Hear, LORD, and be merciful to me; LORD, be my help."

You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.

LORD my God, I will praise you forever.

Sing or read: (Tune StF 186 – Tell out my soul)

The world we thought we knew is changing fast,
and longingly we cling to what is past –
that settled life which made no great demand
Our foretaste of the hoped for promised land.

But as for you, dynamic, Pilgrim God,
you do not linger on the path well trod,
but ever lead your pilgrim people on
to risk an unknown future with your Son.

The challenge of diversity and change
will take us well beyond our former range.
Exposing us to things we do not know,
demanding all the love that we can show.

You take the stuff of chaos, fear and dread,
and make a path where we can safely tread;
and if we fear the wildness of the wave,
we know your outstretched hand is there to save.

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Read Philippians 3:1-11

Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard.

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh!

For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— even though I, too, have reason

for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet, whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Reflection

Paul underwent a life-changing experience on the Damascus road, such that we now call those sort of experiences we may have as Damascene moments. During our lifetime changes take place all the time, either to us or around us; nothing remains the *status quo*. We move from home to school, from school to work, from work to retirement. Along the way we may get married, have children, divorce. We move house, area, to a new country. We lose loved ones along the way. And every time, we change and adapt to what is going on. We are reminded of our past with stories, photos, what we have achieved, where we may have 'failed'. But, all the time we are moving forward.

Paul is looking at his past in his letter to the Philippians and reminiscing. He reflects on how as a Jew, his heritage and birthright, his zeal in persecution of the early church were his life. It's what he was, what he did. End of. Clinging to his credentials which would stand him in good stead all his life and *earn* him God's favour.

And then Jesus Christ came and changed everything for him. His whole ethos changed. The Spirit of God took over and Paul was willing to let that happen. He surrendered his will (the way of flesh – leading his life as he wanted) to God's will, and the righteousness of the old law to the righteousness of faith in Jesus Christ. He was willing to be led into the unknown, to suffer joyfully, to experience what faith in Jesus Christ had to offer him. He is encouraging the Philippians to experience the same through faith and not rely on their own ways.

I have always thought of Philippians as a 'love letter'. Paul's love of Jesus comes through in his writing and in encouraging them, his love for the Philippians is also evident. He wants them to succeed, to thrive, to grow. He is telling them that as he has let go of the past, so must they.

Probably, our collective most recent Damascene moment came the day of 'lockdown', when our world seemed to come to a complete standstill. We have had to adapt our ways of communicating, whether using Zoom, Skype or other internet channels; phoning instead of face-to-face chat, actually writing letters, which for younger people is 'new'. We have been aware of other ways of worshipping separately – through the service sheets, online, watching TV. Some of us have enjoyed the different worship experiences of other denominations. All of us, changing and adapting, using the opportunity to follow our faith in new ways.

There has been a huge increase in people seeking Jesus through these means. The Holy Spirit hasn't been sitting in churches patiently awaiting our return. Probably,

these past months have been near to what the early Christian church was about. Spreading the gospel has been necessarily inventive and opportunities have arisen to share the message in a variety of ways.

As we gradually come out of the way of life we have 'known' for the last four months and we look at ways we can worship safely together, we can take encouragement from this passage. A part of our old world has died, and we are offered the chance to enjoy new experiences as we go forward. We are born in the Spirit and our faith is rooted in our love of Jesus Christ. When we pray in the Spirit, we follow the will of God, not ours. The opportunity to rejoice in what God has to offer us in the future is here. Let us embrace it, pray about it and let God lead *us* to succeed, to thrive and to grow. Let us look forward together and discover together what God's will is for us.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving Lord, we come separately yet united in our prayers for those who need to know you, to know your unconditional love, to know that you have a great plan for us all, not just those who believe in One God Almighty.

We pray that through these difficult times the love of Jesus Christ and the witness of the message he brought has been seen and recognised through the work of all who have put aside family to serve those they do not know, who have found new ways of keeping in touch, who have found courage they didn't know they had.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for the bereaved who have experienced the horror of losing loved ones without being able to say their 'goodbyes'. We pray for peace and hope.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for all those for whom 'lockdown' is their normal way of life. Help us to appreciate the needs of others and respond to those needs where we can.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

Open our hearts and minds Lord, to your will that we may be what you would have us be.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Sing or read:

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.

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 land in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

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 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.
Timothy Dudley-Smith

I ask you to remember everyone in our fellowship as you say the Grace:

**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit remain with us always.
Amen.**