

26th October 2025 – Morning Service

Martyn Filsak

Call to Worship

"Holy, holy holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3)

StF 11 – Holy, Holy, Holy

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| 1) Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty.
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity. | 3) Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness
hide thee,
Though the sinful human eye thy glory
may not see,
Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee.
Perfect in power, in love, and purity. |
| 2) Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
Casting down their golden crowns
around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be. | 4) Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth
and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity |

Reginald Heber

Prayers

Lord our God, we give you praise for the beauty of nature around us. We give you thanks for the abundance of the fruit of tree, field and hedgerow. The autumn colours on the trees give us cause to praise you. We remember that you are the source of all that we need. Nature only gives us a signpost to who you really are. Your beauty, holiness and goodness give us cause to wonder and bow down in awe. We cannot match your holiness and are not worthy to be your children, yet you sent Jesus to take our sin upon the cross that we might receive your righteousness. We believe, we receive and give you thanks and praise. You give us your Holy Spirit as our companion and helper and we are never alone. Lord God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship you.

As we consider the work of your hands and are pointed towards your holiness we are aware that our own lives are tainted with sin. We fail you in word and action, in the things that we do and the things that we neglect. Please forgive and help us to follow Jesus more closely. We receive assurance of your forgiveness and pray that you grant us fresh awareness of the truth that we are part of your family for ever. **Amen.**

Reading: Psalm 65: 1-5 (NIV)

Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion;
to you our vows will be fulfilled.
You who answer prayer,
to you all people will come.
When we were overwhelmed by sins,
you forgave our transgressions.
Blessed are those you choose
and bring near to live in your courts!

We are filled with the good things of your house,
of your holy temple.
You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds,
God our Savior,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,

Reflection

It is said that travel broadens the mind. Certainly if our lives are largely static or our location limited in some way then it's easy for us to think that what we experience is all that there is. Going into a different environment or listening to someone whose experience is different from our own can change our perspective and make us realise that there is so much more. Likewise our Christian experience can lead to

our thinking being limited. What we have not experienced may not feature in our view of the universe unless we hear it from others. We may think that our church is the same as all other churches until we visit one that is different and that gives us a wider perspective.

So it is with the Christian life and with our understanding of salvation. We can think that the entire story of the Bible is only about how an individual can be saved. If this were true then it would still be an amazing thing worth celebrating and worth forming a Church for! However, there's more! (Readers of a certain age might at this point have a mental image of Jimmy Cricket!) Psalm 65 and Joel 2 hint at a bigger story. The Bible as a whole, if it could be summed up in a few sentences, might be something like this:

God created the Universe, the world and placed life upon it, and in particular human beings who were designed for communion (relationship) with God. The people's relationship with God was broken through sin. This affected the whole of creation in a negative way. A rescue plan was needed. God chose an individual (Abraham) through whose descendants he would make a nation (Israel) through whom he would send a Saviour, who would become the means by which God's reign on earth would be re-established, individuals worldwide re-connected to divine communion through faith and repentance, and the created order itself restored to how the Maker meant it to be. Colossians 1:20 hints at the amazing possibility that all things are to be reconciled to God, in other words the whole Universe is to be restored.

The Psalm (if we were to read it all the way through) and the Joel passage both link the activity of God to abundance in the natural world. This points to the salvation of the natural order as well as the individual. It confirms that trust in God will not be confined to the Jewish nation through whom the help would come, but is to be global! People in the farthest reaches of the earth will trust in God (Psalm 65:5). The Spirit of God will ultimately be poured out on all flesh, a process that began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17, Joel 2:28-30).

At the moment we see the natural world in its fallen state. God's restoration, the New Testament assures us, will only come at the return of Jesus to reign upon a new earth. However, the natural world, even though tainted by sin, can still be beautiful. Under God's blessing it can yield abundantly. This points to the ultimate future restoration of which Peter speaks in Acts 3:21 and Paul in Romans 8:19-21. This is great news for environmentalists! There is hope! Should we therefore continue to care for the world we live in? Yes, absolutely we should, and nothing that we do is wasted. We are here as stewards of creation. However the full restoration will come when Jesus reigns on earth, and this will be hastened by our sharing of the gospel, which should be our priority.

Psalm 65:3 points to the fact that we can't deal with our own sins. Only God can do that. We will shortly look at how that works on an individual basis.

StF 363 – My Jesus, my Saviour

1) My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord there is none like you.
All of my days I want to praise
the wonders of your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength,
let every breath, all that I am,
never cease to worship you.

*Ch) Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing,
power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down
and the seas will roar
at the sound of your name.
I sing for joy at the work of your hands.
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the
promise I have in you.*

Darlene Zschech © 1993 Darlene Zschech / Hillsong Publishing

Reading: 2 Timothy 4: 6-8 (NIV)

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Reading: Luke 18: 9-14 (NIV)

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Reflection

We have established that our sins have separated us from God. What, therefore, is the remedy? Can we somehow work our way back? Many people think that life is a matter of doing good deeds to offset our bad ones, that somehow we can therefore climb back into God’s favour and blessing. Some don’t even acknowledge that sin is real and is a barrier between us and God. Their attitude is to imagine that either they are blameless, or, if sin is a real concept, then God is willing to ignore it.

One of the characters in our Gospel passage seems to fall into that category. He had gone to the Temple to pray. He was a Pharisee, one of the religious people of his day, probably with an outwardly good lifestyle and very devout. He imagined that he was in good standing with God because he wasn’t greedy, adulterous or dishonest, and because of his religious observances such as tithing and fasting. Now, avoiding the sins that he mentions is a positive thing, as is the performance of tithing and fasting, but the problem is with his attitude. He thinks that those things give him credit with God. He thinks that he is superior to the tax collector who is also praying in the Temple. However, the Pharisee had fallen into the sin of pride. The tax collector, on the other hand, was not under such delusions about his own goodness. He simply asked, as a sinner, for mercy from God, and received it! Jesus is very clear about which one of the two went home forgiven of his sins, namely the one who humbled himself.

This shows us that we cannot gain favour with God by our own efforts. The Scriptures fill in further detail by showing us that Jesus is the one who takes our sin upon himself on the cross, and that by our trusting in him and in the sacrifice that he made for us, we receive the righteousness of God. We are saved only by grace, not by our own efforts, though once saved we receive a calling to good works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Conclusions:

1. We all need a Saviour.
2. We are forgiven and restored to relationship with God through trust in Jesus.
3. Jesus will return to reign and will restore the whole of creation to be how God intended it.

StF 565 – Only by grace can we enter

Only by grace can we enter,
Only by grace can we stand;
Not by our human endeavour,
But by the blood of the Lamb.
Into Your presence You call us, You call us to come.
Into Your presence You draw us,
And now by Your grace we come,
Now by Your grace we come.

Gerrit Gustafson © 1990 Integrity Music

Lord if You mark our transgressions,
Who would stand?
Thanks to Your grace we are cleansed
By the blood of the Lamb.
Lord if You mark our transgressions,
Who would stand?
Thanks to Your grace we are cleansed
By the blood of the Lamb.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord God, we give thanks for your gospel, which you have made available to all the nations through your grace. Thank-you that, trusting in Jesus, we are made part of your holy nation, and nothing shall snatch us out of your hands. **Amen.**

Lord, we pray for peace in the nations. We give thanks for the return of the hostages to their families in Israel and pray that they are healed from trauma. We lift up to you the Jewish people, through whom you chose to bring the good news to the world. In this time of worldwide Jew-hatred we pray for the protection of the Jewish people in the UK and elsewhere, and for ordinary citizens, politicians and the Church to stand with them. We pray for a deep and lasting peace for Israel and the whole Middle East, for the rebuilding of Gaza, and an end to the suffering on all sides.

We pray also for an end to the war in Ukraine and in many other conflicts throughout the world, and pray for your blessing on all people who actively seek peace.
For our own nation we pray for wisdom and courage for those who make decisions on our behalf, especially national and local government. We pray for restored health for the King and that he would serve you faithfully.

We remember those dear to us who have needs, whether it be for healing, resources, comfort, strength, peace or guidance, and we lift to you our own needs.

We pray for the whole Church of Christ, for unity, love and strength in the Holy Spirit, and especially for our own churches and circuit, that there may be increase in spirituality and in numbers.
Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy 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 thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 416 – There's a wideness in God's mercy

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| 1) There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice
Which is more than liberty. | 4) For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of the mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind. |
| 2) There is plentiful redemption
In the blood that has been shed;
There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the Head. | 5) But we make his love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify his strictness
With a zeal he will not own. |
| 3) There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss. | 6) If our love were but more simple
We should take him at his word;
And our lives would be illumined
By the presence of our Lord. |

Frederick William Faber

Blessing

God of grace, pour out your Spirit and your blessings on your Church, that the message of salvation may reach those you place in our path and ultimately people in all the earth.

The blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be amongst us and remain with us now and evermore. **Amen.**