

Welcome to this act of worship. Take comfort & strength that although you may be on your own, you are part of God's church, worshipping God together with others at this time.

Call to Worship: Psalm 90: 13b-14

Have compassion on your servants!

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Prayer Lord God of all, I set aside this time and space to be in your presence. Help me to open my heart, mind and will to you, in order that I may receive everything that you have prepared for me. Amen

Hymn StF 137 New every morning is the love

New every morning is the love
our wakening and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life and power and thought.

The trivial round, the common task,
will furnish all we need to ask,
room to deny ourselves, a road
to bring us daily nearer God.

New mercies, each returning day,
hover around us while we pray;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

Prepare us, Lord, in your dear love
for perfect rest with you above;
and help us, this and every day,
to live more nearly as we pray.

If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

Prayers

Living God, we give you thanks and praise, for you have made us and given us life,
You have redeemed us and set us free.

Loving God, we give you thanks and praise, for you have found us and made us your own,
Named us and called us 'Beloved'.

Accompanying God, we give you thanks and praise, for you have promised to be with us always
And nothing can separate us from your love.
God, our God, we love and adore you. Amen

God of mercy, your love for us is strong but our love for you is weak.
You call us to follow Jesus, but we are slow to obey.
You care for all that you have made, but we ignore the needs of others and misuse your creation.
We are sorry for our sins.
Forgive us, and help us to please you by the way we live.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is love and forgives our sins through Jesus. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Amos 5: 6-7, 10-15

Seek the Lord and live, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them, and Bethel will have no one to quench it.

There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.

There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth.

You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain.

Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them;

though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.

For I know how many are your offences and how great your sins.

There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil.

Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is.

Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts.

Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

Mark 10: 17-31 from The Message

As he went out into the street, a man came running up, greeted him with great reverence, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to get eternal life?"

Jesus said, "Why are you calling me good? No one is good, only God. You know the commandments: Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, don't cheat, honour your father and mother."

He said, "Teacher, I have—from my youth—kept them all!"

Jesus looked him hard in the eye—and loved him! He said, "There's one thing left: Go sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. And come follow me."

The man's face clouded over. This was the last thing he expected to hear, and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go.

Looking at his disciples, Jesus said, "Do you have any idea how difficult it is for people who 'have it all' to enter God's kingdom?" The disciples couldn't believe what they were hearing, but Jesus kept on: "You can't imagine how difficult. I'd say it's easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for the rich to get into God's kingdom."

That set the disciples back on their heels. "Then who has any chance at all?" they asked.

Jesus was blunt: "No chance at all if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you let God do it."

Peter tried another angle: "We left everything and followed you."

Jesus said, "Mark my words, no one who sacrifices house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, land—whatever—because of me and the Message will lose out. They'll get it all back, but multiplied many times in homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and land—but also in troubles. And then the bonus of eternal life! This is once again the Great Reversal: Many who are first will end up last, and the last first."

Reflection

What makes a good life & will make you happy & fulfilled?

If ads on TV are to be believed, a good life has the following:

Holiday in the sun, a cruise maybe.

A flash car that somehow takes you to places of amazing beauty and almost has a personality of its own.

Watching the latest box set of a thrilling TV series.

Owning the latest mobile phone.....

What sort of things would you consider necessary for a good life? In Mark's gospel, the rich young man wanted to know how to attain eternal life! Jews wanted to know how they could be sure of being part of the Age to Come, God's Kingdom & eternal life.

Had he heard Jesus teaching and preaching and was beginning to sense that there was something more to living than keeping the rules of the Law? Did Jesus have some extra tips on how to tweak his keeping of the Law more strictly?

He says 'what must I DO to inherit eternal life? As if there was something, some law or command that was hidden from him, that by following it would guarantee his entrance to God's kingdom.

He says quite openly and seemingly without pride, that keeping the commands Jesus highlights has been part of his life since childhood. He's done what is expected of him.

Although the man is seeking Jesus out, he falls into the trap of thinking, like many of the Pharisees, that he can achieve his own passport to life in the kingdom of God, eternal life, by his own merit, his own actions.

It's a mistake many people make...thinking that by good works, going to church, keeping the commandments, they can earn their way to eternal life. Jesus is much more radical than that!

Eternal life, life in God's presence both now and beyond death, is a pure gift from God. It's not something we can earn or gain by anything WE DO ourselves, but a gift that is promised to those who put their complete trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and in God for directing their living, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers that living.

Amos called the people of Israel to seek God and live! Amos was an ordinary man, called to give an uncomfortable message to God's people. The people of Israel enjoyed an outward appearance of prosperity but it was gained at the expense of the vulnerable, but that reality was invisible to them. They had become complacent about God, and worshipped idols.

Justice and business conducted at the city gate was corrupt and they were oppressing the poor. The life of the nation was not in line with God's Covenant and Amos warned that disaster loomed if change didn't happen. Seek God and live!

This was Jesus' call to the young man, to all of us..., seek God and live.

For the young man, real living meant giving away his wealth..., it would be a burden on his mind, preventing him from really trusting Jesus and following him to Jerusalem and the cross.

Following Jesus is what's required for a good life; no half- hearted following but throwing everything in with Jesus.

The young man was nearly there but he could not bring himself to relinquish his wealth. It meant too much to him and he held on to it too tightly. The man's wealth got between him and a relationship with Jesus.

What comes between us and Jesus? Are there things that we need to let go of because they stop us from journeying with Jesus more fully and freely?

Jesus knows our hearts! He knows what those things are.

Three times in this passage Mark says that Jesus looked:

He looked at the young man.....

He looked at the people gathered around.....

He looked at the disciples.....

What is it that Mark is telling us that Jesus wants us to see?

In Jesus' time, prosperity and wealth were considered a blessing from God, the result of living a good life.

But now Jesus was saying that the blessing of prosperity doesn't even get you into God's kingdom,

It certainly raised the question for the disciples... what hope is there for those who have given up everything to follow Jesus?!

The point is, is that salvation and eternal life does not rely on what we can do at all but has everything to do with what God has done for us in and through Jesus Christ.

Jesus was able to look on all the people as Mark describes, including the young man and even though he knew what was in all of their hearts, he loved them all; just as he looks upon all of us today and loves each and every one of us.

The young man was unwilling to step into that place of complete vulnerability, to relinquish his security in his wealth and exchange it for the security of a living relationship with Jesus, which would lead him to life eternal, treasure in heaven.

Jesus looked at him and loved him.... but the young man turned his back on all the possibilities and potential of a life with Jesus. I wonder if eventually he realised the mistake he made and took a different course?

The disciples are quite shaken by this encounter....they thought it called into question their own decision to follow Jesus. The hyperbole of the camel and the eye of the needle quite rattled them....the impossibility of eternal life loomed large!

How could they keep following? How do any of us keep following Jesus?

Because Jesus says that with God, all things are possible, and they are possible because Jesus has gone before us, he experienced the total vulnerability of the cross and now stands beside us.

Through that place of complete trust in God, total vulnerability before God, Jesus meets us in our need and covers us with his unfailing grace.

So, each day as Jesus invites us into relationship with him, may we know Jesus' love for us, put him first in our daily lives, take up our cross and follow? Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Giver of life, we think of our world today – where there can be so much greed and so little justice.

We pray for those for whom money is their great motivator, while other concerns get pushed aside.

We ask for a renewed compassion among those whose hearts seem so focused on their own gain, to the detriment of others.

We pray for situations we have heard about this week, where wickedness and corruption hold sway, and where those who have little are trampled under the heels of the powerful.

We ask for your light to spread into the darkest places – the remote areas scarred by suffering we know nothing about,

the anguish behind closed doors of respectability, the evil that can lurk within human hearts.

Jesus, you defeated darkness by confronting it on the cross, and then rising to brilliant life again.

May we be your torch bearers, showing those around us a better way of living.

In your name. Amen.

Hymn StF 566 Take my life and let it be

Take my life and let it be consecrated to Thee

Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise

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 voice and let me sing always, only for my King

Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee

Take my silver and my gold, not a might would I withhold

Take my intellect and use every power as You choose

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 love, my Lord I pour at Your feet, it's treasure store

Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee

Blessing God, sustain and empower us in the coming days.

Help us to live in ways that reflect our holy calling as your children.

Bless us in Jesus' name. Amen.