

DSW Written service 2 February 2025

Opening Prayer

Eternal God, source of all blessing,
help us to worship you with all our heart and mind
and strength; for you alone are God, Father, Son
and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn [STF 65]

Sing of the Lord's goodness, Father of all wisdom,
come to him and bless his name.

Mercy he has shown us, his love is for ever,
faithful to the end of days.

*Come then, all you nations, sing of your Lord's
goodness,
melodies of praise and thanks to God.*

*Ring out the Lord's glory, praise him with your music,
worship him and bless his name.*

Power he has wielded, honour is his garment,
risen from the snares of death.
His word he has spoken, one bread he has broken,
new life he now gives to all.

Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow,
Spirit of our God most high;
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,
splendour of the living God.

Praise him with your singing, praise him with the
trumpet,
praise God with the lute and harp;
praise him with the cymbals, praise him with your
dancing,
praise God till the end of days.

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Prayer

Creator God, before our birth, you were planning
and perfecting; in the womb, your love and care
enfolded and surrounded us;
Before our body clocks began to tick, your creative
hand was at work;
When our future was still shrouded in your
mystery, your purposes lit up the darkness into
flames of potential.
You are the one who takes the hand of the child in
us, and tells us: 'Do not be afraid.'
So we come to praise and adore you.
You are our hope, O Lord God, our rock, our
stronghold, to whom we can come to confess our
weakness and our fears.

Lord, you took Jeremiah when he thought he was
too young to be your voice.
When we hang back, feeling too little, too
awkward, too insignificant:
and when we use our words wrongly, in cowardly
silence, or in selfish words that cause pain:
When we forget your call to be your voice in the
world:

Forgive us Lord, touch our lips and heal us with
your mercy.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit, and pour into our
hearts your wonderful gift of love,
the true bond of peace and source of all goodness,
so that we may walk in your ways
and in all our dealings be channels of your saving
love & grace
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-10

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,
⁵'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'
⁶Then I said, 'Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know
how to speak, for I am only a boy.'
⁷But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, "I am only a boy";
for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall
speak whatever I command you.
⁸Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you,
says the LORD.'
⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth;
and the LORD said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth.'
¹⁰See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms.'

Reading: Luke 4:21-30

²¹ Then Jesus began to say to them, Today this
scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.
²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious
words that came from his mouth. They said, Is not
this Josephs son? ²³ He said to them, Doubtless you
will quote to me this proverb, Doctor, cure
yourself! And you will say, Do here also in your
hometown the things that we have heard you did
at Capernaum. ²⁴ And he said, Truly I tell you, no
prophet is accepted in the prophets hometown. ²⁵
But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel
in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up
three years and six months, and there was a severe
famine over all the land; ²⁶ yet Elijah was sent to
none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in

Sidon. ²⁷ There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. ²⁸ When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Hymn [STF 449]

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!
Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
And yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
In joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.
Your bondage is freedom; your service is song;
And, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
Rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to find;
What eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
Is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart,
Your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
Your presence to shield me, whatever betide.

Lord of all being, I give you my all;
If e'er I disown you, I stumble and fall;
But, led in your service your word to obey,
I'll walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

Jack Copley Winslow (1882-1974)

Reflection

How would you feel if you were asked to share your testimony, the story of how you came to faith in Jesus?

If you've ever listened to someone else's faith story, how did you respond?

Many of us may feel inspired by other's stories of how they came to know Jesus, but might feel hesitant about sharing our own journey to faith, especially if it wasn't as dramatic as Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus! Perhaps we can identify more easily with John Wesley's

heartwarming experience of coming to a personal faith in Jesus.

But however we feel about our calling as disciples of Jesus, today's Bible readings can offer us much encouragement.

It might be tempting to assume that the Biblical Prophets were great figures who were confident & clever, accomplished speakers and orators, and yet in most cases the opposite is more true, particularly when they received their calling at the start of their ministry.

So we read that when Jeremiah hears God's call, he resists & says "I'm too young, I'm only a boy and I don't know how to speak." Perhaps many of us might feel that way too, and even if we're not as young as Jeremiah was, we can identify with his feeling underconfident about having the right words and knowing what to say.

But God says to Jeremiah "don't say I'm just a boy, because I've known you since before you were born & I've chosen you to be my prophet. Don't worry about what to say, because I'll give you the words, I'll tell you where to go, and who to speak to and what to say. You don't need to worry about that, you just need to be willing to go, and obey, and don't be afraid."

"Don't be afraid" is one of the most repeated phrases in the Bible.

Jeremiah didn't think he was good enough to be sent out, but he still obeyed and went in response to God and putting his trust in God's promises.

In the gospel reading for today, Jesus is near the beginning of his ministry. After spending 40 days in the wilderness he's been baptised by John and is now in Nazareth, preaching to a home crowd. But they are not sympathetic when he begins to tell them who he really is, and what his message is. And that's because they think they know where Jesus is from & who he is, and whose son he is, and that colours their judgment and prevents them from listening and understanding Jesus' true identity as God's son, and that his words are God's words to them.

The reaction of those who chase Jesus out of the synagogue to the nearby cliff intending to throw

him off is pretty extreme, but Jesus walks through them & goes on his way.

When he was baptised, Jesus was affirmed by God's voice saying "This is my beloved son", so he knows he's loved, he knows who he is, he knows whose message he's bringing. His identity is borne in the love of God and he is filled with the love of God.

Jeremiah also knows he is loved by God and has been since before he was born and that made all the difference for him too.

And we know who we are too: we know we are loved by God who has known us from before we were born. And in response to God's love for us, shown in the teaching and life of Jesus and in his death and resurrection, we've made our commitment to follow Jesus & do whatever he calls us to. Many of us will have renewed that commitment to follow God's leading by making our Covenant prayer this month, as we do each year.

We are people who are defined by the love of God, which makes all the difference to what we do and how we do it – not just in knowing that we're loved personally by God in Jesus, but by being filled with & motivated by that love too.

St Paul reminds us (in 1 Corinthians 13) that we can do all sorts of things in our own strength, but if we do them without love they're as dissonant & meaningless as a clanging cymbal or a noisy gong. When we act with love in our hearts, when we love others as God does, and when we invite God to fill us with his love through the presence of his Holy Spirit, we find the courage and strength and the words we need to do God's work, as we learn to care as deeply for his people as God does.

What lies at the core of who God is, shown in the love of Jesus who died for our sakes, in that gift of grace so freely given, is love. That is what gives us our true identity as beloved children of God, called to follow Jesus and allowing God to empower and equip us by the presence of his Holy Spirit living within us, in our hearts and souls and minds. And we're being changed into the likeness of Jesus, who is the essence of love, as he calls us to live and work and speak and love in his name.

We may not feel super-qualified to share our stories about what God's love has done and still is doing in our lives & for others, but like Jeremiah, & Paul, and millions of people across the world, we've been chosen by God in Jesus, who calls us to trust in him, to offer to him all that we have and are – all of our words, our thoughts, our actions, our lives – to be channels of the love of God in Jesus, working in us & through us, to bless the lives of others, especially those who don't yet know how much they are also loved by God.

God will give us the words, Jesus through his Spirit will prompt us about when to speak and what to say, and as we're filled with the love of God, that love will shine out of us for all to see.

We all have a story to tell, we each have our part to play in sharing the wonderful news of the love of God in our world. God in Jesus invites us to come to him to be filled with his love and then calls us to go with him, in his name to share the good news of his love with others.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving Father God,

Thank you for vision that sees possibilities in hopeless places; thank you for love that sees potential in unexpected people;

Thank you for Jesus, who lived out love in action, walking through a crowd of doubters to set us free:

Thank you for your Holy Spirit, helping us to trust you, giving us opportunities and words and actions to share your love with others

Thank you for those who've helped us on our way, patiently guiding & helping us to follow you, and for those who offer help & support to us now, please bless us and everyone who shares your love with others and help us to share all the blessings we receive from you. Amen.

Prayers for others (based on 1 Cor 13)

'Love is patient and kind.'

We pray for the victims of impatience or unkindness:

those who take longer to do or understand things, or who find it hard to adapt to new ways;

those smarting from an injustice, or wounded by cruel words.

Gracious God: **fill us with your love.**

'Love envies no one, is never boastful, never conceited, never rude.'

We pray for the victims of envy or pride:
those who are never satisfied with what they have,
or who are too satisfied with who they are;
those trodden underfoot in the clamour for
success, belittled by lack of respect from others.
Gracious God: **fill us with your love.**

'Love is never selfish, never quick to take offence.'
We pray for the victims of selfishness or anger:
those who live in poverty and hunger,
or whose deepest needs are never met;
those left lonely and bereft after conflict,
longing for reconciliation and peace.
Gracious God: **fill us with your love.**

'Love keeps no score of wrongs, takes no pleasure in the sins of others, but delights in the truth.'
We pray for the victims of sin or falsehood:
those whose unloving deeds have ruined their own
lives and the lives of those around them;
those whose lives have been built upon and shaped
by wrong ideas of truth and false priorities.
Gracious God: **fill us with your love.**

'There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance.'
Gracious God: **fill us with your love. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn [STF 662]

Have you heard Gods' voice, has your heart been stirred?

Are you still prepared to follow?

Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
though the way be rough and narrow?

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?*

*Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow?*

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
when the multitudes are silent?

Will you make a choice to stand your ground when
the crowds are turning violent?

In your city streets will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?

Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,
will you share your faith with the faithless?

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith and
believe it could be different?

Will you share your views using words of grace?

Will you leave a thoughtful footprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost so much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.*

*We will trust in One who entrusts to you the disciples of
tomorrow.*

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Blessing

May we go in faith, in hope, in love,
In the confidence and joy that one day we will fully
know, as we are fully known by our Lord of Love.
And may the blessing of God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Rev Jane Wilson
January 2025