

**‘Dorset South & West Written Service, Sunday January 23rd 2022.
‘The joy of the Lord is your strength’. Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.**

Call to Worship. Listen for God who speaks within our hearts, in wildest thoughts, when we are least aware, and in the silence at the heart of prayer.

(From Andrew Brown’s hymn ‘listen for God’ published on the STF plus website.)

STF 563

O Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
Lord, be for ever near me,
my master and my friend;
I shall not fear the battle
if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if you will be my guide.

O let me feel you near me;
the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me, and within;
but, Jesus, now draw nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear you speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control:
Lord, speak, and make me listen,
O guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, you have promised
to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory
your servant shall be too;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow
my master and my friend.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession.

I have often suggested we sing the opening hymn, ‘O Jesus I have promised’, to the tune of Puff the Magic Dragon. After exploring the storyline of the fairy tale and contrasting it’s story with what we know of ‘Our Master and Friend’, in the light of the promises we make to Him.

In our prayers of Adoration let us think about the joy of friendship, ‘both human and divine’.

Reflect for a moment on the human friendships you have been blessed with and give thanks.
Reflect for a moment on the unfailing friendship of God, rejoice in how you have been blessed
and give thanks.

Loving God we praise you for the blessings of human friendship and the divine love and friendship you bestow upon us. We give you our heart felt praise and thanksgiving. **Amen.**

We recall that in the fairy tale little Jackie Paper soon forgets his friend. We are reminded of how fickle we can be. Through ignorance or neglect we so easily forget about the friendship of others. We let so many foolish things get in the way of friendship’s human and sadly divine. Forgive us and help us to keep our promises to serve you to the end. Especially in how we reflect your self giving love to those we are privileged to meet.

Amen.

Gospel Reading Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

Reflection:

I am writing this service knowing that in less than a months time when it is published I will be a year older and we will be almost one month into 2022.

Birthdays and new year’s are both times for reflection and thinking about what we will do with ourselves in the year ahead. Pivotal moments! On the whole promises about some improvement or something we would like to achieve. Our thoughts also have something to say about how we feel about ourselves in these pivotal moments.

I wonder how you would sum up your life, in a few words? Could you use the words in the title of this service or does another quote from the Bible come to mind?

Our Gospel reading seems to be a pivotal moment in Jesus’ life. He chooses to read from the book of Isaiah and then makes a bold statement in which he claims that this prophecy is his ministry, and purpose in a nutshell.

The passage Jesus chose has a major role because of what it reveals about who Jesus is, what Jesus will do, and for whom Jesus has come.

What do the words we choose for our pivotal moments say about ourselves? Some people say, “I never make New Years resolutions”. Let’s go beyond that and think about how we would want to reveal who we are, what we will do and for who? It’s a very personal thing for us, but one worth exploring even in the privacy of our own thoughts and prayers. How do you sum up who you are and where you are at in this year ahead, and who you would want to be there for, in a nutshell?

The title for this service is ‘The Joy of the Lord is your strength’ Nehemiah 8:10

Joy is an interesting word. You can look it up and come up maybe with this definition, ‘delight, great pleasure, joyfulness, jubilation, triumph, exultation, rejoicing, happiness, gladness, glee, exhilaration, ebullience, exuberance, elation, euphoria, bliss, ecstasy, transports of delight, rapture, radiance; enjoyment, gratification, felicity; cloud nine, seventh heaven.’

I like the Sunday school definition I have carried with me all my 29+++ years! Ok 49++++!!!

Seriously.. J. Stands for Jesus first,
O. for others next and
Y. yourself last.

If we keep to that order of priorities in our lives we will have real Joy.

Think of the many examples from life. Inspiring people who have reflected that way of being. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, leaders of the churches; the Wesley’s, William Booth, John Knox and I am sure you can add many more names.

How about you? Maybe our reluctance to answer or reveal things about ourselves is seated in the fear of failure? The reluctance even to give our age might be related to how we think society thinks about some one of ‘that age’? You can’t get past that concern, you will always be either too young or so old! However the text I have chosen reminds me joy doesn’t depend upon what others think of me or I perceive that they might think of me. Or my strength, experience, ability or whatever but it is from God each and every day. Each and every moment.

What scripture is the foundation for your life?

May it be your blessing and sustenance as you live it out in this new year ahead.

For our next Hymn

let's share Joy Dine's hymn 'God who sets us on a journey',

The Suggested tunes: "Hyfrydol" (StF 103) was Joy Dine's preferred tune for this text. Also appropriate are "Blaenwern" (StF 503) and "Austria" (StF 301)

However, for a tune that seems to better reflect the anticipation and energy of the journey, try "Jesus Calls Us" (StF 28)

God who sets us on a journey
to discover, dream and grow,
lead us as you led your people
in the desert long ago;
journey inward, journey outward,
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,
love for God and self and neighbour
marks the way that Christ defined.

Exploration brings new insights,
changes, choices we must face;
give us wisdom in deciding,
mindful always of your grace;
should we stumble, lose our bearings,
find it hard to know what's right,
we regain our true direction
focused on the Jesus light.

End our longing for the old days,
grant the vision that we lack –
once we've started on this journey
there can be no turning back;
let us travel light, discarding
excess baggage from our past,
cherish only what's essential,
choosing treasure that will last.

When we set up camp and settle
to avoid love's risk and pain,
you disturb complacent comfort,
pull the tent pegs up again;
keep us travelling in the knowledge
you are always at our side;
give us courage for the journey,
Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

Prayers for Others.

I am continuing to use Andrew Brown's hymn 'listen for God' published on the STF plus website to guide our prayers.

Listen for God inhabiting the edge;
heard through the lost, unwanted, dispossessed,
those at the margins, easily oppressed.

As we listen let us offer to God our concerns for those these thoughts bring to mind.

Listen for God in holy scriptures' voice;
learning from all who wrote how lives were stirred,
transformed, reborn by the great, living Word.

Let us give thanks for those who have founded our churches and for those who continue in so many different ways to keep our churches together and worshipping in these ever changing and challenging days.

Listen for God, for other voices call,
encouraging our selfish, careless ways;
ignoring others, all the costs they pay.

Help us not to be senseless to the needs of the many disadvantaged in our world today. We bring to mind the charities we know and those in need who have been brought to our attention in recent days.

Listen for God, so all may fully live; for we must hear the truth and change our ways to shape a new world, one of love and praise. **Amen** **We say the Lord's Prayer.**

STF 673 Will you come and follow me if I but call your name.

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

A prayer of Blessing.

Lord, we ask for your blessings of wisdom, and for your strength and power to be constantly present within us. We pray you would bless us to be strong and courageous for the road ahead. Give us ability beyond what we feel able, let your gifts flow freely through us, so that you would be honoured by our lives, and others would be drawn to you. In Jesus Name, **Amen.**