

Dorset S&W Circuit Written Service 25th June 2023 prepared by Rev R Lownsborough

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

Opening prayer Lord God of all, now, 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 530 Noel Richards

To be in your presence, to sit at your feet,
Where your love surrounds me and makes me complete.

This is my desire, O Lord, this is my desire. This is my desire, O Lord, this is my desire.

To rest in your presence, not rushing away, to cherish each moment – here I would stay.

This is my desire, O Lord, this is my desire. This is my desire, O Lord, this is my desire.

Prayers

Praise & Thanks You have given so much of yourself for us and to us, O God.

To you be all praise and glory.

Your sacrifice for us is beyond understanding.

To you be all praise and glory.

You reach out to us in love and compassion.

To you be all praise and glory.

Your spirit burns within us, warms us, bursts forth from us when we let it.

To you be all praise and glory.

Yours is a story to transform the world, to transform lives, to save lives, to enrich lives.

To you be all praise and glory.

You are the giver of life, the giver of abundant love.

To you be all praise and glory.

In this generation and the next and for ever and ever. Amen.

Confession Loving God, thank you that you know each one of us, you know all about us, good and bad and yet everyone is precious to you.

I come to you, trusting in your love which never runs out and which stops me from being afraid. I come now to tell you about the times this past week when I haven't followed the way that Jesus showed me, either deliberately or through carelessness.....

I am truly sorry Lord.

Jesus hears all who are truly sorry and forgives their sins.

Thank you Jesus that, in you, I can have a fresh start. Help me to live in a way that puts you first. Amen

Lord's Prayer

Readings: Jeremiah 20: 7-13 O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me and you have prevailed. I have become a laughing-stock all day long; everyone mocks me.

For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, 'Violence and destruction!'

For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.

If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name', then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones;

I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

For I hear many whispering: 'Terror is all around! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!'

All my close friends are watching for me to stumble.

'Perhaps he can be enticed, and we can prevail against him, and take our revenge on him.'

But the LORD is with me like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed.

Their eternal dishonour will never be forgotten.

O LORD of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind;

let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause.

Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD!

For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

Matthew 10: 24-39 A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! 'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. 'Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Reflection What are the first images that come to mind when you hear the word 'success'? Achievement, recognition, a following, financial security, a few more goals in the

back of the net!!? If we go with this kind of definition, then by all accounts, Jeremiah was not a successful person. And yet, in God's eyes, he was a most successful prophet. It was Jeremiah's obedience and faithfulness to the task God had set for him that made him successful. Jeremiah was called to take a message to the nation of Israel and the leaders of Judah to return to God in repentance, otherwise there would be dire consequences for them at the hand of their enemies.

As you can imagine, Jeremiah was not a popular person and he suffered all kinds of abuses at the hands of those who did not want to hear his message. However, Jeremiah was faithful and despite all the difficulties, he found the capacity to praise God, and he did what God asked him to do. The knowledge that God was with him, gave him the perseverance, strength and courage to do it

The passage in Matthew's gospel also highlights the challenges and difficulties which are to be expected when following Jesus. There is an exhortation to persevere because, in the end, God will reveal the true nature of everyone's actions. Those who oppose God will eventually be exposed for what they really are and those who are true to God will be acknowledged as such. One day, everything will be out in the open.

These passages put the spotlight on our understanding of mission today. How do we share God's message of love with others? Does the gospel message burn like fire within us, as did God's words within Jeremiah? When he tried to have an easier time by saying nothing, he discovered it was impossible to even try to keep the message to himself. Jeremiah's body protested until he spoke God's message to the people to repent and turn back to God. (v9) Does God's message stir us up so much inside that no matter how hard we try to push it away or keep it in, or what obstacles are before us, in the end God's word must be spoken and lived?

Matthew's gospel, highlights Jesus' warning to his disciples of the power of God's message but also the powers that would try to oppose it; the conflict God's message would stir up – especially within families. Matthew had a clear idea of what it cost to be a disciple – in pure monetary terms, there was no going back for someone who gave up being a tax collector for the Romans. But Matthew is also keen to point out the rewards of faithfulness to Jesus' great commission – the promise of acknowledgement by God for what the disciples had done.

So what of us? The last few words of this passage in Matthew's gospel gives us our direction. Put God First! The stakes are high, the calling is tough. Each of us has our cross to carry. How can we succeed if God is not first in everything, guiding and directing everything that we think, speak or do? And that is when God's wonderful promise is there to uphold us. We cannot rely on our own resources to do God's work. It is only possible when we rely on his strength, through his Holy Spirit within us.

Our steps of faith might be small but we must take them and they will lead to a world which is hungry for satisfaction which only comes from God. Steps of faith always involve risk and that's uncomfortable and scary. Jeremiah knew it, the disciples knew it, Jesus himself knew

it. But God says to us, do not be afraid, I am with you. If you do what I ask, the rewards are everlasting. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Rejoice in the Lord always. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

God of joy, we bring our prayers to you as acts of love for you and for our neighbours.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayer.

You call us to take courage and hope in you. We pray for ourselves and those dear to us.

Your word is faithful, Lord; hear our prayer

You show goodness to those who trust you in sight of all. We pray for our community and for our neighbours. **Your word is faithful, Lord; hear our prayer**

You strengthen your people with wisdom. We pray for the church in all places, that we may be faithful in solidarity across generations and geography.

Your word is faithful, Lord; hear our prayer

Yours is the Spirit of reconciling love and healing power. We pray for the world, for our enemies and for all in conflicts across this world.

Your word is faithful, Lord; hear our prayer

We offer you other concerns we carry in our hearts.....

Your word is faithful, Lord; hear our prayer

We offer all our prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen

Hymn H&P 678 In heavenly love abiding

1. In heavenly love abiding,
No change my heart shall fear;
And safe is such confiding,
For nothing changes here:
The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?

2. Wherever he may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack:
His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim,

He knows the way he taketh,
And I will walk with him.

3. Green pastures are before me,
Which yet I have not seen;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me,
Where the dark clouds have been;
My hope I cannot measure,
My path to life is free;
My Saviour has my treasure,
And he will walk with me.

Anna Laetitia Waring (1823-1910)

Blessing God, who knows and loves each of us better than we know ourselves, give us courage to persist in following you, over and above all else; to not be afraid and to keep on risking vulnerable love.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you, now and always. Amen