

## DSW Written Service 9<sup>th</sup> July 2023

### Opening Prayer

You are the Word behind all words,  
the calm at the core of the storm,  
the energy that sustains creation.  
You are present in the pain behind the tears,  
the laughter in the eyes, the yearning in the heart.  
All these you share,  
yet your gift to us is much more.  
Open us up, Lord, to depths we have not  
explored, truths we have avoided,  
paths we have not followed,  
beauty we have yet to admire.  
Open us up to Jesus  
in whom all things are held and for our good.

Help us to sing out the faith we have found.  
help us to pray with the hope we have found.  
help us to rejoice at the acceptance we have  
found in Jesus, our Good Shepherd, friend and  
Saviour.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit:

Open our spiritual eyes so that we can see more  
of you;  
Open our spiritual ears so we can hear what you  
want to say to us;  
Open our hearts and speak to us so that we can  
go deeper with you  
We offer you our willingness to listen to you,  
Our eagerness to know more of you  
Our gratitude for all you have done for us  
Our desire to be filled with your love  
In the name of our Saviour Jesus. Amen

### Hymn (STF 544)

As the deer pants for the water,  
So my soul longs after You.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship You.  
*You alone are my strength, my shield,  
To You alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship You.*

I want You more than gold or silver,  
Only You can satisfy.  
You alone are the real joy-giver  
And the apple of my eye.

You're my Friend and You are my Brother,  
Even though You are a King.  
I love You more than any other,  
So much more than anything.

*Martin J. Nystrom © 1983 Restoration Music Ltd./ Adm. by  
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### Reading: Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and  
burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke  
upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and  
humble in heart, and you will find rest for your  
souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is  
light.”

### Matthew 11:28-30 The Message (MSG):

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on  
religion? Come to me. Get away with me and  
you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take  
a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—  
watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of  
grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on  
you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to  
live freely and lightly.”

### Reflection: The Unforced Rhythms of Grace

Recently I've been struck by the number of times  
in conversation with people of all ages, they've  
commented on how busy life is for them at the  
moment. It seems to be a recurring theme among  
young people and older people, who feel there is  
little opportunity to pause and take time out just  
to “be”. The temptation to fill our diaries seems  
to apply to all of us, regardless of whether we're  
doing paid or voluntary work or not working at  
all!

So this gospel reading from Matthew seems  
really appropriate for today. It's a familiar reading  
to many of us in the traditional version, but I  
particularly like the Message version which for me  
draws out in a different way what Jesus was trying  
to teach his disciples.

Jesus is explaining a way of being which was  
fundamental to his life and which he knows is life-  
giving and life-changing for his followers.

Jesus asks : *Are you tired, worn out ? Burned out on  
religion?* How does that resonate with us? Do  
we sometimes find ourselves worn out by  
religion, or by our own or others' expectations of  
what church involves?

Many of us have had days when life has seemed  
out of kilter, when we haven't felt in control of  
how we spend our time, when we've felt as if  
everything has got on top of us. Jesus says: *Come  
to me – get away with me and you'll recover your life*

- Let me show you how to get your life back on track..

*I'll show you how to take a real rest.* What might that mean? Not just sleep, but rest for the soul, the deep peace that only Jesus brings, that spending time with God brings.

*Walk with me and work with me – and watch how I do it.* And how did Jesus do it? By taking time out to be with God – to pray, to allow the still small voice of God to be heard, and we can do that too, listening attentively for what God wants us to do, and letting him love us.

*Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.*

We know we need balance in our lives, we need the rhythm of work and play and rest and worship - but so often our lives get out of balance and out of rhythm. And maybe part of what being in lockdown taught us was how to reconnect with that unforced rhythm of life Jesus is referring to? Think of the numbers of people of all ages & backgrounds who said they were not church goers but that they prayed during lockdown, and similar responses have been given in more recent surveys.

Grace is love & forgiveness that is undeserved, grace is a gift from God to us. God's grace to us is shown in the love of Jesus, in his generous, endless love for us, manifested in so many different ways, every day, often in ways we may not notice because we've been too busy, rushing from one thing to the next.

But in lockdown we had more time and space to notice the sights and sounds of nature and to appreciate the love and care received and shared with each other, and I wonder whether we have lost those blessings by reverting to busyness and filling our lives with "doing" instead of "being" too quickly?

The practice of mindfulness has become popular in our society, but I think Jesus was there well before the current craze, teaching us gently to slow down and just BE in the moment, to look and listen and notice God's goodness to us in so many ways.

Jesus says *I won't lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you* the traditional version says "*my yoke is easy.*" That isn't to say that we won't have hardships to face – we all know life wasn't trouble free for Jesus or his followers and it won't be for us either.

But Jesus says *I won't lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you.* God doesn't do that. Often we do that to ourselves, taking upon ourselves burdens that are ill-fitting or too heavy.

We carry hurts and resentments and guilt and anger. We may be burdened by habits that don't fit with who we are before God, which harm our ability to fulfil the potential he's placed inside each one of us; perhaps addictions to food or alcohol, or obsessions with how we look, or what others will think of us. And when these things begin to take over our lives, they become a burden, and they are not the yokes God or Jesus wants us to carry. Jesus wants to liberate us from those burdens.

So what is the yoke of Jesus? Jesus carried the yoke of obedience which led him to death on the cross, for you & me, so that we could be freed of all the heavy and ill fitting yokes that sin and evil and Satan try to make us carry.

Jesus' yoke is an easy one: he listened to God, he spent time with his heavenly Father, he trusted God to take care of him to the end, to lead him through all the trials and hardships and even through death, to the wonder of Resurrection and the joy of being welcomed with rejoicing by his Father in heaven. That's the yoke he calls us to take on too.

*Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.* Who wouldn't want to live freely and lightly? Isn't that what we all yearn for?

*Keep company with me,* says Jesus– spend time with me, talk to me as you would a close friend, listen to me, let me help you to understand.

Surely the way to live lightly and freely is to live in company with Jesus?

Surely this is the heart of our faith? A way of living freely and easily, carrying the yoke of obedience to God, who knows better than we do where we need to be and what we need to be doing; the yoke of trusting Him to provide for our needs wherever we are, to be there to guide us when we listen in the quietness of our hearts, when we set aside specific time to focus on God in Jesus, bringing him our cares & concerns and then listening to his words for us.

*Keep company with me and you will learn to live freely and lightly.* What a promise!

How might our churches be in the future if we learned to keep company more closely with Jesus, walking with him and working with him?

## Hymn (STF 248)

I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon my breast.'  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad,  
I found in him a resting place,  
And he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'Behold, I freely give  
The living water, thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink and live,'  
I came to Jesus and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'I am this dark world's Light;  
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,  
And all thy day be bright.'  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
In him my star, my sun;  
And in that light of life I'll walk,  
Till travelling days are done. *Horatius Bonar (1808-89)*

## Prayers of Thanksgiving, confession & for others

Lord God, thank you for the busy times when we hardly had a moment to think; for times when it felt good to be active and useful, when we felt we had the right skills and personality to do the task, and were in the right place at the right time  
Thank you too for the times when we didn't feel useful or able to help; when we felt overwhelmed or that our contributions were not welcome.  
Thank you that you are with us however we are feeling, and even when we're not conscious of you, when we don't stop to feel your presence, you are there, you don't forget us.

Lord Jesus, you lived a life in harmony: rest and work, time for others, time for yourself, time for your Father, activity and prayer, were all in perfect balance.

But we often get it wrong.  
When we work so hard that there is no time for those we love:

**Lord, forgive us.**

When we're overcome by the effort of trying to do things in our own strength instead of yours:

**Lord, forgive us.**

When we let other things distract us and ignore your invitation to come to you;

**Lord, forgive us.**

Help us to regain the balance in our lives, to walk with you and work with you, individually and in our life as your church.

Help us to be true your call to live freely and lightly, keeping company with you.

Transform us by your Holy Spirit and recreate us, so that our overwhelming desire is to share the joy of knowing you with those who don't yet know how much you love them.

We pray for our church and churches in this town & nation and across the world:

Give us courage to speak out about your amazing gift of grace to all; to speak words of peace & forgiveness when others talk of war and vengeance;

Give us the power of your Holy Spirit to live out your word by loving our enemies, doing good to those who hate us & praying for those who seek to persecute us.

May this land again be a land where your name is exalted & held holy, where your healing love and saving grace is known and fully proclaimed:

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer**

We pray for the leaders of communities and people in authority;

Inspire them to seek peace & justice in place of violence and hatred;

Where there is bitterness and hatred Lord, bring your healing touch of love and peace;

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer**

We pray for all those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, who may be close at hand or far away, lifting to you those who especially those who are on our hearts today who need your healing touch in their lives...

Bring comfort, healing and wholeness, and restore broken lives with your hope, peace and loving presence in heart, mind, soul & body

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer**

In all of these situations, help us to see the opportunities you give us to answers to our own prayers, remembering that with you, all things are possible.

We pray in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ, as we say the prayer he gave us

**The Lord's Prayer**

## **Hymn (STF 462)**

Come with me, come wander, come welcome  
the world  
where strangers might smile or where stones  
may be hurled;  
come leave what you cling to, lay down what you  
clutch  
and find, with hands empty, that hearts can hold  
much.

*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools !  
Sing hey for the pharisees leaving their rules !  
Sing hey for the fishermen leaving their nets !  
Sing hey for the people who leave their regrets !*

Come walk in my company, come sleep by my  
side,  
come savour a lifestyle with nothing to hide ;  
come sit at my table and eat with my friends,  
discovering that love which the world never ends.

Come share in my laughter, come close to my  
fears,  
come find yourself washed with the kiss of my  
tears ;  
come stand close at hand while I suffer and die  
and find in three days how I never will lie.

Come leave your possessions, come share out  
your treasure,  
come give and receive without method or  
measure ;  
come loose every bond that's resisting the Spirit,  
enabling the earth to be yours to inherit.

*John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958) © 1987,  
WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland.  
<[www.wgrg.co.uk](http://www.wgrg.co.uk)>*

## **Blessing**

May the blessing of God the Father,  
the love of Jesus the Son,  
and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit,  
be your true treasure today and always.

**Amen.**

**By Revd Jane Wilson**