

Call to Worship – Psalm 119: 1 – 3

Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.
Happy are those who keep his decrees, who seek him with their whole heart,
who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways.

Hymn StF 501

Help us, O Lord, to learn
the truths your word imparts,
to study that your laws may be
inscribed upon our hearts.

Help us, O Lord, to live
the faith which we proclaim,
that all our thoughts and words and deeds
may glorify your name.

Help us, O Lord, to teach
the beauty of your ways,
that all who seek may find the Christ,
and make a life of praise,

William Watkins Reid

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

We praise you, wonderful God, for revealing yourself to your creation. You did not leave us in the dark about you: your light has illuminated your nature, just as the sun illuminates your world.

We praise you, almighty God, for revealing yourself to your people. You spoke through the prophets, and even if people did not heed your words, you continued to encourage and guide them.

We praise you, Father God, for revealing yourself through your son, Jesus. Through his words and deed, he showed your finest virtues – mercy, peace and love – and astonished all who saw them.

We praise you, wise God, for revealing yourself through the Holy Spirit. She inspires us, brings us close to you and binds us to you in love.

We praise you, God of all time and every place, for revealing yourself to us, so that we can know you.

And so, loving God, help us to reveal you and your virtues through our daily living.

Help us to recognise when we cast shadows rather than bringing people into your light, when we go contrary to your word and turn away from your teachings and examples, when we are unmerciful, not peaceful and project hate, when we do the same things again and again without thought and cling to the past instead of taking inspiration from the present and opportunities for the future. Forgive us when we do not know you as we should, please continue to encourage and guide us even when we go astray. We repent and seek a closer relationship with God, pardon our follies and wilfulness, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lord's Prayer – please use whichever version or language you find most helpful

Readings Deuteronomy 6: 1 – 9

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Mark 12: 28 – 34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' Then the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that "he is one, and besides him there is no other"; and "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength", and "to love one's neighbour as oneself",—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Hymn StF 157

God has spoken – by his prophets,
spoken his unchanging word;
each from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
'Mid the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holding fast:
God eternal reigns forever,
God the first, and God the last.

God has spoken – by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time was born;
Light from Light, to earth descending,
Christ, revealing God to all.

God is speaking – by the Spirit,
speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith is standing fast;
God still speaks, the Word unchanging,
God the first and God the last.

George Wallace Briggs

Reflection

Both of our Old and New Testament readings today quote from the Ten Commandments, both starting with the first, the most important one, to love God above all else. The difference in the two readings is that in Deuteronomy, Moses (the supposed author) goes in in detail about how this can be seen to be carried out, and the positive consequences of doing so. Many Jewish houses have this on their doorposts, and many, mostly male, Jews may well have a forehead band with scripture contained within a box, or Tefillin, and also one of their arm. In the Gospel reading, Jesus not only quotes Deuteronomy but adds in the quote from Leviticus 19 :18 "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself." These things, I expect, you know. But what caught my eye as I was starting to prepare this worship was how both Deuteronomy started and how Jesus started his quote: 'Hear!' or perhaps we would say 'Listen!'.

So often in today's world we communicate so much that no one seems to be listening to anyone else, let alone God. You may have been on an active listening course, or you may try very hard, when someone is talking, to concentrate on what they are saying rather than thinking about what you are going to say next. But, since the rise of the internet and Bluetooth technologies, I find that I can happily spend time listening to podcasts when at home, or out, or the radio, live or on playback, so I can choose what, and who, I want to listen to. This means I can learn and entertain myself as I wish, but it also means that I filter out the things I would rather not. Self-selection can be good for my mental health, but it does mean I don't get the full story, I miss things of importance, of interest. And although having the radio or tv on at home means I drown out the roadworks and noisy people going past, it does mean that I am disconnected from the sounds of nature. Maybe this is why my ideal place to be is the seaside, where I need nothing but the lap of the waves, the wheeling of the gulls, and the whistle of the wind.

We are all different, we have different ways of connecting with God, with others, with the world, but sometimes we need to stop, to turn off, to unplug, to listen. And when we do, when we really listen, it's then that we hear.

Background and familiar noises can be tuned out so we don't notice them, in fact we would be overwhelmed if did hear everything, every day, but it is worth listening to and discerning what we can hear. Hear outside ourselves, and within ourselves. We can ignore what our body is telling us, until something fails; we can disregard our consciences, until we hit crisis; we can discount the world out there, until it directly affects us. Each of these difficulties could be ameliorated or avoided if only we listened, we heard.

It is not for nothing that Moses, Jesus, the Torah collators and the Gospel writers used the word 'Hear' because we need too be reminded that what follows is important, and there is nothing more important in the life of a Christian than to love God: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." And to love our neighbours: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Maybe we don't attach these to our heads and arms, but perhaps we should speak them out loud, together or alone, until we really hear the words, and their meaning, and take them into our hearts and lives.

Hymn StF 407

Hear the call of the kingdom,
lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you
as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy,
came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven,
the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him,
loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to
proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the kingdom
to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion
in the wonder of the cross,
bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in him.

King of heaven, we will answer the call...
Keith & Kristyn Getty and Stuart Townend

Prayers of Intercession

What have you to say to the world, God of justice?

We speak to you of hunger, war, of corruption, of refugees, of suspicion and hatred.

We pray for wisdom to show the world a better way.

Please add your own prayer

Lord this is our prayer: help us to know and do your will.

What have you to say to the church, God of faith?

We speak to you of plans and visions, of doubts and mistrust, of hopes and fears.

We pray for guidance to be your servants to the community.

Please add your own prayer

Lord this is our prayer: help us to know and do your will.

What have you to say to those who suffer, God of love?

We speak to you of friends, neighbours and strangers who, sick in body, mind or spirit, are in need of care.

We pray for healing and wholeness for them and ourselves.

Please add your own prayer

Lord this is our prayer: help us to know and do your will.

What have you to say to us, God of all?

We speak to you of our longings, of difficult choices, of divided loyalties and of wonderful opportunities.

We pray for faith to follow the movement of your Spirit.

Please add your own prayer

Lord this is our prayer: help us to know and do your will.

God who has spoken throughout history, help us hear your voice calling today. Amen.

Hymn StF 492

Christ be my leader by night as by day;
safe through the darkness, for he is the way.
Gladly I follow, my future his care,
darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.

Christ be my teacher in age as in youth,
drifting or doubting, for he is the truth.
Grant me to trust him; though shifting as
sand,
doubt cannot daunt me; in Jesus I stand.

Christ be my Saviour in calm as in strife;
death cannot hold me, for he is the life.
Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its
stain
can touch my salvation; with Jesus I reign,
Timothy Dudley-Smith

Blessing

May the blessing of God,
the eternal goodwill of God,
the shalom of God,
the wildness and the warmth of God,
be among us and between us,
now and always. Amen.

