

**Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service.**  
**Sunday August 24th 2025**  
**Keeping the Sabbath special.**  
**Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.**



**Call to Worship.** Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Psalm 103

**STF 83**

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
to his feet thy tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
who like thee his praise should sing?  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour  
to his people in distress;  
praise him, still the same for ever,  
slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like, he tends and spares us;  
well our feeble frame he knows;  
in his hands he gently bears us,  
rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Widely as his mercy flows.

Angels in the height, adore him;  
ye behold him face to face;  
sun and moon, bow down before him,  
dwellers all in time and space.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

**Prayers of adoration and confession** *based on Psalm 103*

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Heavenly Father we thank you for everything that you have bestowed upon us in this past week. We praise and thank you that you have satisfied us with innumerable good gifts. We thank you and praise you for the health and happiness that we receive daily. The wonders of creation that delight our souls and are the source of life. For friends and family and every remembrance of your love. We have so much to praise you for. Not least that when we come to you and confess our faults you forgive all our sins and heal all our dis-ease. You redeem our lives and crown us with your love and compassion. We praise and thank you that you are compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. We praise you O God of Grace. **Amen**

**Bible readings: Luke 13:10-17**

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

**Isaiah 58:9-14**

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honourable and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

**Reflection**

I am writing this service on the second day of the second session of heatwaves this summer. The words of Isaiah are so refreshing. "The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." The Dorset Echo also released today some lovely artists impressions of the rebuild of the Weymouth Maiden

street church and its prospective new purpose. Elegant new dwellings and the apartment with the new rose window looking out onto the town centre. It's hard not to dwell on what has been lost especially when we think of the church building that has meant so much to us. However Isaiah says, "Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." I am glad that the old church and many of our old churches are turned into places where people can live and not into more shops. Do you know it's 31 years since the Sunday trading laws changed on 28th August 1994. I still feel awkward if I have to shop for essentials on a Sunday but Isaiah's words about the sabbath are not that legalistic. Certainly not as legalistic as the synagogue leader in our gospel reading who condemned Jesus for healing a woman on the Sabbath. I guess he would have harsher words to say if he could time travel and catch me in the supermarket replacing my mouldy bread or sour milk! I can imagine him shouting down the aisle "There are six days for work. So come," "on those days, not on the Sabbath."



If we look carefully at the words of Isaiah we are asked to make the day special and not do things just to please ourselves. Not to speak idle words but to do things that honour God. The idea of a sabbath of course has its roots in the creation story. Six days to create the world and then God rested. It's also the 4th commandment. (EX 20: 8 – 11) "Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the 7th day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."

So we should not be too hard on the synagogue leader. He has a history of the law teaching how the sabbath is to be kept to worship God. But he is overlooking something. There's a useful description, 'perpetual narrowing' that I became familiar with in my years of scuba diving. 'Perceptual narrowing is where the diver is unable to notice or deal with subtle developing aspects of a situation and perceives only the broadest or more obvious elements of a problem.' In short you don't see the things that are around you because you're too focused on one thing that might be causing you stress. The synagogue leader hasn't even noticed the unnamed woman who probably was looking completely uncomfortable. She has suffered for eighteen years with a condition that has kept her from being able to stand up straight. She would not have been in the main area of the synagogue but with the women in their section and probably stooped near the wall on the perimeter to keep her balance. Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. You can imagine that mid sentence he stopped and he called the woman to him. This poor woman can't stand straight and instead of going to her he called her to him. Why? There would be rules of propriety in the synagogue, separating the men and women and so to enter the women's section would have been very disturbing. However I think it's more than that. Jesus offers us so very much, but he never forces himself upon us. Do you know Holman Hunt's famous painting based on John 8:12 "I am the light of the world" Jesus knocks but there's no handle on His side of the door, depicting that we must open the door to him. The woman comes to Jesus and she is healed, she can stand straight and see what is in front of her. The synagogue leader seems to be the one symbolically bent over and unable to see what is in front of him. He is bent up under the law and he can't even see the miraculous event that happened. Just a breach of the fourth commandment. How in the words of Isaiah is he helping and reaching out to the needy? The woman's 'frame' has been strengthened but what of this synagogue leader who is accused in front of everyone of being a 'hypocrite'. Is he 'in the frame', for being a hypocrite? Are we hypocrites when we 'sabbath break'? Why is Jesus so hard on the Synagogue ruler? Jesus said to the ruler: "You hypocrite". Harsh words. Not the way "to make friends and influence people" But why did he do it? Are these the "idle words", that Isaiah warns about? The synagogue leader can only speak maliciously and not even directly to Jesus but to those witnessing the miracle. A hypocrite because he is implicitly claiming to act on God's behalf and yet flatly contradicting the spirit of God's law.



It is the spirit of God's law that counts not the letter of it. Look at Jesus' reasoning. "If on the Sabbath you untie your donkey and lead it to water, why should this woman, who has been bound 18 years not be set free." Legalism had so crippled the ruler's mind that he could not see how inconsistent his words were. He was abiding by the spirit of the law for animals but abiding by the letter of the law for people. Instead of reacting as he did, the ruler should have gone away rejoicing at the woman's freedom from the sickness that had crippled her for so many years. Instead he treated the whole episode with less charity and dignity than he would afford an ox or a donkey. What the synagogue ruler said was laughable and humiliating. The fourth commandment does say just what he said, but his interpretation is completely against all that the love of God countenance's.

There's a funny story about three church leaders being rescued from tragic situations. The Methodist Minister was on the cruise of a lifetime but being so overjoyed by the sights of the vast expanse of the ocean he leaned over too far and heard words he didn't want to hear, or be a party too. "Man overboard!". He prayed for all he was worth and was soon rescued and safe back on board. A Roman Catholic Priest flying out to a remote island in a small airplane noticed one of the engines had shut down. He grabbed his rosary

and prayed for all his might. He was disturbed in his fervent prayers as the stewardess asked him to prepare for landing. He looked out of the window and saw the runway and the engine that had restarted. A Rabbi was in the synagogue on the sabbath and an electrical fault had started a fire. He prayed that the day would change back to Wednesday! Ridiculous, surely he would have taken the right action to save the lives of the people and himself? But would it have been lawful to operate a fire extinguisher on the sabbath?!!! Perceptual narrowing! The letter of the law or the spirit of the law? Legalism is usually a killjoy but the fruit of the Spirit is different. Look at what St. Paul says in Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. The Christian life is meant to be joyful, not life limiting. The woman went away rejoicing in her healing; the synagogue ruler missed out. Jesus said: I have come that you might have life and life in abundance (Jn 10:10) Let us not lose out by putting up unnecessary barriers - like the Synagogue ruler did to the work of Jesus.

So how do we keep the Sabbath holy today? How do we worship God in the 21st century? The ways we used to keep the Sabbath are long gone. On Sundays now, we work, we shop, we play sports or watch them on television, we do everything that we do on any other day. With our busy schedules, our desire to spend time with the family, and our focus on having as much fun and free time as we can, we struggle with honouring the Sabbath and using the day to worship God. We know it is often tempting to join the throngs of people for whom Sunday is no different from any day. Yet the very fact that we do set aside time to worship says that we are looking for something more, that we are looking for ways to keep the Sabbath holy and to thank and praise God. So as we use Sunday as a time to stop and to hear the story of God's love for us. We experience that love, given to us, which joins us to God and to each other, and to all Christians in every time and every place. We rejoice in God's graciousness and give thanks for His many gifts. And we also give time and attention to think of the needs around the world. We try to bring before God the people who need our prayers and to be in a symbolic way, the fulfilment of Isaiah's words, "Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." Healing broken walls can refer to relationships that have broken down. Our world both locally and globally is filled with people 'bent over' from terrible events and experiences. One commentator says about restoring streets and dwellings, "This emphasises the creation of a place where people can live and thrive. It signifies rebuilding communities, fostering social harmony, and providing safe, liveable environments". There are numerous charities that we are connected to, who go beyond the boundaries and see the real needs of broken communities. They identify the causes of the problems and try to bring, 'light in the darkness' and 'water that never fails'. Our setting aside time to connect with God and to pray connects us through prayer to those who are restoring lives. We praise God that he entrusts us to serve our neighbour. We thank God by loving our neighbour. As Jesus taught us, that's how we keep the Sabbath holy and that's how we worship God.

We note in conclusion that the woman was freed from what ever was keeping her bowed down. The synagogue leader was left humiliated by the legalistic views that he could not see past. As we seek to honour God and worship him, however we keep the sabbath. Let us pray to be free to worship as God enables us and not to feel constrained or humiliated by what we feel we ought to be doing. The importance is that we seek time to worship and honour God.

### STF 696

For the healing of the nations,  
Lord, we pray with one accord;  
for a just and equal sharing  
of the things that earth affords.  
To a life of love in action  
help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom;  
from despair your world release,  
that, redeemed from war and hatred,  
all may come and go in peace.  
Show us how through care and goodness  
fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,  
let it from the earth be banned;  
pride of status, race, or schooling,  
dogmas that obscure your plan.  
In our common quest for justice  
may we hallow life's brief span.

You, Creator-God, have written  
your great name on humankind;  
for our growing in your likeness  
bring the life of Christ to mind;  
that by our response and service  
earth its destiny may find.

### Prayers of Intercession

We have touched on the 4th commandment so let us use all ten to guide our prayers today.

**1. You shall have no other God's before me.**

**2. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.**

Lord God, help us to put you first. Remove all the distractions that stop us from focusing all of our attention upon you. Help us to recognise your power and majesty in the world around us. We pray for those who make God's out of all that robs them of true life in you. Addictions, greed and power.

**3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.** Lord God, we know that the words we say are powerful and can have a huge impact. Help us to control the words we say and to think before we speak. Help us to not misuse your name and to value it above all other names. Show us how we can glorify your name, respect it and share it with other people. We pray for people who are abused by others who use their words to control and bring harm and discord. We pray for the perpetrators that they might see the futility of their malicious ways and begin to try to bring restitution.

**4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.** We thank you for our churches and the circuit. We pray for all those who Minister to us and help us to make a good Sabbath. We pray for our Circuit's as we come together in a new vision to make a Holy dwelling in this locality.

**5. Honour your father and your mother.** We thank you for the people who care for us. Thank you for our families and those people who have helped us to be the people that we are today. We pray for those who find it difficult to honour their family members. The victims of abuse. We pray for those who struggle with parenting and we pray for agencies that try to assist families in their difficulties.

**6. You shall not murder.** Challenge those people who see murder, pain and violence as their only option. Help them to see alternative solutions and to work for peace and equality. Provide comfort and grace to those who have suffered from the harm caused by others. Comfort those who have lost loved ones, may they know your peace and presence with them.

**7. You shall not commit adultery.** We thank you for marriage and life long partnerships. Thank you that you bring people together in love and for the commitment that they make to each other and to you. Watch over and protect them. Help couples to remain focused upon you and upon each other, protect them from the temptations that try to pull them away. Help them to see the beauty in their relationship and give them the wisdom and courage to work to maintain it

**8. You shall not steal.** Be with those who feel that they need to steal in order to survive. Provide them with the help and resources that they need. Bless them with people to support them and fair employment. We pray for those who have suffered from the distress of being robbed. We pray that in their distress they might know your peace and protection. Release those who have been stolen away from their families and forced into slavery. Bring justice for these people and a safe, free life for the victims.

**9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.** thank you that you are the truth. Help us to remain honest, even when it takes great courage. Help us to admit our mistakes and to confess our sins before you. Guide us towards what is right and help us not to lie, whether for deception, personal gain or self-preservation. We pray for our neighbours, for those who are good neighbours we thank you and we pray for those who, for whatever reason, we find it difficult to be neighbourly with.

**10. You shall not covet.** thank you for the many blessings that we receive each day from your hands. Help us to be grateful and content with the wondrous gifts we have. Keep our eyes fixed upon you, not upon the possessions of other people. Help us not to compare ourselves to other people, but to work to be who you have said we are. We pray for those who have such influence upon society today. Those who try to dictate what is fashionable and are 'must have's'. We thank you that so many people are trying to be eco conscious and not to allow fashion and fancy dictate how we live. We thank you for your guidance and direction and we gather together these our prayers and the prayers on our hearts in the words of : **the Lord's Prayer.**

#### STF 152

This is the day,  
this is the day that the Lord has  
made,  
that the Lord has made.  
We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it,  
and be glad in it.  
This is the day that the Lord has  
made;  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.  
This is the day,  
this is the day that the Lord has  
made.

This is the day,  
this is the day when he rose  
again,  
when he rose again.  
We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it,  
and be glad in it.  
This is the day when he rose  
again;  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.  
This is the day,  
this is the day when he rose  
again.

This is the day,  
this is the day when the Spirit  
came,  
when the Spirit came.  
We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it,  
and be glad in it.  
This is the day when the Spirit  
came;  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.  
This is the day,  
this is the day when the Spirit  
came.

**The Blessing :** May the love of the Lord Jesus draw us to himself; may the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen us in his service; may the joy of the Lord Jesus fill our hearts. **Amen.**

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