

Call to worship Psalm 89: 1 – 2

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, for ever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
I declare that your steadfast love is established for ever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Hymn StF 24

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue
will confess you are God,
one day every knee will bow.
Still, the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship...

Brian Doerksen

Prayers of Praise and Confession

Loving God, so often we focus on, and praise you for, the awesomeness of life, the beauty of our heavens and earth, the immensity of all the good things, past and present and a hopeful future. And today we look at the small things that also bring joy and delight: the insects, bees and butterflies that fly through our gardens and countryside, pollinating the fruit and flowers to produce the beauty of the environment; the unexpected smiles and greetings as we go places and see people; the small gestures of kindness from friends and strangers alike.

When we seek to emulate our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, help us to remember to delight in the basics, the beginnings, as well as praise and adore God for the immense paradise in which we live and breathe.

And be with us, Lord, so that we don't overlook the little in favour of the big, the loud over the quiet, the fast paced over the still. Forgive us when we are distracted and do not concentrate enough of the things that matter to us, to our world and to our God. Forgive us, we pray, and aid us to focus on the small and grow into the mighty, in your name we pray. Amen.

Lord's Prayer – please pray whichever version in whatever language you prefer

Reading Matthew 10: 40 – 42

'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me,
and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.
Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward;
and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person
will receive the reward of the righteous;
and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—
truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'



Hymn StF 409

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
*All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

Marty Haugen

Reflection

Occasionally, when you read a Bible passage, especially a Gospel passage, you realise that it's one that is usually ignored or passed over. Sometimes it seems for a good reason, like it adds nothing, or makes no sense, or is difficult to understand in today's world. But for a book that has been studied intently for hundreds of years, it always seems odd to me to find something 'new'.

This passage today comes halfway through Matthew's Gospel and after the significant passages of sending out the twelve Apostles, remembering there will be deception and persecution, but have no fear, and you will need to bring a sword rather than peace. Then there is this final part – the rewards. The rewards for all the people, dependant on their reactions to the message of the Good News. These final two verses are not found in the other Gospels, nor are they particularly referenced in Bible Commentaries, or indeed sung about in our hymn book, nevertheless I believe they bear a closer look. In a different, modern translation by Paul Langham we read:

'Anyone who welcomes you, welcomes me; and to welcome me is to welcome God himself. My Father will reward everyone who welcomes one of my followers; even the smallest act of kindness shown to my followers will be noticed.'

I think that makes it a little easier to understand, but we can still struggle with the idea of punishment and reward. We want a God who loves us unconditionally, not one where our relationship with God depends in what we do or don't do. The two things, however, as not mutually exclusive. We can be loved unconditionally, as a parent loves their child, at the same time we can be proud of or disappointed by them depending on their attitudes, words, and actions. The better we do, the better our relationship. I do not have a problem with this as it encourages us to always strive to be better and do our best as individuals, community, and society.

The last part also reminds us that no deed of kindness is too small, even if it is the most basic hospitality of offering a drink of water to a stranger – it means we receive them, acknowledge them, show them they are worthy and a fellow human being. Their meagre reward brings our reward of building a relationship with God.

This passage also reminded me of a song we used to sing at school/Sunday school. I wonder if you remember it too:

Little Things

Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean
And the pleasant land.

So the little moments,
Humble though they be,
Make the mighty ages
Of Eternity

So the little errors
Lead the soul away
From the paths of virtue
Far in sin to stray.

Little deeds of kindness,
Little words of love,
Help to make earth happy
Like the Heaven above.

Julia Abigail Fletcher Carney

Perhaps, this poem/song may serve as a reminder to us all, that from the smallest word, or action, bigger things may grow. We can often use the excuse that 'I can't make a difference on my own', which may or may not be true, but if we don't try, or do our part, we cannot expect or require anyone else to do theirs, but if we lead by example, the movement can and will grow and we are no longer on our own, but in a group, a crowd, a community, and then we see the effects. We witness this in the sending out of the Apostles, and are proof of what a small movement can start.

So, do not wait, change that things today that you've been putting off and tell your family, friends, neighbours what you are doing and why – they may just have been waiting for the opportunity to join.

Hymn StF 98

Your love is amazing, steady and unchanging,
your love is a mountain, firm beneath my feet.
Your love is a mystery, how you gently lift me,
when I am surrounded, your love carries me.

*Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, your love makes me sing.
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, your love makes me sing.*

Your love is surprising, I can feel it rising,
all the joy that's growing deep inside of me.
Ev'ry time I see you, all your goodness shines
through,
I can feel this God-song, rising up in me.

Hallelujah...

Brenton Brown and Brian Doerksen

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Guiding God, show us the way to be thankful and grateful that you care for each and every one of us, all of humanity. That you notice our little lives and help us to grow; that you equip us with the basics, encouraging us to increase and multiply.

We take a moment to be thankful for this past week and the opportunities we will find in the weeks to come...

And, creator God, we bring to our hearts and minds the people, places, and situations that we have noticed recently or that have been with us for a while, as we pray for:

All that is close to us... our family and friends, our neighbours, the relationships we have with people no longer geographically near us...

All that is within our churches... the people who keep it running, from the building itself to the activities that happen in there and from there...all who lead worship, the ministers, preachers, musicians, readers, stewards and coffee makers...

All that surrounds us in our communities...the shops and services, those who we recognise, even if we don't know their names, the green spaces, the seaside, the towns and villages and all they have to offer, all they need...

All that affects our world...the wars and violence, the care of humanity for each other, the natural and climate disasters, those working to alleviate suffering, those in leadership and those in opposition holding them to accounts, the times when we come together, the times we live our separate lives...

All that has consequences for your creation...each scientist that seeks solutions to the problems of climate change, each doctor or that helps to find cure and comfort, each politician looking beyond the short term local, each small start-up and charity getting on with the practicalities...

Encourage and strengthen us, we pray, to do our small part and to join with others doing the same, so that we can put the world onto a new path of righteousness, justice, and peace for the whole world. Amen.

Hymn StF 183

Praise to the God who clears the way
preparing room and space;
for power and pride will lose their sway
as peace comes in their place.

Praise to the God who comes to judge
the truth of word and deed,
who calls our minds and wills to change,
rebuking wealth and greed.

Blessing

In the name of Jesus Christ,
we ask blessings on our lives.
Giving to others as we receive
to bring about a world of peace. Amen

Praise to the God who waits with us
for hope and joy to reign,
who shares our suffering and our loss,
embodied in our pain.

Praise to the God who comes to bring
comfort to all who mourn.
The whole creation 'Glory' sings
as Christ the light is born.

Jan Berry

