

Hymn: *All my hope on God is founded*
Joachim Neander

All my hope on God is founded; He doth still my trust renew. Me through change and chance he guideth, only good and only true. God unknown, He alone calls my heart to be His own.	3 God's great goodness aye endureth, deep His wisdom, passing thought: splendour, light, & life attend Him, beauty springeth out of naught. Evermore, from His store new-born worlds rise and adore.
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2 Human pride and earthly glory, sword and crown betray His trust; what with care and toil He buildeth, tower and temple, fall to dust. But God's power, hour by hour, is my temple and my tower.	4 Still from earth to God eternal sacrifice of praise be done, high above all praises praising for the gift of Christ His Son. Christ doth call one and all: ye who follow shall not fall.
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Blessing

May God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit bless and equip you for your service in the world, Amen

Sources and Thanks

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United Reformed Church Daily Devotion Worship Sunday 21 June 2020 The Rev'd Richard Church



Good Morning! My name is Richard Church. My role, for a few more weeks, is as Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) and I live in Streatham, South West London and I am speaking to you from my home.

Call to Worship

We meet in the name of God, the Holy Trinity of Love

who knows our needs, hears our cries, feels our pain, and heals our wounds.

God is our light and our salvation. In God's name we light this candle and are reminded of Jesus, the Light of the World, God's own Voice who came to live with us.

May our hearts be open to you, O God, now and always. Amen

Hymn: *In Christ Alone*
Keith Getty / Stuart Townend

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength,
my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought
and storm.
What heights of love,
what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled,
when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

3: There in the ground
His body lay,
light of the world
by darkness slain:
then bursting forth
in glorious day
up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am His and He is mine –
bought with the precious
blood of Christ.

2: In Christ alone! –
who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones
He came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied –
for every sin on Him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.

4: No guilt in life,
no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no human plan,
can ever pluck me from His hand:
till He returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ
I'll stand.

Prayers of Approach & Confession

Here in the familiar place, we come to you. Here in a familiar way, we bring our prayers. Here in our time, we want to meet with you, the Eternal One, and with the unseen company on earth and in heaven.

Let us pray remembering especially the work of the World Health Organisation, Countries who lack the resources to care for their populations...

Come to us Lord. **Renew and refresh us**

We give thanks for artists and musicians and all who influence others,
We pray for those suffering from depression and who cannot sense the beauty of life

Come to us Lord. **Renew and refresh us**

We pray this morning for those who restore lives by giving hope to people in the grip of addictions May the streams of compassion never run dry within all offering care to others.

Come to us Lord. **Renew and refresh us**

We pray for the church around the world...

Challenged by our vocation to share the good news, often overwhelmed by the burden of administration, seeking to be a sign of hope whilst experiencing smaller congregations...

Come to us Lord. **Renew and refresh us**

We draw our prayers to a close using a prayer reminding us of Jesus the worker..

O Christ, the Master Carpenter, who at the last through wood and nails purchased our whole salvation; wield well your tools in the workshop of your world, so that we who come rough-hewn to your work bench may be fashioned to a truer beauty by your hand. **Amen.**

As our saviour taught us, so we pray: Our Father...

**Despite the limitations of our reason and the revolts of our hearts,
we believe in God.**

We believe in Jesus Christ.

**Despite the centuries which separate us
from the time when he came to earth, we believe in His word.**

**Despite our incomprehension and our doubt,
we believe in His resurrection.**

Despite his weakness and poverty, we believe in His reign.

We believe in the Holy Spirit.

**Despite appearances we believe He guides the Church;
despite death we believe in eternal life;
despite ignorance and disbelief,
we believe that the Kingdom of God is promised to all. Amen.**

Offertory

As our buildings are closed, our churches as communities of faith are open. As communities of disciples we are aware of how freely we have received so many blessings, so may we freely give in money as well as in other ways to our local church, by either paying by direct bank transfer or by putting money aside for the time we will be able take ourselves as we gather once more as church. We present ourselves to you now, blessed in so many ways, in gratitude, we pledge our time, our skills and our money to your mission of renewing the world through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Intercessory Prayers

Let us pray for our world. Come to us, Lord. **Renew and refresh us**

Yet you Lord startle us, with the fullness of your life, and the lengths to which you go in searching us out.

We are poor disciples - yet we often pretend not to be. We come as part of a compromised and compromising society, our warm worship words often conceal cold hearts, our passion for justice stops short of our own doors, we have set out on your way but have allowed ourselves to be diverted. We ask to be set right, with you and therefore with each other, In the name of Jesus who endured the cross to bring us back to life. Amen.

Here is the good news...God knows us, God, in Jesus, offers a new beginning, God the Holy Spirit gives power from within, to renew our walk with him, in the confidence that we are loved, thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayer of illumination

Help us now to listen deeply, deliver us from the echoes of our own prejudices, release us from routines of piety so that we can form new habits of faithfulness as we walk on with you, Amen

Readings

Psalm 86.1- 10

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you;

save your servant who trusts in you.

You are my God; be gracious to me, O Lord,

for to you do I cry all day long.

Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,

abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication.

In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me.

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.

All the nations you have made shall come
and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.
For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

St Matthew 10.24- 39

Jesus said

‘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.

The call to follow Jesus in all the interactions of our life was never more urgent but we do not do so in our own strength but in trust that the One who said ‘I am making everything new’ will shape our inconstant efforts to his own loving purposes. With the Psalmist we pray:

Gladden the soul of your servant for to you O Lord I lift up my soul.
For you O Lord are good and forgiving abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you, Amen.

Hymn: *I Cannot Tell*
W Y Fullerton (1857-1932)

I cannot tell why He,
whom angels worship,
should set His love
upon the sons of men,
or why, as Shepherd,
He should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back,
they know not how or when.
But this I know,
that He was born of Mary,
when Beth’hem’s manger
was His only home,
and that He lived
at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour,
Saviour of the world, is come.

2 I cannot tell
how silently He suffered,
as with His peace
He graced this place of tears,
or how His heart
upon the Cross was broken,
the crown of pain
to three and thirty years.
But this I know,
He heals the broken-hearted,
and stays our sin,
and calms our lurking fear,
and lifts the burden
from the heavy laden,
for yet the Saviour,
Saviour of the world, is here.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God.

Despite His silence and His secrets we believe that He lives.

**Despite evil and suffering we believe that He made the world
so that all would be happy in life.**

But as God does wondrous things, our response still remains part of that restoration project. Jesus reminds us that a disciple follows the master not the other way around. So we have a tough uncompromising challenge to be a grounded follower of Jesus. Everything will be laid bare. The gospel is irrepressible and therefore our lives as bearers of the Gospel will be marked by openness rather than reticence, trust in place of intimidation, and a willingness to publicise the ways of God in fresh and creative actions.

This call to costly discipleship is issued so that the restoration project is fulfilled by people speaking and living out courageously. Losing their lives in order to find them as Jesus put it. We depend on them as signposts along the way. People like Corrie ten Boom whose birthday was marked by the URC on 15 April who hid Jews from the Nazis in the second world war and taught subsequently on the role of prayer and forgiveness, inspiring many along the way.

Building hope, living a life of grace, speaking truth in uncomfortable situations, and most of all believing that God is great and does wondrous things is best understood by watching, learning, and practicing what we see in the lives of others. Years ago, I remember wanting to make something for my wife. I found a gifted woodworker and went to him. He told me which wood to use and then showed me how to measure and draw and cut the joints and the left me to practice before making the piece.

In these confined times, the need for a social renovation project is ever more apparent. It is a time in which the call to take tired old practices and refresh them, to learn from others, new ways of remaining faithful to the call of Jesus, and to be creative in our encounters with others online or in neighbour interactions. It might be appropriate to be a champion for just one other person, and of course to be willing ourselves to be encouraged and guided by others just as Jay Blades found someone to mentor him and encourage him.

Hymn: *Lord of All Hopefulness*
Jan Struther

Lord of hopefulness,
Lord of all joy
whose trust ever childlike
no cares could destroy
be there at our waking
and give us, we pray,
your bliss in our hearts, Lord,
at the break of the day.

2: Lord of eagerness,
Lord of all faith
whose strong hands were skilled
at the plane and the lathe
be there at our labours
and give us, we pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord,
at the noon of the day.

3: Lord of all kindness,
Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, your
arms to embrace,
be there at our homing
and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord,
at the eve of the day.

4: Lord of all gentleness,
Lord of all calm,
whose voice is contentment,
whose presence is balm,
be there at our sleeping
and give us, we pray,
your peace in our hearts, Lord,
at the end of the day.

Sermon

I wonder whether any of you have ever watched the Repair Shop on television? People bring much cherished objects in a poor state of repair to the shop and a range of skilled craftsmen and women go to work on them and bring them back to their former glory. On one occasion, a large tin bus was brought and when the work was done on it, it was decided not conceal all the blemishes so as not to destroy the link entirely between its past and its gleaming future.

I wonder as you listen to this, what objects in your life you might want to bring to the repair shed if you had the chance? Can you think of something which means enough to you to bring something for refurbishment? How might you feel seeing how broken and spoilt your

item was, when it is completely restored to be useful once more? What do you think of the decision to allow something of the tin bus's blemishes to remain when the toy could have been restored to be as good as new? I think that when the writer of the Psalm said in verse 1 of Psalm 86 for you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God, he may well have been thinking about the work of God in renewing and repairing what had been broken. You may have noticed that the song writer says Incline your ear, O Lord and answer me, for I am poor and needy v 1. In this sense God is the court of final appeal, there is nowhere else to go. In fact, often the items brought to the repair shed are sometimes deemed by their owners to be almost beyond saving and certainly this is their last hope of restoring their former glory.

Jay Blades, the presenter of the Repair Shop was homeless four years ago after his marriage broke down. Fortunately he had someone who helped him get back on his feet by learning the skills to recycle old items of furniture. Of course, we are not concerned here simply with our possessions, however much sentimental value they might represent. Jay Blades' life itself was turned around by having someone he called a 'guardian angel' someone who believed in him and helped him. It was an exercise in personal rescue. Here we are led into an aspect of Christ's redeeming work in his ministry on earth and culminating in the cross of coming alongside people and restoring them to their full potential and purpose. As we hear the psalmist put her or his whole trust in God's skill and understanding of the human condition and the love which is always at work in the world to bring restoration and hope to what appears to be hopeless circumstances.

We have spent the last few years emphasizing Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today. It is an attempt to put the identity of churches as communities of disciples back at the centre of the Church's life. The Church, relying on the grace which God gives, can be the Repair Shop for lives that have become tired, broken, purposeless. Yet there is a cost to this work.

Jesus' words to us about the nature of the call to discipleship in our reading appear daunting. Did he really mean that a willingness to give up life itself is a precondition to finding the life God has made us for? Was this just rabbinic hyperbole? And what about those uncompromising words about Jesus bringing not peace but a sword? How do we live faithful to that call at a time when social cohesion is valued and peace building between nations is a common longing? In other words, was following Jesus intended to be as costly and divisive as this teaching appears to make it?

I think that here we see Jesus managing the expectations of those who would follow him. He does so in two ways; one way is a realism about what lies ahead whatever happens to the master happens to the apprentices and the other is a constant refrain do not fear. Don't fill your day with anxiety about what people might think of you. Don't fear the authorities, their power is limited. Do not fear that your life counts as nothing for you are infinitely precious to God.

Of course, how this call of Jesus sounds in a community facing persecution is very different to how it might sound to most of us. For the persecuted Church, secrecy about the Gospel is less an option, division in families is more probable and therefore it is with a thirst for assurance and comfort that the church has heard do not be afraid you are worth many sparrows.

Years ago, I remember being in Israel/Palestine listening to a Palestinian Christian woman speaking in the Sabeel Centre about the situation in which she and her people found themselves. Even at that time the two state solution seemed unlikely, yet when asked she replied that she still had hope because we believe in a God of miracles. Now, this kind of hope has been castigated by some, yet it picks up this confidence that restoration and redemption are defining attributes of God. You are God and do wondrous things is a testimony in the intractable politics of the middle east, just as it was for the song writer.