

Online Worship: Sunday 25th October

Bible Sunday

Spending time with God's Word

Introductory music: Your words to me are life and health

Welcome

Good morning everyone. Welcome to this morning's service. I am Karen Smith, and I shall be leading worship this morning. Today is Bible Sunday, the day each year on which churches celebrate the continuing impact the Bible has on individuals and communities throughout the world. It is right that we celebrate the privilege we have in being able to read and hear the bible with readings from both the Old and New Testament today.

We are together to respond to God's Word as His disciples. Let's prepare for worship with a moment of stillness. *Pause*

We are going to sing a verse from 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' together in preparation for worship

Hymn: v.3 **Be still for the presence of the Lord**

Sung by the Newcastle Virtual Choir Project by permission

Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

He comes to cleanse and heal; to minister his grace.

No work too hard for him: in faith receive from him.

Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

Prayer of Approach

Lord of light and hope, be with us this day as we have gathered to hear your word. Help us open our hearts to the commandments to love, even when loving is difficult. Give us the courage to be people who will commit their

whole lives in your service. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1805/worship-connection-october-25-2020>

We come now to our prayers of approach and confession. Let us pray.

Prayers of Adoration, confession and Lord's Prayer

Loving God,
We join together in your house to worship you.
We come once more reminded of all you are
and all you have done Of the love with which
you surround us,
The grace you have shown us through Jesus
Christ, and the purpose you have for our lives.

We come to offer you our praise,
To declare again your mighty acts, to marvel at
your greatness, and to commit ourselves to
your service.

We come to give thanks, to rejoice in all you
have given us,
To respond to your goodness, and to offer our
love in return.

We come to pray for ourselves, to seek your
guidance, to discover your will,
And to find the strength we need to live as
your people.

We come to pray for others, our loved ones
with all their joys and sorrows,
Our world with all its suffering, and your church
as it seeks to express your compassion in
action.

Loving God, we come to worship you in the
conviction that you are here with us now,
That you are by our side always, that you hold
all things and all people in your hands.

As we reach out to you, reach out to us, we
pray,
And fill every moment of every day with the
light of your love,
And the peace of your presence. Through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

God, we need you; when faced with a choice
between good and evil,
We often choose the things that harm us and
those around us,
We have not loved other people, we've held
grudges, we've ignored injustice,
We have been jealous and unforgiving.
God, we're ashamed,
We want to run away from you, to curl up
somewhere and hide, and yet, as we turn to
go,
We hear you calling us back, calling us by
name.
And so we are here, God,
Some of us are angry, some of us are afraid,
some of us are sad, some of us are OK, but
we're here,
And we tell you in the silence the kind of
people that we really are, and we tell you that
we're sorry. *(Short silence)*
Listen then to Jesus,

Feel his touch, know his love, for through Him
God says to us:
'Your sins are forgiven, you are loved, you are
free'.
Loving God, we thank you and join together
now to say the prayer Jesus taught us:

(adapted from a prayer by Ruth Burgess in Acorns and Archangels)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those that trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen**

We are going to hear today's readings, which
include one from each of the main sections of
the Bible. Ruth will read to us from Leviticus,

from the Old Testament, in which God speaks to Moses, and Tom Dean will read from the New Testament with the Gospel of Matthew, in which Jesus reminds us of the greatest commandment.

Reading: Leviticus 19: 1,2 & 15 – 18
read by Rev'd Ruth Dillon

1 The LORD said to Moses, **2** “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. **15** “ ‘Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your neighbour fairly. **16** “ ‘Do not go about spreading slander among your people. “ ‘Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour’s life. I am the LORD. **17** “ ‘Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so you will not share in their guilt. **18** “ ‘Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD.

Reading: Matthew 22: 34 – 46 read by Tom Dean

34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. **35** One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: **36** “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” **37** Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” **41** While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, **42** “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?” “The son of David,” they replied. **43** He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says, **44** “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.” ’ **45** If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” **46** No one could say a word in reply,

and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Our second hymn this morning reminds us of the Word we are to proclaim. This may not be a familiar hymn, but we sing this together to a familiar tune.

Hymn: We have a Gospel to proclaim

Sung by the Newcastle Virtual Choir Project by permission

We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth,
the gospel of a Saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem,
not in a royal house or hall,

but in a stable dark and dim:
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of his death at Calvary,
hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross:
for all he loved, his life he gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn,
empty the tomb, for he was free:
he broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.
Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified:

He sends his Spirit on his Church,
to live for him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name him King:

Jesus is Lord of all the earth.

This gospel message we proclaim;

we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Let us pray

As we hear your word today Lord, may we have open ears to hear, and open hearts to receive so that it may dwell in each one of us. Amen.

Reflection: Spending time with God's Word

I've been on a trip down memory lane this week. I decided, when I realised today is Bible Sunday, to go through my book shelves and see how many Bibles I have. And here I sit,

surrounded by them having been totally distracted and loving every moment of reading the messages inside them. Some have been gifts and others have transported me back to long forgotten events.

I have several generations worth of Bibles – my mother's given to her by her mother; one from my Godmother when I was only 5 years old; one from my Mum on my confirmation; ones presented to my daughters in Junior Church and Youth Group. I have a variety of versions: those that are translations and those that are redrafted in to modern language such as the Street Bible, The Message & Good as New. My well - thumbed study Bible from starting TLS training a number of years ago, which Whistler tried to eat as a puppy! Wonderful memories wrapped up in God's Word.

That stroll down memory lane made me thoughtful. I smiled, I laughed and even got a little teary eyed at seeing the writing and blessings shared by people who shaped me and those who are still doing that today. How privileged I am to have so many different

Bibles to read, compare and wonder with and it was shared with me throughout my life. Because one of the driving forces behind Bible Sunday is thinking about how more people who really want a Bible but don't have one at all or not in their language, can enjoy the same experience we have and perhaps take for granted.

There have been quite a lot of surveys about how many people read the Bible and how often. How up to date they are is always a question but the common thread is that – wait for it- about 20% of churchgoers read the Bible every day. Does that strike a chord with you? I have no idea if and when each of you watching or listening read your Bible but today is a chance to pause and consider that very question.

Perhaps it's time or habit that we need, but it made me wonder if we really need is a good reason explained to us so we read the Bible more often. Ruth started us on this path last week in talking about the letter to the Thessalonians and how Jesus has influenced

our lives, our thinking and our understanding & growing our spiritual resilience.

For me, it's about how I read the Bible as opposed to reading because I feel I ought to. Talking about what I have read, journaling my thoughts and bringing questions to others who may have interpreted a narrative differently because of their context is an exciting element of how I read the bible. To me, it's God inviting us to read, speaking directly to us through the Bible. God wants us to find him there and reaches out to us through his Word, inviting us in to create a relationship with him and with others.

Today's readings might help us a little in thinking about the influence the Bible has on our growth as Christians and our faith.

Ruth read to us from the Book of Leviticus – apparently seen by many as the most boring book in the bible according to Bible Society research. It's more like an instruction manual on the surface, but the question that underpinned it's writing is more – I suppose I could sum it up as 'what do I need to do to lead as holy a life as I can?'

The answer to that question for the ancient Israelites not only involved public worship at the temple if they could but also private devotions that affected what they did with their bodies, what they ate and how they related to other people. Our reading from apparently boring old Leviticus this morning ended with that iconic verse, 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself' which is one of the responses Jesus gives to the religious authorities in his time when they try to trip him up with testing questions in our reading from Matthew. And suddenly we know, in joining these readings together that this is one way of leading as holy a life as we can because Jesus links it for us, just like that!

The greatest commandment tells us to love God with all our mind. I believe that one way to love with all your mind is to read God's word – to feast on what God says about himself, about us, and about everything he has created. God's Word will teach us about marvellous things, making us full of enthusiasm about what we've read. If it fills us with passion and enthusiasm then we can

share it with others and encourage them to read. The more we talk about the Bible, the more natural it will become and the more confident we will be about sharing the gospel. Getting more out of reading our Bible is a lifelong commitment and venture as we continue to learn more about how to love our God with all our heart and soul. It is a gift.

Let us pray:

Your Word is the light we see,
a guide for our footsteps to where you are found.

Your Word is the strength we find
when darkness threatens to overwhelm.

Your Word is the power we need
to become servants of a Heavenly King.

Your Word is the reason we live
in the sure knowledge you are everything.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Our prayers of intercession this morning remind us of the people we hear about in the

Bible and their relationship with God. So now let us pray together.

God of the silence, God in the stillness and the calm,
Who met Elijah not in the rushing wind but in quietness,
who brought peace to a group of fishermen in a raging storm:
Be with us, here, and now.
Help us to leave behind the busyness of our lives, and listen for your word.

God of relationships, God of compassion and love,
Who gave Ruth to Naomi when she had no family,
who gave Abraham and Sarah a baby when they had given up hope,
who brought together the disciples and other followers of Jesus:
We think of our relationships,
Our families, our friends and colleagues and our church family,

We lift them to you now,
We bring our thanks, our concerns, our need for forgiveness.
Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of wisdom, God of the proverbs and the 10 commandments,
Who inspired your prophets like Amos, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, to speak your words:
We bring before you our country and its political leaders, we pray for wisdom and justice.
And we think of situations, people, places around the world that need change.
Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of creativity, God of beauty and delight,
Who gave David the gift of song-writing, who spoke to Joseph in vivid dreams, who inspired the Songs of Solomon:
Open our eyes to see you all around us.
Help us to find you in nature, in poetry, in song, in conversation, in touch.
Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of surprises, God of hopes and plans,
Who called Samuel in the night,
who met Paul in blinding light,
Help us to hear your call for our lives, however
big or small,
Open our eyes to your promptings and
guidance, so that we can see the people,
places, opportunities that you want us to.
Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of revelation, who came to us as one of
us
You call us to be the light of the world,
to love our enemies, and treat our neighbours
as we would be treated,
Who urges us not to worry, who encouraged
us to seek and we will find,
who told us that we are so loved that if we
were 1 of 100 sheep he would leave the other
99 to look for us if we were lost:
Help us to take your Gospel words seriously,
let them shape our lives and give us courage
to take new paths and explore new patterns.

Help us to hear their call afresh and let them
release us from old routines to try new steps
and dance with you in abandoned joy through
all our days.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer. Amen**

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Closing prayer:

Lord, we are thankful to you for the gift of your
Word to us. We thank you for lives changed
through the centuries as people have come to
know you, the Living Word.

Lord, we are thankful to you for your gift of
Jesus, the living Word. We pray that as we
read the Bible and allow your word into our
hearts that you may dwell richly in us through
your Spirit.

And we pray that we may have opportunities to
share your Word with those around us in our
own communities, and with those around the
world who are still waiting for even one book of

the Bible, that your kingdom may grow here on earth.

With thankful hearts for the witness of generations, for the part we play in the continuing story of your people, we go encouraged to serve you, to seek to build your Kingdom, here, now, this week, for ever.

Blessing

Whatever we do, in word or deed, may we do it in your name Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit, giving thanks to God our Father.
Amen.

Closing Music

Your words to me are life and health

This is the final service Anna will be preparing for us. A big thank you to Anna for all these months since lockdown preparing and editing the recorded service. It is much appreciated by everyone.

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