

Worship - Sunday 24th January 2021

Led by Anna Crawford

Listening prayerfully



Opening music: We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing

Welcome & Prayer of preparation by Margaret Armes

Dear God, silence all voices within our minds but your own.
Help us to seek and be able to follow your will.
May our prayers be joined with those of our sisters and brothers in the faith,
that together we may glorify your name and enjoy your fellowship forever.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

-from The Worship Sourcebook, ©2004, Faith Alive Christian Resources

Call to worship Anna Crawford

The Lord is here, and we will praise Him. The Lord is here, and we will worship Him.
The Lord is here, and we will trust Him. The Lord is here, and we will honour Him.

The Lord is here, and He has called us to give Him the glory.

Prayers

Let us pray

Gracious God, lord of all, we thank you that we can come to you in prayer, that for all your greatness, and wonder, and holiness, we can speak to you as to a friend.

we thank you that we can open our hearts to you, that we can pour our innermost souls and share our deepest thoughts, in the knowledge that you are there, and always ready to listen and understand.

Hear now our prayer.

and teach us to listen to you in response.

So now once more we lay our lives before you, open to your gaze - the bad as well as the good, the doubt as well as the faith, the sorrow as well as the joy, the despair as well as the hope.

We bring the anger as well as the peace, the hatred as well as the love, the confusion as well as the certainty, the fear as well as the trust.

Hear now our prayer.

and teach us to listen to you in response

Gracious God, we bring these not with a sense of pride or any sense of arrogance, but honestly, recognising that you know us through and through.

Help us now to be truthful to ourselves and truthful to you - and so we may discover the renewing love which only you can offer – a love that frees us to live as you would have us live and allows us to be the people you would have us be.

Hear now our prayer

and teach us to listen to you in response.

In the name of Christ **Amen**

As one family let us say together the prayer that Jesus gave us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who 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**

Hymn: What a friend we have in Jesus
Author: Joseph M. Scriven

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
burdened with a load of care?
Jesus is our only refuge;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you;
you will find a solace there.

Reading: Acts 12 verses 5-17 read by Kathy Le Fanu

⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵ “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Reflection:

Peter has been imprisoned and is most likely facing death. His friends and fellow followers of Jesus are in an earnest prayer meeting. Peter, as he followed the angel out of prison must have felt that he was dreaming, but he soon realises that he is indeed free: the chill of the Judean night air would have brought him fully awake, even though the angel told him to put his cloak on. He makes his way to Mary’s house - in trouble Peter turned to those fellow followers of Jesus -where he knew he would find solace. But it is not Peter that I wish to think about but Rhoda, a young girl at the prayer meeting in Mary’s house. Was she a member of the household? was she a friend of John Mark? or a fellow believer? We do not know: possibly a carefree young teenager. Whatever the situation she was there praying to the Lord for Peter.

Peter is standing at the gate of the premises, knocking for admittance, and this is where we meet Rhoda. Did everyone hear the knocking on the outer gate? Maybe only Rhoda heard and slipped out to investigate; in either case, for all her youthful eagerness, it must have been with a certain amount of trepidation that she crossed the courtyard and stood behind the gate, resounding with the thunderous blows at the hands of the impetuous and not always too patient Peter. For all Rhoda knew, the knocking might have been Herod’s officers, seeking someone else, or all of them, to be taken to prison. Peter, however, on the other side of the gate, was probably thinking the sooner he got out

of the public street the better. Rhoda called in her clear young voice, possessing a confidence she probably only partly felt. “Who’s there?” was answered by a gruff and well-remembered but now decidedly impatient response “Peter, of course. Let me in!” In her relief from apprehension, and joy that their prayers had been answered, Rhoda inadvertently left him standing there outside and ran indoors to tell the others.

Now here is the most intriguing part of the story. The assembled brethren did not believe Rhoda. “Peter at the gate: Rubbish” they said “You must be mad”. They knew perfectly well that Peter was in prison and people did not get out of Herod’s prisons so easily as that. The girl was imagining things; whoever it was, it could not be Peter.

They had been praying unceasingly for Peter’s release, and now they were told he was standing at the gate they refused to believe it. One is really justified in wondering how much of faith was mingled with their prayers. Perhaps though it might be more charitable, and maybe nearer the truth, to assume that these immature and inexperienced Christians had not yet appreciated the true power of prayer. They took a lot of persuading. “You’re mad” they told her. *“But she consistently said it was.”*

One can imagine the young girl trying hard to induce the stubborn grown-ups around her to take her seriously. Peter, of course, was still knocking but nobody took any notice of that. Finding it impossible to dissuade Rhoda, and being, it would seem, reluctant to test the truth of her news by sending someone else to the gate, the brethren decided that must be Peter’s guardian angel—speaking apparently with Peter’s voice. The early Christians had a very intense and definite belief in the existence of guardian angels, though why they should expect an angel to stand out in the street knocking for admittance and not just appear.

“But Peter continued knocking - probably definitely thunderous knocking by now, so that at last for very shame’s sake they had to open the door: *“and when they saw him, they were astonished”*. This is the only place in all the Scriptures where a company of

believers joining in supplicatory prayer are stated to have been astonished at receiving the object of their petition! These ardent prayers were so bound up in praying that they were not open to the answer; Rhoda was in her innocence.

Do we pray so hard that we forget to listen? to accept an answer? doubt an answer we feel is impossible?

Prayer:

My God, there are so many things to do, and think about, and I feel overwhelmed.

I pray for the right perspective and calm disposition that I may do all things with the right attitude at the right time and accept the answer you give.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, there are times when we look at people's lives and find it hard to believe that things can ever change for the better – we see them racked by illness, weighed down by anxiety, tormented by depression, crippled by debt, broken by alcohol, destroyed by drugs, scarred by bereavement, shattered through unemployment, and wonder what their prospects are, what hope we can realistically offer them? what help can we possibly give.?

Transforming God, hear our prayer
And help us to listen to your response.

We pray for such people known to us now – family – friends – members of our fellowships - colleagues at work – neighbours – acquaintances; as well as the countless people unknown to us, each struggling under their own particular burdens.
Let us take a moment in the stillness for our own prayers.

(Silence)

Transforming God, hear our prayer
And help us to listen to your response.

We pray for our world – for the many people who face suffering, injustice, hardship, and death.

Reach out to all who are in despair, we pray, all who long for change but see only hopelessness stretching before them. Touch their lives, and bring them hope, healing, and wholeness.

Transforming God, hear our prayer
And help us to listen to your response.

Loving God, it is sometimes hard to believe that those around us, still less the world around, can ever change for the better. Help us see beneath the surface, recognising you are at work and that things can change, help us to see beyond appearances, recognising you are a God able to transform even the most helpless situations, as we saw in our reading today. Give to us and to all people the assurance that there is no one and no situation unable to be transformed by your power.

Transforming God, hear our prayer
And help us to listen to your response.

(Possible extra prayers responding to current situation.)

These and all our prayers voiced aloud or in our thoughts we offer to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

Hymn: And can it be that I should gain

Author: Charles Wesley

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain;
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds enquire no more.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;
Let angel minds enquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above --
So free, so infinite His grace --
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray--
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Blessing:

The God we worship is our strength and our song.
The God we serve is our courage and our reward.
The God we trust is our hope and our joy.
He now sends us out to declare his glory and to serve him in his
name, and with the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy
Ghost.

Closing music: I need the prayers of those I love

Responses led by Margaret Tracey

Opening music: <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet/S-WeGatherTogether-Kremser-PipeLC-48-CAM.mp3>

Closing music: <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet-2010/S-INeedThePrayers-Vaughan-PipeLC-48-CAM.mp3>

Hymns: [STF 531 - What A Friend We Have In Jesus part of Singing The Faith; Contributed by Paul Wood & Ian Worsfold | The Worship Cloud](#)

<https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/2016/Video/V-AndCanItBe-5v-G-PipeLC-128-CAM-Video-JD.mp4>

Hymns reproduced & streamed under CCLI 6025 & CCLI 21997 respectively