

Service for 9 August 2020

Turn your eyes towards God, and give thanks for all the blessings you have received this week.

Let the earth resound with the energy of your presence. Let our voices raise with praise and adoration. You are here and we worship you, God of the universe. May we lift up our hearts and give you the glory, for you are God and we are the children of your love. Thank you, God, for being here among us, today. Amen

Prayer

Lord Jesus, your arrival among us is exciting and invigorating to us. We await your presence, your light, your gaze upon us. We are the focus of your love and your sacrifice. We are the centre of your attention and you lavish love upon us, every day. Help us to be entranced by your beauty, knowing that you change us with your love. Be with us as we worship and encourage our faith in you. Amen

King of kings, majesty,

God of Heaven living in me,
gentle Saviour, closest friend,
strong deliverer, beginning and end,
all within me falls at your throne.

*Your majesty, I can but bow,
I lay my all before you now.
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve your majesty.*

Earth and Heaven worship you,
love eternal, faithful and true,
who bought the nations, ransomed souls,
brought this sinner near to your throne;
all within me cries out in praise.

*Your majesty, I can but bow,
I lay my all before you now.
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve your majesty*

Philippians 2 v 12 - 18

¹² My dear friends, you always obeyed when I was with you. Now that I am away, you should obey even more. So, work with fear and trembling to discover what it really means to be saved. ¹³ God is working in you to make you willing and able to obey him. ¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing. ¹⁵ Then you will be the pure and innocent children of God. You live among people who are crooked and evil, but you must not do anything that they can say is wrong. Try to shine as lights among the people of this world, ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to^[a] the message that gives life. Then on the day when Christ returns, I can take pride in you. I can also know that my work and efforts were not useless. ¹⁷ Your faith in the Lord and your service are like a sacrifice offered to him. And my own blood may have to be poured out with the sacrifice.^[a] If this happens, I will be glad and rejoice with you. ¹⁸ In the same way, you should be glad and rejoice with me.

Matthew 25 1 - 13

"At the time my coming draws near, heaven's kingdom realm can be compared to ten maidens who took their oil lamps and went outside to meet the bridegroom and

his bride. ²⁻⁴ Five of them were foolish and ill-prepared, for they took no extra oil for their lamps. Five of them were wise and sensible, for they took flasks of olive oil with their lamps. ⁵ When the bridegroom didn't come when they expected, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ Then suddenly, in the middle of the night, they were awakened by the shout 'Get up! The bridegroom is here! Come out and have an encounter with him!' ⁷ So all the girls got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ But the foolish ones were running out of oil, so they said to the five wise ones, 'Share your oil with us, because our lamps are going out!'

⁹ "We can't," they replied. 'We don't have enough for all of us. You'll have to go and buy some for yourselves!'

¹⁰ "While the five girls were out buying oil, the bridegroom appeared. Those who were ready and waiting were escorted inside with him and the wedding party to enjoy the feast. And then the door was locked. ¹¹ Later, the five foolish girls came running up to the door and pleaded, 'Lord, Lord, let us come in!'

¹² "But he called back, 'Go away! Do I know you? I can assure you; I don't even know you!'

¹³ "That is the reason you should always stay awake and be alert, because you don't know the day or hour when the Bridegroom will appear." Silent reflection

Give me oil in my lamp keep me burning

Give me oil in my lamp, I pray,
Give my oil in my lamp, keep me burning,
Keep me burning 'till the end of day.
*Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King!*

Give me love in my heart, keep me sharing.
Give me love in my heart, I pray.
Give me love in my heart, keep me sharing.
Keep me sharing till the break of day. (Refrain)

Give me joy in my heart, keep me singing.
Give me joy in my heart, I pray.
Give me joy in my heart, keep me singing.
Keep me singing till the break of day. (Refrain)

Give me faith in my heart, keep me praying.
Give me faith in my heart, I pray.
Give me faith in my heart, keep me praying.
Keep me praying till the break of day. (Refrain)

Message

Every time I read or hear this story, it reminds me of my sister, Elaine's wedding. My brother -in-law, Doug had organised which photographs he wanted with family and friends. He called all the men present for a photo and was looking around for his brother George. The cry went up, "He's gone to get a film for his camera". He missed his photo opportunity and it was like he was absent! Can you believe it! It wasn't able to be repeated, so he's permanently missing. Be prepared!

This parable speaks of Jesus, the bridegroom's return to earth and we are all waiting for that wonderful event to occur. In the society that Jesus lived in, there was not just one marriage ceremony, but many over a few

days. If the bridal party had a ceremony at the bride's parent's house, it was a full-on feast rather than a little snack. It was then difficult for the bride and groom to go on to the next planned stage because curtesy needs to be adhered to. This means that many people were waiting for their arrival. It gets later and later and in order to be respectful they wait. It's not surprising that with all the excitement and apprehension that they have a little nap, and someone watches out. When the call comes, remembering that there are no street lights they need to provide their own light in order to arrive as safely as possible. They all trim their wicks and the realisation dawns that some do not have the required oil to complete their journey to the banquet. When the Bible uses the metaphor oil, it can mean the presence of the Holy Spirit, which lubricates the life of faith. Those people who attend to their faith will be rewarded; those people who take a flexible approach to faith will need to pay closer attention. This is a parable about creating the right foundation, so that the promises of God are able to be revealed, Jesus, the promise of God, can be active and influential in our lives. Being watchers and alert to what God wants to reveal to us about ourselves and others.

I had a thought about the behaviour of the girls with sufficient oil; what do you think was happening? Most of the time, Jesus says, share with each other; so why are these girls unwilling to share what they have? On reflection I think that Jesus is referring to when the bridegroom comes, himself; when Jesus will come to complete the creation and call everything to himself. In this regard, we each have to be responsive to God in our own way. I cannot, because of my faith, ensure you are saved by God, this is something you have to do for yourself. It is your and my relationship with God that is the most important. I need to work out what God means to me and you have to do the same. *"Work out your own salvation, in fear and trembling" Phil 2:12.* This is why the oil, of the girls, cannot be shared. God is interested in each of us, as individuals, and expects an individual response to that love God lavishes upon us. We cannot fulfil that purpose, even though we might want to, especially for those who are dear to us. Jesus is saying that access to God's kingdom is through an intimate relationship, and like all relationships, that are happy and healthy, we need to give our full attention, and not be distracted. Maybe this time of lock-down has aided us, in this respect. Let us honour our relationship and be watchful and awake to God's call to action. May it be so, Amen.

Prayers

Our hearts are filled with gratitude to God, who is making all things new, especially in this "new normal". We pray for people who are facing drastic changes to their lives; financial, medical and emotional. We thank you, God, for the support we are receiving, from people who are concerned for our health and wellbeing. We pray for our Elders as they wrestle with the technicalities of rules, in order to ensure our safe return to worship. Give them patience and wisdom in the tasks ahead. We know that you have our best interests at heart and we join our prayers to yours in concern for people. Please be with all those who mourn the loss of

a precious loved one. Please give all people your peace, which passes all understanding. Amen

Lord's Prayer

O Jesus, I have promised

to serve thee to the end:
be thou ever near me,
my Master and my friend;
I shall not fear the battle
if thou art by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if thou wilt be my guide.

O let me feel thee near me!
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me and within;
but Jesus, draw thou nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear thee speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control;
O speak, and make me listen,
thou guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, thou hast promised
to all who follow thee,
that where thou art in glory
there shall thy servant be;
and, Jesus I have promised
to serve thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow,
my Master and my friend.

O let me see thy footmarks,
and in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly
is in thy strength alone.
O guide me, call me, draw me,
uphold me to the end;
and then in heaven receive me,
my and my Friend.

Prayer

We have felt your presence with us, as we have worshipped. You have drawn us together in our listening, entwined within your love. You remind us that we are part of your, worldwide family and that we are held in the palm of your hand. Amen

Blessing

May the love of God be the passion in your heart.
The joy of God your strength, when times are hard.
The presence of God a peace that overflows.
The Word of God the seed that you might sow.
May you be blessed and energised by the power and love of God. Amen.