

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP:

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-10 [New Living Translation]

OPENING SONGS

Strength Will Rise

**Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord
We will wait upon the Lord,
We will wait upon you Lord
(repeat)**

**Our God, You reign forever
Our hope, our strong deliverer**

**You are the everlasting God
The everlasting God
You will not faint, You won't grow weary
You're the defender of the weak
You comfort those in need
You lift us up on wings like eagles**

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Standing In Your Presence

**Standing in Your presence,
Lord, my heart and life are changed;
Just to love You and to live to
See Your beauty and Your grace.**

**Heaven and earth cry out Your name,
Nations rise up and see Your face;
And Your kingdom is established
As I live to know You more.
Now I will never be the same;
Spirit of God, my life You've changed,
And I'll forever sing Your praise.
I live to know You, Lord.
I live to know You, Lord.**

**You've called me, I will follow;
Your will for me I'm sure.
Let Your heartbeat be my heart's cry,
Let me live to serve Your call.**

BE STILL AND KNOW GOD
Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently
for Him to act. Luke 10: 38-42
9th June 2024



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To Be In Your Presence

**To be in Your presence,
To sit at Your feet,
Where Your love surrounds me
And makes me complete.**

**This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.
This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.**

**To rest in Your presence,
Not rushing away,
To cherish each moment,
Here I would stay.**

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OPENING PRAYER

God of Peace, who is greater than the most powerful forces in this world, enable us to be still and know that You are God. O Lord who answers out of the whirlwind of everyday life, breathe in us Your Holy Spirit to strengthen, comfort, and guide us in the midst of the storm. O still, small voice, speak to us this hour that we might become makers of Your peace in our homes, in our communities, and in our world. We pray all this in the name of the One who calmed the raging sea: Jesus, our Lord, our Saviour and our Friend, . **Amen.**

CONFESSION

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God is merciful and kind; slow to anger and abounding in love. Hear now His gracious words of pardon. 'Your sins are forgiven.' Receive His gift of forgiveness and be at peace. **Amen.**

NOTICES/TIME OF SHARING

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OFFERTORY HYMN

**Be still for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One, is here;
Come bow before Him now with reverence and fear:
In Him no sin is found - we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One, is here.**

**Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned:
How awesome is the sight - our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around.**

**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.**

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OFFERTORY PRAYER

Help us to be generous givers, dear Lord, both of our money and our lives, that we might make a difference in this community. We ask this through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ who gave all that He was that we might know life in all its fullness. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR THE SUNDAY CLUB

Lord Jesus, you grew up and know what it is to belong to a family and a community. We pray that our children here may know your love and the love of their church family, that they may grow in faith and love in Sunday Club today. Bless them and all those you have raised up to guide them on their journeys of faith. **Amen.**

READING: Luke 10: 38-42 – Carol Hales

At the home of Martha and Mary

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' 41 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things,

42 but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.’

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

REFLECTION: Don't do something – just sit there!

Do you find sometimes that the Bible doesn't appear to make a lot of sense? For example, take what Jesus had to say in Luke's gospel shortly after appointing the 12 Apostles. Check out Luke 6: 27-30. What is Jesus telling us?

- 'Love your enemies'
- 'Do good to those who hate you'
- 'Bless those who curse you'
- 'Pray for those who hurt you'? 'If anyone hits you on one cheek, let them hit the other one too?'
- If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt as well'

All these commands are counter intuitive, which is a wonderful and comparatively recent saying meaning things that are, to quote from the dictionary, "contrary to what common sense would suggest." We find many examples of this in the Bible. For instance:

- Building an ark is counter intuitive
- Crossing the Red Sea on dry ground is counter intuitive
- Facing Goliath without armour is counter intuitive
- Marching around Jericho blowing trumpets is counter intuitive
- And of course walking on water is counter intuitive.

You might say that every biblical hero did things that were counter-intuitive, that is, they didn't fit into the conventional wisdom of the times. And indeed living by faith will always involve some things that are "contrary to what common sense would suggest."

But, as our call to worship reminds us, God's ways and God's thoughts are way beyond our human understanding; we are just called to trust and obey Him.

Our Gospel reading this morning has an important counter-intuitive message from Jesus. I've heard lots of sermons on this story and I'm sure you have too.. It's a short, simple story, but it is actually quite difficult to get a handle on, because it seems so counter intuitive. Surely, we say, doing things in the service of Jesus, in the service of the Kingdom, is enormously important?

This story is, in some ways, at the heart of Jesus' teaching about discipleship, and about servanthood. Its context is that Jesus is continuing his mission. He is going through Judea teaching people about the Kingdom of God and calling them to live in the ways of God. At the same time, he is teaching his disciples about what it means to be servants.

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Jesus has come to the home of two people he knows well, and they're showing him hospitality. Martha is doing things to make sure everyone is fed, warm and looked after generally – important things, because hospitality to the visitor was a key part of the culture of that time.

Mary is sitting and listening to Jesus. Martha, not unreasonably you might think, asks Jesus – she doesn't use his name, by the way, she acknowledges her relationship with him by using the word 'Master' – she asks Jesus to tell her sister to help.

Here we see the counter-intuitive essence of this story. Martha effectively is saying, 'Mary, don't just sit there, do something!' In response, Jesus is saying, 'Mary, don't do something – just sit there!'

And Jesus not only tells Martha that Mary is doing the thing he wants, the much better thing, but he gets to the root of her problem: Martha is pulled away from Jesus by all the busy things she is doing.

Many preachers use this story as an illustration of the two different 'lives' of service in the Kingdom. Martha's is an active life of service, Mary's is a contemplative life of prayer. The clear implication is that Mary's is better – indeed Jesus tells us it is.

But, for those who can't lead the contemplative life, who are called to keep busy in serving Jesus, that is a bit of a kick in the teeth. You have to live a sort of second-best life, knowing that Jesus isn't keen on it.

I think what Jesus is getting at, is this. The first step, the most essential step, the one that all the others depend upon and without which all of the others are impossible, is to be in love with God, and to listen to what He is saying. I know that being still seems like a foreign concept in our fast-paced world. However, it's in the moments of stillness that we often hear God's voice most clearly and find peace.

If we are in love with God and listening carefully for God's movements in our lives; if we're doing that, service will come and it will come from the right place – from God's love. So this story isn't about two different sorts of people, with two different sorts of gift – one better than the other. It is a teaching about the priority all of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus need to put on things.

For too long the church has taught, either explicitly or implicitly, that it is enough for those who sit in the pews to attend, to give money and service, and to belong to the club. Jesus' way is much more radical than that, and much more costly. Each of us is called to be in love with God, to make that the most fundamental part of our lives, and to let that love overflow from us in service and care for the world. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus says this: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." [This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.]

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In practice what does this mean?

Firstly, it means that each of us need to take seriously the need to stop – daily, even many times a day – and listen to Jesus. That means reading the Bible, praying, and being silent and listening to the still small voice of God in your heart.

It isn't enough to rush through this, or to make it peremptory – remember, for the disciple, this is the most important part of your life. Being silent with God and listening.

All of us are called to this, and if we're to grow into the image of Jesus, as Paul says we are, this is something we must do, we have to do. It isn't optional. Ninety minutes in church on a Sunday won't do it, I'm afraid – it takes being in relationship with Jesus.

Secondly, it means that we need to be continually aware and vigilant about all of those things that pull us away from Jesus. Yes, of course tasks need to be undertaken. Meals need to be cooked, housework done, lawns mown, salaries earned and so on. But in our world today there are many things we think need to be done that are really just distractions. Some of them are obvious, but some not so obvious. Sometimes we get so tied up in the busy-work things of our lives that we confuse doing them with being disciples.

Each of needs to be sure that what we're doing is what God is calling us to do. Stop and think for a moment -- what might be pulling you away from Jesus?

So, today's Gospel reading tells us something incredibly important about being a servant of Jesus. A servant of Jesus knows what is pulling her or him away from Jesus. And a servant of Jesus knows that the most important thing is to sit at Jesus' feet and listen.

I know that reflections like this one often disappear from the mind quite quickly, but I'd really challenge you to hold those two thoughts in your mind, and as you pray and spend time with God this week, ask God to help you see what is pulling you away from Jesus, and also, what ways God is offering you to sit at Jesus' feet and listen.

We disciples of Jesus walk on an exciting road. We live lives that are rich and full of possibility. The world needs us, because we are the body of Christ -- and this world desperately needs Jesus. As we grow and change into better servants of Jesus, we become gifts to the world and to one another.

Commenting on today's reading, the theologian and pastor R C Sproul wrote this: 'Jesus said, "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." If we choose to spend time with Christ, if we choose to devote ourselves to being at His feet, to take everything we can from His teaching, whatever we get will not be taken away. That is God's promise for us, now and always.'

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Let us pray.

Jesus, you are our Master and teacher, and show us what we need to do in order to be your disciple. Help us in our daily lives to see what helps us and what hinders us. Help us to sit and listen to you, knowing that when we do, we're doing the thing we were created to do – to love and serve you.

In Your name, Lord, **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION -- Peter Groom

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come

Your will be done on earth as in heaven

Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us

Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil

For the kingdom, the power

and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

SONG BEFORE COMMUNION

Dear Lord and Father of mankind

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,

Forgive our foolish ways:

Reclothe us in our rightful mind;

In purer lives Thy service find,

In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,

Beside the Syrian sea,

The gracious calling of the Lord,

Let us, like them, without a word:

Rise up and follow Thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!

O calm of hills above,

Where Jesus knelt to share

with Thee

The silence of eternity,

Interpreted by love!

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,

Till all our strivings cease;

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**Take from our souls the strain
and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.**

**Breathe through the heats of
our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm!**

John Greenleaf Whittier. CCL Licence Number: 839

THE PEACE

Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross. We meet in His name and share in His peace. The peace of the risen Christ be always with you.

And also with you.

Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

HOLY COMMUNION

When we share the cup of the Lord and break bread together, we express our common participation in the benefits of Jesus' death for us. Thus, we should examine ourselves before we eat the bread and drink the cup, confessing our sins to God, acknowledging the need to care for one another, and renewing our trust in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

As we prepare to gather around the Lord's Table let us take a few moments of silence to clear our hearts and our minds and remember why we do this. We come to this table not because we must, but because we may. We come not because we are strong, but because we are weak. We come not because we have perfect faith, but because we have questions and even doubts. But we come nonetheless because Jesus invites us to come and we will never be turned away. We read in Scripture that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' After supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant of my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.'

PRAYER BEFORE COMMUNION

Lord, as we take this bread, we remember that you are the bread of life. You feed and nourish us, mind, body and soul. As we break bread may we feel your love enfold us. May the rising of the bread recall to mind your resurrection and the grace you brought us from the Father.

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As we pour out the cup may we remember you are the giver of life. We give thanks that you came and poured out your life on the cross that we might be saved. **Amen**

Distribution of the bread and wine

Please retain the bread and the cup so that we may all eat together.

The body of Christ given for you keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ shed for you keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you and ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CLOSING SONG:

O Jesus I Have Promised

**O Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end;
be Thou for 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.**

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**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 Saviour and my friend!**

John Bode
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CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Great God and Lord of all, we give ourselves to you, and ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your eternal kingdom. May we walk in humility before you; listen to the tender whisper of your word; and know the truth of your sovereignty over all our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve and share the Lord
In the name of Christ, Amen.