

Worship at Home – 16th March 2025 (2nd Sunday in Lent)
A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Erica Gassor.

Call to worship

Loving God, we gather today
to explore your promise to always
lead us in the right way.
Help us as we think about the promises we make. **Amen**

Hymn – STF 51 – Great is thy faithfulness Thomas O Chisholm (1866-1960)

- 1 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not,
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be.
Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided -
great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!
- 2 Summer and winter, and spring-time and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
Chorus
- 3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
Chorus

Bible reading – Psalm 27

A psalm of David

- 27** The Lord is my light, and he saves me.
Why should I fear anyone?
The Lord is my place of safety.
Why should I be afraid?
- 2** My enemies are evil.
They will trip and fall
when they attack me
and try to swallow me up.
- 3** Even if an army attacks me,
my heart will not be afraid.
Even if war breaks out against me,
I will still trust in God.

- ⁴ I'm asking the Lord for only one thing.
Here is what I want.
I want to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life.
I want to look at the beauty of the Lord.
I want to worship him in his temple.
- ⁵ When I'm in trouble,
he will keep me safe in his house.
He will hide me in the safety of his holy tent.
He will put me on a rock that is very high.
- ⁶ Then I will win the battle
over my enemies who are all around me.
At his holy tent I will offer my sacrifice with shouts of joy.
I will sing and make music to the Lord.
- ⁷ Lord, hear my voice when I call out to you.
Treat me with kindness and answer me.
- ⁸ My heart says, "Seek him!"
Lord, I will seek you.
- ⁹ Don't turn your face away from me.
Don't turn me away because you are angry.
You have helped me.
God my Savior, don't say no to me.
Don't desert me.
- ¹⁰ My father and mother may desert me,
but the Lord will accept me.
- ¹¹ Lord, teach me your ways.
Lead me along a straight path.
There are many people who treat me badly.
- ¹² My enemies want to harm me. So don't turn me over to them.
Witnesses who tell lies are rising up against me.
They say all sorts of evil things about me.
- ¹³ Here is something I am still sure of.
I will see the Lord's goodness
while I'm still alive.
- ¹⁴ Wait for the Lord.
Be strong and don't lose hope.
Wait for the Lord.

Prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and forgiveness

We adore you, Lord.
You promise to lead us:
now and always.
You promise to keep us safe and secure:
now and always.
You promise to teach us:
now and always.
You promise to be our guide and helper:
now and always.

We adore you, Lord, and look to you in all things:
now and always.

We adore you, Lord:
and trust in what is now and what is not yet seen.

Lord, we are sorry when we fail to believe in your promises,
when we think we must have heard you wrong.
Forgive us for doubting and not trusting enough.
Help us to have greater faith and deepen our trust in you,
knowing that your promises may not have been fulfilled yet but will be in time.

Forgive us when we lose heart.
Help us to wait upon you and bless us with faith
that nothing can shake.

Father God, you fulfilled your promise of a Saviour
in your Son Jesus Christ,
who grants forgiveness of sin.
We are forgiven. **Amen**

Hymn – STF 440 – Amazing grace John Newton (1725-1807)

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| 1 | Amazing grace-how sweet the sound-
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see. | 2 | God's grace has taught my heart to fear,
his grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed! |
| 3 | Through many dangers, toils
and snares
I have already come;
God's grace has brought me safe
thus far,
and grace will lead me home. | 4 | The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures. |
| 5 | And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
a life of joy and peace. | 6 | When we've been there ten
thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun. |

Bible reading – Luke 13:31-35

Jesus' Sadness Over Jerusalem

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus. They said to him, "Leave this place. Go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

³² He replied, "Go and tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons. I will keep on healing people today and tomorrow. And on the third day I will reach my goal.' ³³ In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day. Certainly, no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

³⁴ "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and throw stones in order to kill those who are sent to you. Many times, I have wanted to gather your people together. I have wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. And you would not let me. ³⁵ Look, your house is left

empty. I tell you; you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Reflection on the reading

As we know, Jesus was a controversial figure. Against a backdrop of tension between freedom to practise faith and necessary allegiance to the Roman occupying forces and the huge inequalities in society, anyone offering the possibility of a way through presents both a hope and a threat. As Jesus' following grows, so does the anxiety that he and his disciples might upset the delicate balance that currently maintained the status quo. We heard how in today's reading from Luke, that the Pharisees' warned Jesus. That may have been out of genuine concern for his welfare, or a wider concern for keeping the peace or another temptation to Jesus to walk away from his calling. Jesus, however, is clear about his purpose – and while he had lived and proclaimed the kingdom of God, he had not yet fulfilled all that he came to do. Identifying himself clearly as a prophet (although he was and is more than that) and speaking openly about his pending death, he also demonstrates God's compassion for Jerusalem as the symbol of the people of God and the location of God's presence in the Temple.

How many times do we feel compelled to do or say something that we feel is ethical and correct but may well be against the current feelings in our local environment or society. It is often very difficult when you feel driven to point these things out and take action when others warn you of the consequences and how it could make you very unpopular. All this can definitely put us off taking action and leads us towards 'going with the flow' and leaving things as they are.

During this time of Lent, we should be even more aware of the strength of our faith and beliefs – not 'giving up' on what we know is right and staying close to the good and true teachings of Jesus. I always feel that, during Lent, giving up chocolate or biscuits or similar doesn't make a difference but persevering with what is 'right' and 'good' and not 'giving up' or 'giving in' to the 'norm' is a far better aim. When we think of how our Lord and Saviour resisted the temptation to take the easy route and just go along with what society expected, we know that we too have to take this path and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we know he will be there to lead and guide us, keeping his promise to be with us always.

As a child, I was always taught to think and look at things differently and form my own opinions and, never having attended a school as I was taught at home, I was very much able to follow my own path of thought, something for which I am very grateful in life as, guided by the love of God and our Lord and Saviour Jesus, perseverance will overcome obstacles and objections. As Winston Churchill famously said "If at first you don't succeed, try, try & try again UNTIL you succeed!" – empowered by the Holy Spirit we can achieve!

Let us go forward in this season of Lent remembering the words of Psalm 27 that we heard earlier – "The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear" – indeed let us move forward with conviction persevering with the right and good, empowered and protected by our Father in Heaven.

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves

We bring our prayers to you for our World and think of
all the areas of unresolved conflict,
where deep-seated grievances and complex history collide,
where shattered lives and destroyed cities are the evidence for our wars
and we feel helpless at so much brokenness:

God of our hope, we place our trust in you.
In political decision making on energy, security, aid and sanctions,

where true leadership and wisdom matter,
when government should meet the needs (and not the wants) of the people,
when costly decisions are needed,
and self-interest needs to be set aside for the good of others:

God of our hope, we place our trust in you.
In freezing temperatures, and when snow falls,
when the homeless, refugees and frightened families shiver in distress,
when our visa policy is too complex and bureaucratic to save the desperate
when, in our relatively affluent country, many go hungry
and many with homes are struggling to stay warm amid rising energy costs,
we know that change is needed:

God of our hope, we place our trust in you.
In our relative security and safety in this country.
where we are tempted to trust in our own strength,
when our compassion fails,
when we lack the imagination to walk in the shoes of the dispossessed,
and we lose sight of our own dependence on you:

God of our hope, we place our trust in you.
In the mountains of our possessions,
when we spend, acquire and accumulate things that do not lead to life,
and are obsessed with more, bigger and better we forget the needs of others:

God of our hope, we place our trust in you.
In the tangled conflicts at home, school or work in which we are trapped,
when we cannot give in and the desire to win is greater than our desire to continue,
soften our stubborn hearts, we pray:

God of our hope, we place our trust in you.
In the absence of safety and home,
when refugees flee to the borders in the pauses between shelling,
when a humanitarian crisis is building, and families are torn apart and we fear the fresh horrors of
the news:

God of our hope, we place our trust in you.
In all our dreams and longings,
where freedom itself is at stake,
and we yearn for a better, fairer and kinder world,
teach us to seek your face and listen to your voice
in all our ways and for all of our days:

God of our hope, we place our trust in you.
Save us, O Lord we pray. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Hymn – STF 351 – In Christ Alone Stuart Townend (born 1963) and Keith Getty (born 1974)

- 1 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from His hand;
till He returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Blessing

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, this day and ever more. **Amen**

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