

Worship at Home – 11th May 2025 (4th Sunday of Easter)

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Marilyn Britt.

Introduction

Good morning and welcome to Worship at Home on Sunday 11th May. My name is Marilyn Britt, and I am a worship leader at Thatcham Methodist Church. It's a bit chilly and blustery as I write this, but the weather forecast is warmer and brighter. I have been on holiday recently and seen some very young lambs in the fields. We shall be thinking today of Jesus our Good Shepherd. Today is also the start of Christian Aid week - a time when we hear more about the charity, their work and how Christian faith is shared by words and action. We'll hear about Tabitha, also called Dorcas, who demonstrated her faith by caring for and befriending vulnerable widows in her city of Joppa. Jesus calls us to live, sharing the news of eternal life and making a difference in the lives around us.

Call to worship (Revelation 7: 15 – 17)

¹⁵ So, "they are in front of the throne of God.

They serve him day and night in his temple.

The one who sits on the throne

will be with them to keep them safe.

¹⁶ 'Never again will they be hungry.

Never again will they be thirsty.

The sun will not beat down on them.'

The heat of the desert will not harm them.

¹⁷ The Lamb, who is at the centre of the area around the throne,

will be their shepherd.

'He will lead them to springs of living water.'

'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

Hymn – STF 353 – Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it David J Mansell (born 1936)

1 Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
for by his power each tree and flower was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it.
Sun, moon and stars in heaven cry Jesus is Lord!
Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias for Jesus is Lord!

2 Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
in flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding,
yet gave his life a ransom thus setting us free.
Chorus

3 Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death he rose, and all his foes shall own his name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.
Chorus

Prayers of praise, confession and assurance of forgiveness

Yes, indeed Jesus, you are our Lord, the Lamb upon the throne.

We praise and adore you.

You are with us today and every day, constantly at our side.

We see you all around us and rejoice in the wonder of your creation, not just on the ground but in the heavens, the stars moon and sun, day and night, make this world a good place to live.

You came to give us life, to show us the way, to teach us how to live: being kind and generous and share your good news with others.

We adore you, our shepherd, showing us the way as we learn how to listen to your voice and be alongside us as you guide us to do the plans you have for us.

But so often Lord, we get distracted and stop listening or ignore your guiding hand to do what is right.

Sometimes we do it deliberately – thinking that what you are asking is too hard for us or inconvenient.

We forget that you are there beside us constantly and that you will guide and strengthen us and show us to do what we should do.

Forgive us Lord when we think we know best.

Have mercy on us as we humble ourselves to bow to your will that will help spread the joy and hope of your love with others. **Amen**

Bible reading – John 10:22-30

Another Challenge to Jesus' Claims

²² Then came the Feast of Hanukkah at Jerusalem. It was winter. ²³ Jesus was in the temple courtyard walking in Solomon's Porch. ²⁴ The Jews who were gathered there around Jesus spoke to him. They said, "How long will you keep us waiting? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you. But you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name are a witness for me. ²⁶ But you do not believe, because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never die. No one will steal them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than anyone. No one can steal them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Bible reading – Acts 9:36-43

³⁶ In Joppa there was a believer named Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language is Dorcas. She was always doing good and helping poor people. ³⁷ About that time she became sick and died. Her body was washed and placed in a room upstairs. ³⁸ Lydda was near Joppa. The believers heard that Peter was in Lydda. So, they sent two men to him. They begged him, "Please come at once!"

³⁹ Peter went with them. When he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him crying. They showed him the robes and other clothes Dorcas had made before she died.

⁴⁰ Peter sent them all out of the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. He turned toward the dead woman. He said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes. When she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and especially the widows. He brought her to them. They saw that she was alive. ⁴² This became known all over Joppa. Many people believed in the Lord. ⁴³ Peter stayed in Joppa for some time. He stayed with Simon, a man who worked with leather.

Hymn – STF 479 – The King of love my shepherd is Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and he is mine for ever. | 2 | Where streams of living water flow
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow
with food celestial feedeth. |
| 3 | Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home rejoicing brought me | 4 | In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me. |
| 5 | Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth! | 6 | And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never:
good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house for ever. |

Reflection on the reading

The conversation taking place with Jesus was in the winter and they were at the Feast of Dedication or Hannukah rededicating the temple. Were the disciples ready to take on what Jesus was asking them to do? So many people were asking of Jesus ‘Are you the Christ - tell us plainly?’ So many still not understand who he was. He was not the sort of king they were expecting – he did not have an army – he did have his disciples and his followers but even so, I wonder what they really thought of his miracles. He gave sight to the blind, the deaf could hear, cripples were able to walk again, the mute could speak, and he raised people from the dead. He sat and had conversations with just anyone – even Samaritans. He was not just talking – he listened – he spoke of living water, redemption and salvation. He was not always understood immediately but he always gave people time – he did not give up. He was leading the people to God. ‘In the reading Jesus answered, ‘I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me; ²⁶ but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. But just as a shepherd protects his sheep, Jesus protects his people from harm. Earlier Jesus had also said ‘I came that they may have life and have it abundantly’.

So many things can drown out Jesus’s voice as he speaks and guides us. Are we busy, or don’t we want to listen? There are so many things which distract us from him.

In our reading from Acts, we hear of Tabitha (also known as Dorcas). She had a vital impact on a community of widows. We don’t know whether she was wealthy or living in poverty as many other widows, but she was kind and generous and as it says she had devoted to good works and charity. After Tabitha dies and Peter arrives, he is shown the garments and tunics she has made to help the poor. When she died, the room was filled with mourners, probably many of the people she had helped. When Peter raised her to life, the news spread rapidly throughout the town. Tabitha continued using her gifts and Peter learns more about her faith and how she lives it out to help

others. Tabitha learns from Peter more about prayer and preaching and so using each other's gifts are able to share in the love of God.

We all have God given gifts, and it is up to us to make sure we use them – not to satisfy ourselves but to help others.

I said earlier that this week is Christian Aid week and is marking its 80th anniversary. Here is an article from Christian Aid about Amelia who lives in Guatemala, where the climate crisis is killing her precious crops. She relies on the land to feed her 8-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter. She worries about what her children will eat. A river passes through Amelia's farm, but deadly heatwaves are causing it to run dangerously low. Both communities and crops stand to lose life-giving water. The cruel injustice is that Indigenous communities like this, have done the least to cause the climate crisis, yet they endure its impact the most. As their farms are devastated, the search for solutions becomes critical. 'With high heat, there is little we can do but adapt.'

Amelia's hopeful that she can combat extreme weather by changing the way she farms. With the support of specialist training from Christian Aid's partner, Amelia is planting resilient crops, conserving water and making fertiliser. Amelia is also a leader in her community, sharing her knowledge with other households, so that one day, no family will worry about their children going without food. This is the unstoppable power of Amelia's hope in action. She is sharing with words and action how they can overcome the problems.

We sang earlier 'Jesus is Lord, creation's voice proclaims it.' We all need to work to ensure that our gifts so that all people can live, and work together and show the love and generosity that God shares with us all.

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves

Lord, hear us as we pray for your creation. We pray for an end to the destruction of the natural world. We hold before you communities who are watching their land become parched, and rivers dry up. We pray for those finding it difficult to feed their families from the land. Show us how to act and energise us that we may use our power to make change happen.

We pray for all those living in poverty - for those who will not be eating a nutritious meal today, and possibly not tomorrow. May we speak up with them for a more equal and just society.

We pray for our world leaders, peacemakers and changemakers. We pray for those community leaders throughout the world who can make a big difference to the lives of those around them. We pray for a just peace wherever there is conflict particularly the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan. We remember those working in the mission field not just speaking but acting out God's love to all people.

We pray for those who are grieving, those who are ill, suffering loss, homes, livelihoods and trauma. Let them see kindness and comfort.

We pray for those working for Christian Aid, both here and overseas and the generous giving, acting and praying this week.

And we pray for ourselves, that we use the gifts we have been given to help those in need. Wherever we are, show us the opportunities to listen, act or comfort those.

We pray for hope for the future and for the sharing of justice and peace.

Through the love of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

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

Hymn – STF 696 – For the healing of the nations Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

- 1 For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.
- 2 Lead us forward into freedom,
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.
- 3 All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow life's brief span.
- 4 You, Creator-God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

Blessing

God of all you have abundantly blessed us.
May your compassion flow through our actions and offerings.
Faithful God, send us out to serve you as we are able.
Fill us with joy and peace in believing
that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Bible readings from [New International Reader's Version \(NIRV\)](#)

All hymns reproduced under CCLi 570443

Other material from © Roots for Churches Ltd, Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, and Christian Aid