

Worship at Home – 3rd August 2025 (18th in Ordinary Time)

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Rachel Borgars.

Call to worship

God has brought us together, and we have gathered,
The hour is appointed,
The time is here,
It is a sacred moment, in a lifetime of sacred moments,
Let us turn aside and focus our attention on God. **Amen**

Hymn – STF 544 – As the deer pants for the water Martin Nystrom (born 1956)

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| 1 As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after You.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship You.
<i>You alone are my strength, my shield,
to You alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship You.</i> | 2 I want You more than gold or silver,
only You can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.
<i>Chorus</i> |
| | 3 You're my Friend and You're my Brother,
even though You are a king.
I love You more than any other,
so much more than anything.
<i>Chorus</i> |

Opening prayers

Gracious Saviour,
Thank you for your unfailing love that pursues us whenever we may wander,
For your pure heart that loves and nurtures us through every season and chapter of our lives.
Even though we may wander from you, you remain there, steadfast.
Patiently waiting, as we find our way back to you.
You are there in our darkest of valleys, our harshest of storms
and the calmness at the end of it all.
We confess we may have turned away from you and towards more selfish acts.

Help us, gracious God, to turn away from self-centredness:
That we shall not be quick to anger, blame and act,
but will walk with patience and live with a heart like yours that burns with mercy and compassion
not with wrath.

We pray that we can set our hearts on things above and the needs of others, not on earthly
desires.

Lead us back to you so that we may live our lives with pure intentions
and may we know the true riches of this life we have been blessed with.

O Lord, our God,
You are our light bringing us out of the darkness,
Our refuge in this life,
Christ our redeemer. **Amen**

Introducing the theme

“This is how it is with those who pile up riches for themselves but are not rich in God’s sight”

Can you imagine your favourite food? Your favourite one thing to eat... [*your favourite*] ... whatever it is, when you eat this, it brings you so much joy and happiness.

One day you’re standing in the garden, and you drop one of whatever it is you are eating on the ground without realising. When you come out the next day, there’s a little sprout there, so you water it, and over time a beautiful crop grows, and the crop produces the food that you dropped there.

Well, you’re delighted because this means you don’t have to pay for this food ever again, and you have a full supply in your back garden! So, you plant a few more, and over time more of this food grows. But now you’re harvesting more than you can eat, so you start storing it in a barn for the future, just in case the plant ever stops producing it.

What happens to the food that you’ve stored? Well over time it goes bad, and rotten, and is no use to anyone.

What does God tell us to do here? He tells us that we have found something that produced well, and it produced a food that would bring some joy to people when they ate it, but the person chose to keep it hidden and keep it for themselves, and in doing so the food became rotten over time because there was too much for one person to consume.

God tells us that we should share these things that bring joy, that there is plenty of produce for everyone, but storing things up selfishly to use for ourselves is not what God intended.

The riches we store up on earth will not go with us to Heaven.

Of course, this story is based on the parable of the rich fool, and we know that parables are used as stories that portray a message from God. This parable – serves as a warning against greed and a reminder that our joy should come from God, and we know that there is plenty of God to go round.

Hymn – STF 76 – Give me joy in my heart Anonymous

- 1 Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
Give me joy in my heart, I pray;
Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
Keep me praising till the break of day.
Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!
Sing hosanna to the King of kings,
Sing hosanna! Sing Hosanna!
Sing hosanna to the King.
- 2 Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
Give me peace in my heart, I pray;
Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
Keep me loving till the break of day.
Chorus
- 3 Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
Give me love in my heart, I pray;
Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
Keep me serving till the break of day.
Chorus

Bible reading – Hosea 11:1-4; 8-9

- ¹ The Lord continues,
“When Israel was a young nation, I loved them.
I chose to bring my son out of Egypt.
² But the more I called out to Israel,
the more they went away from me.
They brought sacrifices to the statues of the gods
that were named Baal.
And they burned incense to them.
³ I taught Ephraim to walk.
I took them up in my arms.
But they did not realize
I was the one who took care of them.
⁴ I led them with kindness and love.
I was to them like a person who lifts
a little child to their cheek.
I bent down and fed them.
⁸ The Lord continues,
“People of Ephraim, how can I give you up?
Israel, how can I hand you over to your enemies?
Can I destroy you as I did the town of Admah?
Can I treat you like Zeboyim?
My heart is stirred inside me.
It is filled with pity for you.
⁹ I will not be so angry with you anymore.
I will not completely destroy you again.

After all, I am God.

I am not a mere man.

I am the Holy One among you.

I will not direct my anger against their cities.

Bible reading – Luke 12:13-21

The Story of the Rich Fool

¹³ Someone in the crowd spoke to Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “tell my brother to divide the family property with me.”

¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Friend, who made me a judge or umpire between you?” ¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against wanting to have more and more things. Life is not made up of how much a person has.”

¹⁶ Then Jesus told them a story. He said, “A certain rich man’s land produced a very large crop. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have any place to store my crops.’

¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones. I will store my extra grain in them. ¹⁹ I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain stored away for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink and have a good time.”’

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You foolish man! Tonight, I will take your life away from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

²¹ “That is how it will be for whoever stores things away for themselves but is not rich in the sight of God.”

Reflection on the reading

This is the time of year when many people are able to have a holiday, a break from work perhaps, or a change of scene. That can lead to the opportunity to reflect on life and what is important. Of course, you don’t need to go away to do that – half an hour in the garden or on a park bench might also provide that space to think – if we can find the time to do that this week, the bible passages today can provide the questions to think about!

Overall, they seem to be asking whether or not we appreciate what we have, or whether we are always grasping for more. Perhaps they are pointing to a kind of attentiveness – have we always noticed the good things which have been present in our lives, or are we more likely to notice when things go wrong, or when we feel we have been treated badly?

The extract from Hosea’s prophecy is almost unbearably tender and touching. We hear the voice of God describe in detail the love and care which God has poured on the people of Israel over many generations; whilst at the same time lamenting the way in which they haven’t noticed or acknowledged that love and care:

- God has called them – and they have gone in the opposite direction
- God has treated them like tiny children, teaching them to walk, carrying them, bending down to feed them, yet they have refused to return to God and so violence has reigned.

It is enough to make God give up on the people, but no, instead God cries, ‘How can I give you up? How can I hand you over?’ God declares, ‘my compassion grows warm and tender’. God turns away from the remedy of anger, destruction or wrath, but might just let out a bit of a roar... then, God hopes, the people may tremble and return.

What do we do with such love?

- Do we, can we, accept how much God loves us?
- Do we, can we, recognise just how much our turning away grieves the heart of God?
- Do we, can we, respond with the love God longs for?

In the gospel passage from Luke, things get spelled out a bit more directly. It begins with a question from the crowd, someone feels they have been wronged by their own brother, who (it would appear) is not sharing out the family inheritance fairly. The questioner wants Jesus to intervene. Just as an aside, it's very interesting that whenever anyone in the gospels tells Jesus to take a particular action, he finds another way to respond.

Perhaps we would all do well to remember this in our own relationship with Jesus and in our prayers and beware of suggesting exactly what we think Jesus should do in any circumstance!

Here Jesus uses the question as a springboard for some teaching about possessions and spells out for us the inherent dangers in material goods, 'Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions'. He tells the story of a rich man who has an abundant harvest; lacking the space for all his crops he tears down his barns to build bigger ones. This, however, is shown to be a futile and shortsighted action, for he is about to die and will lose everything he values so highly.

August is the month in which most Methodist ministers who are changing circuits make their move. Up and down the country, many ministerial households will be packing and unpacking boxes; moving to other manses – some larger, some smaller. It is a salutary exercise and inevitably leads those of us involved to ponder on the 'abundance of possessions' – usually books in particular.

Perhaps we need to notice that what Jesus calls out is the danger of allowing possessions to become more important than they really are, of seeing life as consisting in the abundance of possessions, of falling into greed.

We are all in danger here – it is not the goods themselves which are dangerous, but how we view them. Jesus gives the antidote in his final words, 'so it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God'.

Our next hymn reminds of the call for us to be rich toward God, and how we can develop our relationship with God.

Hymn – STF 545 – Be thou my vision Irish, c 8th century

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
- 3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.
- 4 Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.
- 5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves

Loving and gracious God, we bring our prayers to you today in the name of Jesus, the Lord of love, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting that your steadfast love endures forever.

We pray for all situations of war and conflict, remembering especially today the countries of the Middle East and the continuing situation in Ukraine and Russia.

Comfort those who are suffering and give strength to all who seek to offer love, peace and healing.

We pray for all who lack the essentials of life: food, water, clothing, shelter, love.

Come close to those in need and make us generous to respond from whatever resources we have.

We pray for all in pain today, whether in body, mind or spirit, known or unknown to us.

Give healing and relief to the sick and patience, love and courage to all who care for them.

We pray for our communities, calling to mind individuals, groups and organisations who seek to make the world a fairer place.

Give wisdom and a passion for justice to all in leadership that your steadfast love may be revealed.

We pray for the church, in this place and in every place where you are worshipped and glorified. Pour out your Holy Spirit afresh that your body on earth may demonstrate your limitless love.

We pray for ourselves, aware that so often we fail to be motivated by love for you and for others.

Reveal yourself to us afresh, that we may live the lives for which you created us, to your glory.

Loving and gracious God, we have offered our prayers to you today in the name of Jesus, the Lord of love, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting that your steadfast love endures forever.

Thanks be to God. **Amen**

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

Hymn: STF 459 – Captain of Israel's host Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

- 1 Captain of Israel's host, and guide
Of all who seek the land above,
Beneath thy shadow we abide,
The cloud of thy protecting love;
Our strength, thy grace; our rule, thy word;
Our end, the glory of the Lord.
- 2 By thine unerring Spirit led,
We shall not in the desert stray;
We shall not full direction need,
Nor miss our providential way;
As far from danger as from fear,
While love, almighty love, is near.

Blessing

Now we move on from this moment,
But worship does not cease here,
in fact, it is only just getting started.
Know that the Spirit of God goes before you,
inviting you to play your part
in the unfolding story of love. **Amen**

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

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