


Cheshire South Methodist Circuit
Worship at Home - Sunday 6th October 2024

Call to Worship drawing on Psalm 90

The psalmist asks God, 'teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart'. As we worship we ask for God's help to count our days

- days of gladness when we have offered our praise to God
- days of sorrow when we have taken comfort from God's compassion for us
- days of uncertainty when we have placed our trust in God's guiding hand
- days of hope when we have looked to our God who makes all things new

For each of these days we bring our thanks, knowing and trusting that God has been with us. As we worship we celebrate that God is with us each and every day. God is with us now.

StF no. 58 Lord, I come before your throne of grace

1 Lord, I come before your throne of grace;
I find rest in your presence
and fullness of joy.
In worship and wonder I behold your face,
singing, 'What a faithful God have I.'

Chorus

*What a faithful God have I,
what a faithful God.
What a faithful God have I,
faithful in every way.*

2. Lord of mercy, you have heard my cry;
through the storm you're the beacon,
my song in the night.
In the shelter of your wings hear my heart's reply,
singing, 'What a faithful God have I.'

Chorus

3. Lord all-sovereign, granting peace from heaven,
let me comfort those who suffer
with the comfort you have given.
I will tell of your great love for as long as I live,
singing, 'What a faithful God have I.'

Chorus

Robert and Dawn Critchley

Prayers of Approach, Confession and Assurance of Pardon

Gracious God, new every morning is your love for us. In our waking and rising we are gifted a new day to experience and share that love with those we meet. Help us to look at each day with fresh eyes which are eager to see the intricacy of your creation, eager to discern the image of the divine in each person we meet, eager to acknowledge the action of the Spirit in simple acts of kindness shared between people.

Your love is all embracing, Creating and compassionate God. It is gentle yet strong, it is comforting and brings us reassurance but sometimes your love is difficult too, for you speak words of challenge, uncovering those things we do not want to hear. You call us to account when we fail to love you and our neighbour, you call us to account when in our carelessness we use words which harm or belittle, you call us to account when we place ourselves at the centre of our world.

We recognise our failings and our need to be forgiven by you and those whom we have failed. In your reconciling love you welcome us within your household and give us the opportunity to continue upon the journey of faith, each day trusting in your love and presence with us and for this we bring our thanks. Amen

New Testament Reading: Matthew 9: 35 – 38 *Jesus has Pity for the People*

³⁵Jesus went round visiting all the towns and villages. He taught in the synagogues, preached the Good News about the Kingdom, and healed people with every kind of disease and sickness. ³⁶As he saw the crowds, his heart was filled with pity for them, because they were worried and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷So he said to his disciples, "The harvest is large, but there are few workers to gather it in. ³⁸Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest."

Message

Jesus did all he could. We heard in Matthew ch9: v 35 that "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness" (Matt. 9:35 NIV). But it was when Jesus saw the crowds, the multitude of people, who needed to be saved and to receive eternal life, that Jesus felt compassion for the crowds.

If we are to see lives saved and won to Christ we need to see the harvest as Jesus saw the harvest of spiritually lost people, facing a life without Christ, both on earth and in eternity.

Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful" (Matt. 9:37 NIV). The world is big. The crowds are huge. The number of spiritually lost people is overwhelming.

In Jesus' day the population of the world was approximately 150 million people. Today the world's population grows by 150 million every two years. The world's population today exceeds 8 billion people.

Not only was the harvest of people vast as Jesus looked upon it, but those people brought tears to Jesus' eyes. All those people, then and now, matter to Jesus. "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them" (Matt. 9:36 NIV). The word used for compassion is the strongest word for pity in the Greek language. It describes the love that moves a person to the depths of their being. It is the type of love that moves people to cry for others. It is love that moves people beyond sentimental feelings into heartfelt action. Jesus' heart grieves over every soul.

In this reading, Jesus described the crowd as being "worried and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36 NIV). These people were defeated by life, they were broken and without purpose. They were wandering aimlessly. People without hope, without meaning. Like sheep without a shepherd, meaning they were vulnerable and would follow any fad or new idea.

Worried, helpless, and sheep without a shepherd, is a fitting description of our broken society today. People are desperately looking for meaning and purpose, but sadly they look in the wrong places.

Jesus said to His disciples, "The harvest is large, but there are few workers to gather it in'. Now while I know little about farming, I do understand that ripened wheat takes on a golden colour when it is ready for harvest, and it is important to get into the fields and cut the corn when it is ready and when the weather is good, before it is too late. There is always a sense of urgency to bring in the harvest.

And there is that same sense of urgency to bring in the harvest of God's people. Today we are living in desperate times. And desperate times demand action. We live in a lost and broken world that is in desperate need for the good news of Jesus Christ.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have much work to do. We must give ourselves to the harvest of souls. The times we live in demand urgent action. As Christians we should feel what Jesus feels. And Jesus is overwhelmed by His love for people as he sees the vastness of the crowds, the perplexity of their problems, and the sense of urgency in reaching them. Then Jesus says, in Matthew 9, v 37 "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Herein lies one of the great truths of the Christian faith: The harvest will never be reaped unless there are reapers to reap it. Jesus Christ needs men and women to bring in the harvest. Jesus' followers today need to see people as Jesus saw them - as precious, but perplexed and perishing people.

So what can we do?

We can take responsibility for our own harvest field. Think of all the people you come into contact with every day: family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues, the folks who work on the checkout at the shops you go to, the folks we meet through any hobbies that we have. That is our harvest field.
So, what do we do?

Firstly we can pray. When we begin to see people as Jesus saw them then we will pray for the harvest. We will pray for the salvation of the lost. We will pray for workers, labourers, servers, and givers. Firstly, we must pray.

Secondly we can go. When we see people as Jesus saw them, we will go into the harvest. We can't bring in the harvest without first going out into the harvest. Our job is not to save the harvest - that's God's work. Our job is to tell people about the Lord of the harvest. Without going out there, there is no knowing. If we do not go, then who will?

We must share our own story of our faith and witness. Let me give you two examples where I have seen this happen. A few months ago, I met Elizabeth, who lives on a canal boat and travels along the canals spreading God's word. I took Elizabeth to B and M in Whitchurch to get some supplies she needed. And much to my surprise as we went through the checkout, she got out a little booklet produced by the Alpha group, called 'Why Jesus', and it explained why we need Jesus in our lives. She started to talk to the checkout assistant, and asked if he would like a booklet, and he seemed really interested and chatted to Elizabeth and thanked her for the booklet. We then went on to Tesco, and whilst in the queue, Elizabeth again started to chat to the lady next to her, who told Elizabeth how she had lost her husband and was just lost without him. Again, Elizabeth got out a little booklet, and gave it to the lady and chatted about Jesus. We may not know the outcome of those examples, but all Jesus asks is that we go out and sow the seed, ready for the Harvest. Needless to say, I ordered 50 copies of the 'Why Jesus' booklets myself.

But, you say, there are so many people. The harvest is so vast. The needs are so overwhelming. What can I do?

Whilst researching for this message I read a story about an old man, who was walking on the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up with the young man, he asked the young man what he was doing. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun.

"But the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish," said the old man. "How can your effort make a difference?"

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one," he said.

I hope that your heart will be stirred to make a difference in the harvest. You see, when we begin to see people as Jesus saw people it makes all the difference in the world. When we see people as Jesus saw people it will cause us to take responsibility, to pray, to go, and to tell about Jesus.

In the movie, Schindler's List, one of the most moving scenes is near the end of the drama. Oscar Schindler had invested his energy and his fortune in saving the lives of hundreds of Jews who would have otherwise been killed in Hitler's holocaust. Because the war is at its end, the Jews he saved will become free men and women; while Schindler will become a fugitive. As Schindler walks to his car with his Jewish friend, Schindler begins to cry. He looks at his watch and knows if he had sold it, he could have saved another life. He looks at his car and knows that he could have exchanged it for additional lives. He says to his friend, "I could have done more."

Oscar Schindler said, "I could have done more." Today friends, can we do more when it comes to serving God and bringing in the harvest of souls?

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, we come before You with a humble heart, ready to be used for Your glory. In the stillness of this moment, we offer ourselves as a vessel for Your divine purposes.

You have called each of us to serve and to spread Your love, and today, we ask that You use us in whatever way You see fit. May our hands perform Your works, may our feet walk in Your paths, and may our words echo Your truth and love.

Equip us with the wisdom, strength, and courage to fulfil the tasks You set before us. Let our lives be a testament to Your grace, a beacon of hope to those in darkness, and a source of comfort to those in need. Help us Lord to work for your kingdom here on earth and to bring in the Harvest of souls. This we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen**

Prayers of intercession

Loving God, we thank you for your invitation to gather here and to seek a true relationship with you. We bow before you now in humility and with faith, voicing our petitions, and so we pray that day by day we will grow to know you more clearly and love you more dearly.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Mighty God, so often the lack of justice throughout the world makes us angry. We see the poor being trampled and denied the basic freedoms that we so often take for granted. We pray for all those who are being driven from their homes and forced to seek refuge in Europe. We pray that the member nations of the European Union will all do their best to offer a safe refuge to those in need.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God we remember this morning those who are sick, sad or lonely. We ask for your healing, peace and comfort for all those who are ill or who are mourning the death of a loved one. We pray that they may be aware of your comforting presence and know that in your hands they are safe and loved.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God, we thank you for this time together in prayer and as we look forward to the week to come, we pray for an awareness of your love and support in all we do.

We bring all these prayers in the name of Jesus, who taught us when we pray to say **Our Father, who art in heaven ...**

StF no 407 Hear the call of the kingdom

1 Hear the call of the kingdom
Lift your eyes to the King
Let His song rise within you
As a fragrant offering
Of how God rich in mercy
Came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace

2 Hear the call of the Kingdom
To be children of light
With the mercy of heaven
The humility of Christ
Walking justly before Him
Loving all that is right
That the life of Christ may shine through us

Chorus
King of Heaven we will answer the call
We will follow bringing hope to the world
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name

3 Hear the call of the Kingdom
To reach out to the lost
With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross
Bringing peace and forgiveness
And a hope yet to come
Let the nations put their trust in Him

Keith and Kristyn Getty and Stuart Townend

A prayer of blessing

May God's Word be in your heart. May God's Word be on your lips. May God's Word direct your feet. On this day and all your days to come. May God's Word be the life you live. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

(This act of worship was prepared by Jenny Smith)