

## **24-05-2020 - Worship At Home**

### **Opening Prayer**

Blessed are you, creator God,  
To you be praise and glory for ever.  
As your Spirit moved over the face of the waters  
Bringing light and life to your creation,  
Pour out your Spirit on us today  
That we may walk as children of light  
And by your grace reveal your presence.  
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
**Blessed be God for ever.**

### **Song: Joy of the Lord**

*(CCLI Song # 7047091)*

Though the tears may fall my song will rise  
My song will rise to You  
Though my heart may fail my song will rise  
My song will rise to You  
While there's breath in my lungs I will praise You Lord  
In the dead of night I'll lift my eyes  
I'll lift my eyes to You  
When the waters rise I'll lift my eyes  
I'll lift my eyes to You  
While there's hope in this heart I will praise You Lord  
***The joy of the Lord is my strength***  
***The joy of the Lord is my strength***  
***In the darkness I'll dance, in the shadows I'll sing***  
***The joy of the Lord is my strength***

When I cannot see You with my eyes  
Let faith arise to You  
When I cannot feel Your hand in mine  
Let faith arise to You  
God of mercy and love I will praise You Lord  
Oh You shine with glory Lord of light  
I feel alive with You  
In Your presence now I come alive  
I am alive with You  
There is strength when I say I will praise You Lord  
*When sorrow comes my way  
You are the shield around me  
Always You remain my courage in the fight  
I hear You call my name, Jesus I am coming  
Walking on the waves reaching for Your light*

## **Confession**

**God of mercy,  
we acknowledge that we are all sinners.  
We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said  
and done,  
and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.  
For the sake of Jesus, who died for us,  
forgive us for all that is past,  
and help us to live each day  
in the light of Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **Reading**

Philippians 1:12-18

## Reflection

Today we continue our Sunday morning journey through Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, finding him in chains but clearly also in good spirits. He may have been writing from Ephesus or even Caesarea, but many scholars feel he was in Rome, where we know he was held for at least two years. But rather than his chains meaning he was in prison, it was probably more like house arrest, where he had at least some freedom to conduct his own affairs and to receive visitors. But he was still dependent on the charity of others to care for him, and was constantly under guard.

A couple of weeks ago Dan pointed to the joy Paul found from partnering in the Gospel with the Philippians. And rather than focusing on his circumstances, Paul's sights here are firmly on the spread of that Gospel, which is continuing wonderfully despite, and even because of, his situation. And this is happening in two particular ways.

First, Paul himself is able to continue to preach it. He was under constant guard, and possibly physically chained to a minder. Think about his circumstances for a moment. The same restrictions that kept Paul from going anywhere also meant a guard was with him for the many hours of his shift. And it wouldn't have been the same guard every shift. And this would have continued month after month, with many different guards spending time with him.

Although he was the captive, he also had a captive audience! I can imagine some of them dreading the thought of yet another day with someone they saw as a bit of a religious madman. But others would have had their lives turned upside down as they responded personally to the Gospel.

Whichever camp they fell into, they would have had many conversations with him. They would have spoken about him with their fellow guards, their families and their friends. They would have known the false charges against him, and that he was being

held because of his faith in God. They would have listened in to his conversations with his visitors, hearing all that he taught about God. They would have seen his faith lived out moment by moment. These palace guards were elite members of a group of 10,000 or more hand-picked Roman soldiers, peacemakers specifically charged with the protection of the Emperor, and granted the highest honours and privileges in their society. And he had the opportunity of time with them because of his circumstances. Many became Christians, as did some members of the Emperor's household. The Gospel was advancing.

And the second way this was happening was through other believers. Paul explains that because of his chains, Christians were being encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. There would have been some who thought "Well, if he can preach right under the noses of palace guard, then surely I can do so where I am." And others would have felt that with Paul in chains, they needed to step up and take more personal responsibility for spreading the Gospel. And it doesn't sound as if they always got it right. Paul speaks of some preaching out of envy and rivalry, with insincerity and selfish ambition, but he still rejoiced that, one way or another, the Gospel was being preached.

It's perhaps easy for us to feel that we're imprisoned by our circumstances at the moment. We've lost many of the freedoms that we were used to as part of everyday life - freedom to shop, freedom to go to a place of worship, freedom to travel, freedom to meet. And it's perhaps easy to slip into a mindset of self-pity, regret, even frustration and anger. But in our changed circumstances our God is unchanging, the same faithful, loving, utterly dependable God He's always been and always will be. When he wrote to the church in Rome, Paul reminded them that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. That's much more than a Christian cliché for difficult times. It's a deep Biblical

truth that should encourage us to look out for what God is doing or might want to do in us, through us and around us at the moment, to specifically look for ways in which we can share our faith with others.

For many in our church family, life is a huge challenge at the moment, with extra responsibilities and pressures, and we need to stand alongside each other in these difficult times. But for others it is bringing new opportunities. We're having contact and building friendships with neighbours in ways that some of us have struggled with in the past, and it's leading, and will lead naturally, to conversations about our faith. I've heard stories of church members discovering new and creative ways of serving their local communities, finding new or forgotten gifts that are helping to spread the good news in very practical ways. We're learning to be church, to do church, in some new and exciting ways that will continue to enrich our life and ministry in the future. And across the nation we're hearing encouraging news of many people exploring faith online, and engaging with the church in a way they've never done before.

None of us wants a coronavirus pandemic. Its impact is devastating for individuals, families and communities across the world. And yet in the midst of great sorrow and tragedy the Gospel is spreading and the Kingdom of God is being built. So in this time when so many earthly foundations are being shaken, what does God want you, want me, to learn? How does he want us to grow? What is He saying to us about our priorities, our focus, our service? What new opportunities is He giving us to share our faith? Whether we feel we have more time on our hands at the moment or whether we feel almost overwhelmed, let's be open, sensitive and obedient to the promptings of His Holy Spirit.

*Thank you, Lord, that the Gospel is your power for the salvation of everyone who believes. Thank you that it has transformed our lives and*

*given us a new hope in you. In these extraordinary times help us to see ways in which we can bring this message of hope to those around us, so that your kingdom moves forward and lives are changed. Amen*

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## Affirmation of Faith

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,  
he did not cling to equality with God,  
but made himself nothing.  
Taking the form of a slave,  
he was born in human likeness.  
He humbled himself  
and was obedient to death,  
even the death of the cross.  
Therefore God has raised him on high,  
and given him the name above every name:  
that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bow,  
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

## Song: Doxology

*(CCLI Song # 7134391)*

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him all creatures here below  
Praise Him above ye Heavenly host  
Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost

***Praise the Father, praise the Son***

***Praise the Spirit now with us***

***Every moment, all our days***

***God be praised, Oh God be praised***

Praise God with morning's breaking light  
Praise Him through darkness of the night  
Praise Him with every breath of life  
Praise Him my soul with all your might

Praise God when face to face we see  
The One Who died to set us free  
The One Who rose in victory  
Praise now forever Christ our King

***Praise You Father, we praise You Son***

***Praise You Spirit now with us***

***Every moment, all our days***

***God be praised, Oh God be praised***

God be praised, Oh God be praised

God be praised, our God be praised



## Gift Day:

As we approach our Gift Day on 14th June, we are focusing on our Fabulous Four – four charities with close connections to Holy Trinity Church. They are Riverbank Trust, Kick, LVA Trust and Karis Kids. As you give generously for this year's Gift Day, the money will be split evenly across those four charities. Last week we heard from Karis Kids, this week we are going to focus on the work of Kick. Let's hear from Joe Lowther about what's happening.

*A message from Joe Lowther for Gift Day:*

It's been quite a roller-coaster since the outbreak of Coronavirus. We have faced budget deficits of £40,000 in March and we are fighting to keep KICK alive. We are also committed to continuing to stay open to provide support to all our young people during this time of isolation and social distancing due to the COVID-19 outbreak. During this time, there can be difficulties that young people can experience with life changing dramatically and with the normal support networks not being available in regular forms. Due to these circumstances, the need for engagement and Mentoring and Chaplaincy provision is as high as ever. KICK has looked to start providing Key Worker Schools provision, innovate our services with Remote Mentoring and prepare to run KICK Camps after the lock down. We want to work in forms that will suit individual schools yet benefit and positively impact students with the safety and safeguarding of students and staff at the forefront. We are encouraged with the recent feedback from St Stephens Primary Headteacher during this period: "Our KICK Coach has contributed so much to the school and the staff during this Coronavirus crisis. He has played a massive part in boosting morale for the school. In a difficult time, he's providing our students with normality and as a

committed Christian man, he is a powerful image bearer of Christ”.

Any money given to Gift Day this year will be split evenly among our fabulous four charities. You can give now by bank transfer, by cheque, and online. You can find all the details of this on the leaflet that you were sent if you get our church emails, or on our website at [htrichmond.org.uk/giftday2020](http://htrichmond.org.uk/giftday2020)

## Prayers

We pray for:

- **Teachers and schools:**

Ask God to be with teachers and schools as they prepare to welcome back children. Ask God to protect them and their families and to help them get everything in place.

- **Government and decision makers:**

Ask God to guide and give wisdom to those who are making decisions about what the future might look like. Ask God to give them courage to make the right decisions and discernment to know what is right and good.

- **Key workers:**

Ask God to bless and protect all key workers. Ask God to give them times of refreshing and rest. Ask God to protect them and their families and for constant reminders that they are valued and loved.

**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: Living Hope**

*(CCLI Song # 7106807)*

How great the chasm that lay between us  
How high the mountain I could not climb  
In desperation I turned to heaven  
And spoke Your name into the night  
Then through the darkness Your loving-kindness  
Tore through the shadows of my soul  
The work is finished the end is written  
Jesus Christ my living hope  
Who could imagine so great a mercy  
What heart could fathom such boundless grace  
The God of ages stepped down from glory  
To wear my sin and bear my shame  
The cross has spoken I am forgiven  
The King of kings calls me His own

Beautiful Savior I'm Yours forever

Jesus Christ my living hope

*Hallelujah praise the One who set me free*

*Hallelujah death has lost its grip on me*

*You have broken every chain*

*There's salvation in Your name*

*Jesus Christ my living hope*

Then came the morning that sealed the promise

Your buried body began to breathe

Out of the silence the Roaring Lion

Declared the grave has no claim on me

Jesus Yours is the victory whoa

*Jesus Christ my living hope*

*Oh God You are my living hope*

## Blessing

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers,  
feeding us with your word,  
and encouraging us in our meeting together.

**Take us and use us  
to love and serve you, and all people,  
in the power of your Spirit  
and in the name of your Son,  
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.**