

Worship at Home - Sunday 2nd May, 2021 with Deacon Richard Beckett

Opening Prayer

Almighty, all-powerful, life-giving God,
we come to you because you have come to us in Christ.
Stay with us as we seek to stay with you in this time of worship.
Stay with us as we seek to stay with you
throughout all the days of our existence. **Amen.**

StF 356 Jesus shall take the highest honour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaiRYYOB0Y>

Jesus shall take the highest honour;
Jesus shall take the highest praise.
Let all earth join heaven in exalting,
The Name which is above all other names.

Let's bow the knee in humble adoration,
For at His Name every knee must bow.
Let every tongue confess
He is Christ God's, only Son,
Sovereign Lord we give You glory now.

For all honour and blessing and power,
Belongs to You, belongs to You.
All honour and blessing and power,
Belongs to You, belongs to You.
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God.

Chris Bowater - © 1988 Lifestyle Music Ltd.

A prayer of praise

Eternal God, first cause of all that is,
we gather to worship and praise you.
We know, from the depth of our hearts to the top of our minds,
that everything we have, and everything we can yet become
is rooted in your provision and care for all.
Help us to revere you as the source of our being.
Enable us to adore you,
as the beating heart of life.
Amen.

A prayer of confession and forgiveness

Honest God, true confession forces us to look beyond the superficial and so we look deeper into our souls today.

We dig below our healing or hurting words and our thoughtful or thoughtless actions.

We search for that which truly motivates our words and deeds.

We think of the people we have become – of our ego, our pride, our desire.

In the quietness of your nurturing presence reveal where we are in need of pruning.

Cut out that which does not bud through the life of Christ or blossom with the love of Christ.

Weed out that which causes you, ourselves and others pain.

Nourish with living water the very roots of who we are.

In the name of the one in whom we seek to abide always, Christ our Lord.

Amen.

StF 639 - Through the love of God our Saviour – all will be well,

Tune: 'All through the night'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQSNZ92NV7o>

Through the love of God our Saviour,
all will be well.

Free and changeless is his favour,
all, all is well.

Precious is the blood that healed us,
perfect is the grace that sealed us,
strong the hand stretched forth to shield us,
all must be well.

Though we pass through tribulation,
all will be well.

Ours is such a full salvation,
all, all is well.

Happy, still in God confiding,
fruitful, if in Christ abiding,
holy, through the Spirit's guiding,
all must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow,
all will be well.
Faith can sing through days of sorrow,
'All, all is well.'
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying,
in our living, in our dying,
all must be well.

Mary Peters (1813 – 1856)

Reading: John 15:1-8

Richard reflects:

I've never had a grape vine but I will always remember watching my Dad prune Raspberry canes in the large garden we grew up in. He did it with great care and respect and then I would stand and look mystified at the little clump of sticks that were left and wonder how they would ever result in the fruit we had each year. His work always bore fruit and in time, of course, those little sticks produced delicious fruit.

Jesus said *'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.'*

There is no doubt that the purpose of the vine is to grow fruit (Not wood or branches!) and in order for that fruit to grow, pruning needs to take place (Or 'cleansing' as Jesus puts it)

There are in every one of us, things which need pruning or 'cleansing'. What might they be for you and me?

- A sense of self-importance?
- A low sense of our own worth in God's eyes?
- Low expectations of what God can do?
- Something between one individual and another which we know needs healing.

What is there in our churches which prevents fruit from growing?

- Have our churches been too busy.
- Not enough prayer in the life of the church?
- The wrong sort of business?
- Being slaves to always getting things 'just right'?
- Over concern for the **size** of our churches at the expense of spiritual depth?

Let's allow God to prune and cleanse so that those fruits which He desires to be grown in his world can develop in us. Fruits such as love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control.

Watchman Nee – was a great Chinese Christian whose life God worked through in many wonderful ways. He spent 20 years of his life in prison – because of his belief in God. One day after his release from prison a friend asked him, “Watchman Nee, what does it mean for Jesus to abide in me?”

Watchman Nee picked up the spoon on the table in front of him and tipped a spoonful of sugar into his cup of tea, stirred it very slowly until it had dissolved.

Then he pushed the cup of tea over to his friend and said “Now then, see if you can take the sugar out of the tea”

“You cannot take the sugar out of the tea”, his friend said.

“That is how close Jesus wants to be with you” said Watchman Nee.

“So close, that he wants to change the whole flavour of your life”

Jesus says to each one of us:

“I want to abide in you, it is my desire to do this – God sent me into the world for this purpose, therefore live the lives God asks of you so that I can continue to abide in you”

Praying for all God's people.

(The 'titles' of Jesus used here might help recall Gospel events which speak into our daily lives)

We pray to God through Christ who is:

Prodigal Embracer – for people whose choices have led them into danger and vulnerability....

Multitude Provider – for people who hunger for spiritual and physical sustenance....

Table Turner – for people who speak out for truth and against injustice at great cost to themselves....

Outcast Welcomer – for people who are stigmatized and excluded....

Calmer of Storms – for people experiencing turmoil, tragedy and trials beyond their control....

Lazarus Raiser – for people mourning the death of a loved one or coping with illness and pain....

May the risen and living Christ bring us strength, wisdom and clarity of vision as we seek his will for us and all people. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

StF 258 You are the Vine, we are the branches

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hw5En1VoYYw>

You are the Vine, We are the branches,
Keep us abiding in You (x 2)

And we'll go, in your love,
And we'll go, in your name.

That the world, will surely know,
That you have the power to heal and to save.

You are the vine,
We are the branches,
Keep us abiding in you (x 2)

Danny Daniels & Randy Rigby © 1985 Mercy / Vineyard Publishing

Sending out prayer

God abides in us and we abide in God.

So, as we go forth from this place
may our God of goodness and nurture,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, stay with us,
as we stay with him now and always. **Amen.**

Service prepared by Deacon Richard Beckett
Some material adapted from Roots for Churches