

4<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Creator God,

We come before you as a small piece of your vast creation.

We come in awe at the beauty and wonder of our planet, and we feel its pain.

Let the embers of our burning bushland Rekindle the flame of Pentecost

**Shine your light in us that we may strive for a greener future.**

Let the dryness of the land in seasons of drought Remind us to thirst for your leadership

**Holy Spirit, lead us towards the well of hope for a sustainable planet.**

Let the waters of our flooded plains and rivers Drench our hearts with your mercy

**Living Water fill us with mercy for your suffering creation.**

Let the roaring of raging winds and cyclones help us hear the cry of Earth

**Jesus, give us your peace to calm our storm, and peace to strengthen our calling.**

Let the rise in sea levels raise our concern and love towards our neighbour

**Risen Christ, resource us with your love for the world.**

Creator God, we are your people, called and purposed to be good stewards of our planet.

**Bless this day. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Hymn TIS 597 Master Speak they Servant Hearth

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.**

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.**

And also with you.

### **Sentence**

Whoever does not carry the cross and follow Jesus cannot be his disciple. Luke 14.27

### **Prayer of Preparation**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Prayer of the Day**

God of the ages, you call the Church to keep watch in the world and to discern the signs of the times: grant us the wisdom that your Spirit bestows, so that with courage we may proclaim your prophetic word, and complete the work you have set before us; through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Jeremiah 18.1-11**

<sup>1</sup> This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: <sup>2</sup> 'Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.' <sup>3</sup> So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. <sup>4</sup> But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

<sup>5</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to me. <sup>6</sup> He said, 'Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?' declares the Lord. 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. <sup>7</sup> If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, <sup>8</sup> and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. <sup>9</sup> And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, <sup>10</sup> and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

<sup>11</sup> 'Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, "This is what the Lord says: look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions."

### **Psalms 139.1-5, 139.12-18**

<sup>1</sup> O Lord, you have searched me out and known me: you know when I sit or when I stand, you comprehend my thoughts long before.

<sup>2</sup> You discern my path and the places where I rest: you are acquainted with all my ways.

<sup>3</sup> For there is not a word on my tongue: but you, Lord, know it altogether.

<sup>4</sup> You have encompassed me behind and before: and have laid your hand upon me.

<sup>5</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: so high that I cannot endure it.

<sup>12</sup> For you have created my inward parts: you knit me together in my mother's womb.

<sup>13</sup> I will praise you, for you are to be feared: fearful are your acts, and wonderful your works.

<sup>14</sup> You knew my soul, and my bones were not hidden from you:

when I was formed in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.

<sup>15</sup> Your eyes saw my limbs when they were yet imperfect: and in your book were all my members written.

<sup>16</sup> Day by day they were fashioned: and not one was late in growing.

<sup>17</sup> How deep are your thoughts to me, O God: and how great is the sum of them!

<sup>18</sup> Were I to count them, they are more in number than the sand: were I to come to the end, I would still be with you.

#### Philemon 1.1-25

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker – <sup>2</sup> also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier – and to the church that meets in your home: <sup>3</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, <sup>9</sup> yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul – an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus – <sup>10</sup> that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. <sup>11</sup> Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup> I am sending him – who is my very heart – back to you. <sup>13</sup> I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. <sup>14</sup> But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favour you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. <sup>15</sup> Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for ever – <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. <sup>17</sup> So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. <sup>18</sup> If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back – not to mention that you owe me your very self. <sup>20</sup> I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. <sup>22</sup> And one thing more: prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. <sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. <sup>24</sup> And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. <sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

#### Luke 14.25-35

<sup>25</sup> Large crowds were travelling with Jesus and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup> 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers, and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> 'Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, <sup>30</sup> saying, "This person began to build and wasn't able to finish." <sup>31</sup> 'Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. <sup>34</sup> 'Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? <sup>35</sup> It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure heap; it is thrown out. 'Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.'

## Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Let us pray for all people and for the Church throughout the world.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

**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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Jesus said, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and who ever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6.35

## Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.

But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

## Confession

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

**Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## Absolution

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

## Hymn SoF 51 Breathe on Me Breath of God

### OFFERTORY

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.

Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God for ever.**

### Thanksgiving 4

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

All thanks and praise, glory and honour, be yours at all times, in every place, holy and loving Father, true and living God. We praise you that through your eternal Word you brought the universe into being and made us in your own image.

You have given us this earth to care for and delight in, and with its bounty you preserve our life.

We thank you that you bound yourself to the human race with the promises of a gracious covenant and

called us to serve you in love and peace. Above all, we give you thanks for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ: born as one of us, he lived our common life and offered his life to you in perfect obedience and trust. By his death he delivered us from sin, brought us new life, and reconciled us to you and to one another. Therefore with angels and archangels, with apostles, and prophets, with holy men and women of every age, we proclaim your great and glorious name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that we who eat and drink them in obedience to our Saviour Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, may be partakers of his body and blood, and be made one with him and with each other in peace and love.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Therefore, we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

As we eat and drink this holy sacrament, renew us by your Spirit that we may be united in the body of your Son and serve you as a royal priesthood in the joy of your eternal kingdom.

Receive our praises, Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom and in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we worship you in songs of never-ending praise:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread:

**so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.**

The gifts of God for the people of God. Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life.

Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life.

Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

Father of all we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.

May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. **Keep us in this hope that we have grasped: so we and all your people will be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name.**

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

**Hymn TIS 111 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation**

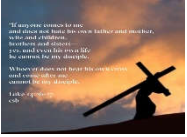
### **Blessing**

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;

and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen**



If you had been in that crowd and heard Jesus, say, 'renounce your family ties, prepare to die, and forsake all your possessions' would you have been inclined to follow him?

If a politician was running for office and promised to break up families, eliminate all social services and impose higher taxes, they would stand very little chance of getting elected but if there was a terrible disaster and the person leading the expedition to help said, 'you'll have to leave your families behind, some of us won't return and there is no point in taking more than the bare essentials', we would understand and there would be plenty of volunteers.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem; he had already made that commitment; he knew the task was urgent and he knew that life would not be easy for his disciples. Unlike some modern evangelists who promise an easy life as a Christian, Jesus knew that real commitment involves sacrifice.



Because Jesus ethic of love makes it unthinkable that one should hate one's own family, we need to look very carefully at this saying. First, it is a semitic hyperbole that exaggerates a contrast so that it can be seen more clearly. And more importantly, in Greek, hate is not the opposite of love: The word translated as hate does not contain any idea of anger or hostility, it indicates that if there is a conflict or choice to be made, one's response to the demands of discipleship must take precedence over anything else.

Commitment to Jesus must always be our first priority. Jesus is not denying the importance of close family and the aptness of living in supportive harmony with them but when there is an urgent task to be done, as there is now, then everything else including one's own life, must be put at risk for the sake of the kingdom.

Also, in Jesus' time Jesus and his disciples were an itinerant band and for many disciples even after the cross this situation continued. Discipleship required a willingness to leave home and travel with minimal provisions from village to village to proclaim the gospel, so this was something that really happened.



When Jesus talked about carrying your cross he is evoking the rejection and suffering that awaits him in Jerusalem. He warns the crowd, therefore, that no one can follow him unless they are ready to suffer the same fate as him. The two parables have basically the same message: a prudent person does not start a project or a war unless they are sure they can finish or win. Or a prudent person does not become a disciple unless they are willing to make a real commitment.

God did not enter the redemptive process without being prepared to complete it and Jesus did not set his face to Jerusalem without being prepared to face the sacrifice that would be required of him there. No one should step forward as a disciple without being prepared to forsake everything for the sake of following Jesus. This commitment is not just a way of life; however, it is a commitment to a person. A disciple follows another person and learns a new way to life



This willingness to sacrifice applies to our possessions, our stuff as well: The verb translated 'renounce' or 'give up' literally means 'say farewell' too or 'take leave of'. Many disciples, then and now, have owned houses and land and have not felt compelled to abandon them, the point is whether we are prepared to do so. Any of us, at any time, might be summoned to give up everything quite literally and respond to a new emergency situation. The sharing of goods in the early church (ACTS 2, 4) probably illustrate what Luke understood this demand to mean.



The sayings about salt are more as warnings to those who are already disciples. The value of salt lies in its saltiness, if it loses its saltiness, it cannot be restored. The point of the analogy is that the disciple is defined by their relationship to Jesus. If one gives up that relationship one is like salt that has lost its flavour.

Jeremiah saw the potter make a different pot from the clay and recognised God's sovereignty over his people. Salt cannot regain its flavour, but clay can be reshaped and if we turn again to the Lord, he can reshape us and make us to be the vessel he intends for us to be.

At every stage of its life the church has faced the challenge, not only of living up to God's demands but of placing them before the world. Nowadays we tend to think of salt as just flavour and we need to be careful of our blood pressure and not have too much but in the world before fridges and modern medicine, salt was used as a preservative, for healing, to sterilise, kill weeds and more, this is the call of the church: to make a difference in our community.



Paul is an example of someone who followed Jesus in every way throughout his whole life, he gave up his family and all his possessions and eventually his life for his Lord, but he brought so many people to become disciples and carry on the work, aside from the fact that we would so much poorer in our understanding of Jesus and the gospel without all his letters. The church has been very blessed by Paul, throughout the centuries and still today.



In this the shortest letter in the bible Paul, an old man, coming towards the end of his life and in prison in Rome, is writing to a particular man who, through one of those coincidences that has God's fingerprints all over it, owns the slave that Paul met in prison. Philemon had a church that met in his home and Paul praises them because they are being true disciples, the salt in their community, full of love and faith.

Originally Onesimus, was a slave who belonged to Philemon, but he ran away and was eventually caught and thrown in prison with Paul. Paul took him under his wing, taught him about Jesus and he in turn was able to be helpful to Paul. The name Onesimus actually means 'useful' hence Paul's little puns about usefulness. Paul would rather have liked to keep Onesimus but he knew that the right thing was to send him back to his owner so he sent him back with this letter in the hope that this might lessen any punishment that the slave might receive and also in the hope that Philemon may perhaps send him back. Paul who has given up everything for Jesus in his old age asks for the small luxury of having a useful friend to tend to his needs.



In a sense, no one can know whether they will be able to fulfil a commitment to discipleship, we all fail but Jesus forgives us. Jesus was not asking for a guarantee of total fidelity in advance. If he had, no one would qualify to be a disciple. Through these sayings and parables, Jesus was simply calling for each person who would be a disciple to consider what this commitment requires.

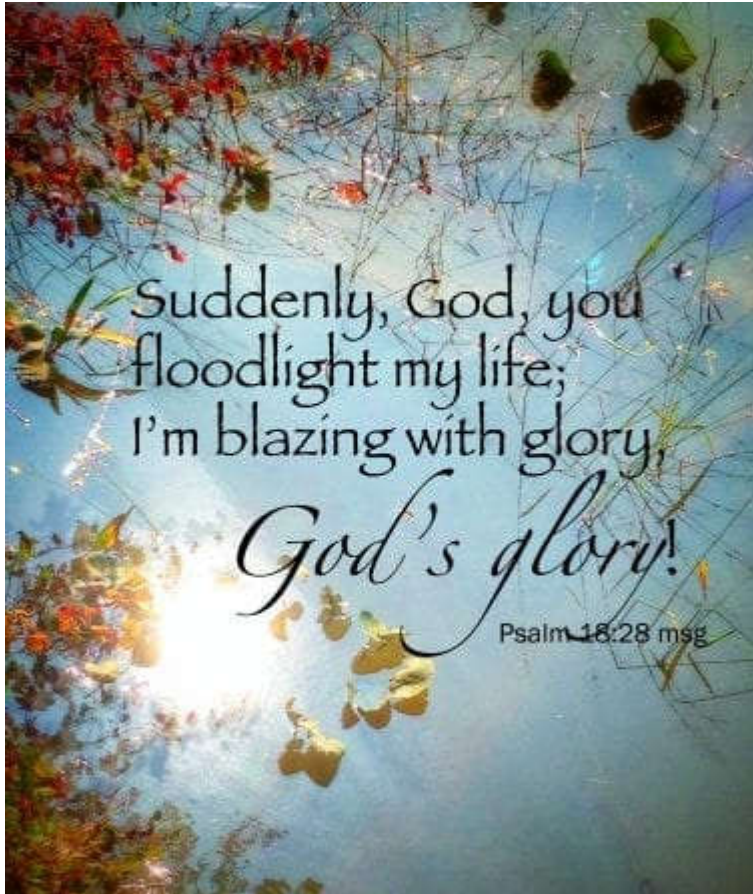
Jesus lived his whole life dedicated to his mission, being obedient to his father and blessing people wherever he went. Our call as disciples is to follow him, follow his example, follow his words and direction in our lives. Nothing can take precedence over that commitment



The cost of discipleship is paid in many different kinds of currency. For some persons, a redirection of time and energy is required, for other a change in personal relationships, a change in vocation, or a commitment of financial resources: but for each person the call of discipleship is all consuming. A complete change in priorities is required of all would be disciples. No part time disciples are admitted, no partial commitments are accepted.

Blessed are they who have not walked in the counsel of the ungodly: nor followed the way of sinners, nor taken their seat amongst the scornful.

<sup>2</sup> But their delight is in the law of the Lord: and on that law will they ponder day and night.



Suddenly, God, you  
floodlight my life;  
I'm blazing with glory,

*God's glory!*

Psalm 18:28 msg