

Sunday 17 November 2024 HC 3

TIS 187 Let all creation dance

Let all creation dance, In energies sublime

As order turns with chance Unfolding space and time

For nature's art in glory grows And newly shows God's mind and heart

God's breath each force unfurls, Igniting from a spark

Expanding starry swirls with whirlpools dense and dark

Though moon and sun seem mindless things, each orbit sings Your will be done

Our own amazing earth with sunlight cloud and storms

And life's abundant growth in lovely shapes and forms

Is made for praise, a fragile whole, and from its soul heav'ns music plays

Lift heart and soul and voice, in Christ all praises meet

And nature shall rejoice as all is made complete

In hope be strong all life befriend and kindly tend creation's song

Sentence of Scripture

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength'. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matthew 22:37-40

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

Almighty God, whose sovereign purpose none can make void: give us faith to be steadfast amid the tumults of this world, knowing that your kingdom shall come and your will be done, to your eternal glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Job 11:13-19

¹³ "Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, ¹⁴ if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, ¹⁵ then, free of fault, you will lift up your face; you will stand firm and without fear. ¹⁶ You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by. ¹⁷ Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning. ¹⁸ You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety. ¹⁹ You will lie down, with no one to make you afraid, and many will court your favour.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalm 4

¹ Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God.

Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

² How long will you people turn my glory into shame?

How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

³ Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.

⁴ Tremble and do not sin;

when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

⁵ Offer the sacrifices of the righteous
and trust in the LORD.

⁶ Many, LORD, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?"

Let the light of your face shine on us.

⁷ Fill my heart with joy

when their grain and new wine abound.

⁸ In peace I will lie down and sleep,

for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Ephesians 4:25–5:2

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. ²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. ^{5.1} Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

Matthew 5:21–26

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement.' ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³ "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

This is the gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon - Psalm 4 - Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God
Question Time

The 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 and his kingdom will have no end.

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

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

Response: Lord in your mercy. **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.

Scripture Sentence

⁶Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. ⁷Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. ⁸“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. Isaiah 55:6–8

The Confession

Knowing the goodness of God and our failure to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins, saying together:

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love, but we have broken your holy laws and have left undone what we ought to have done.

We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.

For the sake of your Son who died for us, forgive us, cleanse us and change us.

By your Holy Spirit, enable us to live for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is slow to anger and full of compassion, forgiving all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. God therefore forgives you in Christ Jesus, in whom there is no condemnation

Greeting of Peace

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 - TIS 624 Christ be my leader

Christ be my leader by night as by day

Safe through the darkness for He is the way

Gladly I follow my future His care

Darkness is daylight when Jesus is there

**Christ be my teacher in age as in youth
Drifting or doubting for He is the truth
Grant me to trust Him though shifting as sand
Doubt cannot daunt me in Jesus I stand**

**Christ be my Saviour in calm as in strife
Death cannot hold me for He is the life
Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its stain
Can touch my salvation with Jesus I reign.**

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Great Thanksgiving

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.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things,

making us in your own image. We praise you for your son, our saviour Jesus Christ, who by his death on the cross and rising to new life offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people. Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

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

And now, gracious God, we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, and pray that we who receive them in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit according to our Saviour's word, in remembrance of his suffering and death, may share his body and his blood.

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying 'Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you.

We who are many are one body in Christ,

for we all share in the one bread.

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 which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

We eat this bread and drink this cup **to proclaim the death of the Lord.**

We do this until he returns. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

Father as we recall his saving death and glorious resurrection, may we who share these gifts be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and united in the body of your Son. Bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom, there to feast at your table and join in your eternal praise.

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever. Amen

The Holy Communion

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 with thanksgiving.

After Communion

Gracious God, thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love, and that we are living members of Christ's body.

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.

Notices

Hymn - TIS 547 - Be thou my vision

**Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.**

**Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one**

**Be thou my armour, my sword for the fight,
be thou my dignity, thou my delight
thou my souls shelter and thou my high tower
raise thou me heavenward, my treasure thou art.**

**Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my Treasure Thou art.**

**High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.**

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.

Sermon - Psalm 4 - Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God.

Last week, when we looked at Psalm 3, we heard how David was going through hard times. He was fleeing his son Absalom who was trying to kill him. Today's psalm, psalm 4, doesn't seem much more cheerful. In verse 1, he begs God for release from distress. Some scholars think this distress is the same as Psalm 3 - but this doesn't seem likely, as we shall see.

However, before we get to that, we need to look at what else verse 1 is telling us.

As I mentioned, it is basically a plea to God: it says: ¹ Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

It may seem a bit forward of the psalmist to tell God to answer his prayer, but like I said last week, it is just the honesty of the psalmist - he doesn't shy from asking God for what he knows he needs. Yet, despite this forwardness, he doesn't forget the character of the God he is asking - he's a righteous God, the God who can give relief in distress, the God who has mercy, and most of all, the God who hears our prayers. We, of course, pray to the same God the psalmist prays to, the same righteous, merciful God, who hears us and can give relief in our distress.

After verse 1 there is a change. The people the psalmist is speaking to changes in verse 2. Not longer is the psalmist speaking to God, but to those men, those people who are causing his distress.

First he questions them:

² How long will you people turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

It doesn't sound like Absalom. Those causing this distress are turning the psalmist's glory into shame, they are embarrassing him, taking everything right and good that he has done and trampling it into the dirt. And not only are they fouling the good that he has done, they are deluding themselves, and enjoying the lie that they are living. They even try to justify themselves with false gods - fake gods that are the complete opposite of the psalmist's merciful, righteous God.

The answer the psalmist wants to know from them is simply 'how long?' How long will they bring distress and lies, how long will they go unopposed?

The psalmist then tells his opponents who he really has on his side. He tells them:

³ Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

It seems likely that when the psalmist refers to 'his faithful servant', he is referring to himself. He is not claiming perfect faithfulness, just that he seeks to be faithful to the one true righteous God, who, as he emphasises again, is the God who listens.

But the term 'faithful servant' is an interesting one. A number of people throughout the Bible are called God's faithful servants: Moses was called one couple of times and David once in another verse, but interestingly, Isaiah 49 calls 'the Messiah' a faithful servant. But when we get to the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as a faithful servant once, but Christians - either specific Christians or Christians in general, are called faithful servants some 5 or 6 times. This means we, as Christians, can rightly put ourselves in the shoes of the Psalmist, set apart by God, and whom The Lord hears when we call.

Getting back to the psalm, the psalmist finishes his address to his opponents with the warning:

⁴ Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds search your hearts and be silent.

⁵ Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the LORD.

Our New Testament reading from Ephesians quoted the first half of verse 4 - as Paul puts it: Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

Furthermore, it certainly seems our psalmist has this thing about beds. Last week he reminded us that the only reason we wake up in our beds in the mornings is that God sustains us, and today he tells his opponents to take the opportunity that their beds give them to search their hearts and be silent, to make sure they don't sin. Paul of course turned this around - he said 'Don't let the sun go down on your anger' - or in other words, don't go to bed when you are angry! I don't know why the psalmist is fixated with beds, but from my own experience, going to bed is always a good opportunity to review the day - search your hearts, seek repentance for sins you have committed, and particularly if you have argued with your wife - repent, seek forgiveness and make amends. Don't let it wait until the morning, sort it out before you sleep - or you might find you don't sleep well at all!

Then, recognising that none of us, Christian or opponent, is perfectly sinless, the psalmist also tells them to offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the Lord.

For the psalmist in the Old Testament, sacrifices were for the forgiveness of sins, but as Christians, we know that the only one true sacrifice for sin is Jesus' death on the cross.

Only his crucifixion and resurrection pay the penalty for sin on our behalf, so we don't have to.

But if that is the case, what then are the sacrifices of the righteous Christian that we should make?

Hebrews 13 tells us to, ¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:15-16

The sacrifices of the righteous Christian are therefore praise, openly professing Jesus's name, and doing good and sharing with others. These are spiritual sacrifices that Christians are called to make, not for forgiveness of sins, but in response to the forgiveness we have already received through Christ's sacrifice.

And this then brings us to the last verses in the psalm, which like the first verse, the psalmist addresses to God.

He says: ⁶ Many, LORD, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?" Let the light of your face shine on us. ⁷ Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound.

The world around the psalmist and us misunderstands God's mercy and power. They think that God promises material wealth, but the psalmist knows that God brings even greater joy than what you get from material wealth, from grain and wine. It is not that clear from the NIV translation, but other translations highlight that righteous joy is actually greater than the joy that comes from the abundance of food and drink. The psalmist asks God to fill his heart with more joy than his opponents get when their grain and new wine abound. Is this your prayer. Do you have you when you have enough, even when others, and even your opponents have more? The psalmist does!

The psalmist then finishes of the psalm by going back to his theme of beds:

⁸ In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.

And we can rejoice with the psalmist, even we are distressed as he was, that the God of peace sustains us in our beds, the Lord makes us dwell in safety, and as Christians, we know that that this safety is eternal safety, eternal life in the perfectly restored world for which Christ has redeemed us by his blood on the cross.

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety - forever.