



Chet Valley Churches
Last Sunday Praise
28 June 2020



Welcome

Welcome to Last Sunday Praise. In this file you will find links to the songs we have chosen for our worship. Click on the links to take you to each song.

Introduction

Our theme for this service is 'Freedom from Slavery'. Many people have felt enslaved by the effects of Covid-19, and slavery is far from unusual in our modern world. And yet, we have a God who sets us free from slavery in so many ways. So let's start with some worship songs that we probably all know and love. Then later in our service there may be songs that are less familiar – a chance to sing God's praises in a new song.

♪♪ All the songs link to YouTube. Just click with your mouse on the link, which will take you to a song with on-screen words. You may have to skip a few YouTube adverts.

♪♪ Jesus, hope of the Nations

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuK5fZ9Ur9c>

♪♪ This is amazing grace

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

♪♪ Beauty for Brokenness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaMPE53uP38>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

People have had very mixed feelings about the easing of lockdown, often determined by the circumstances of their own lives. For those at the bottom of the social pile, it has been appalling, both financially and in terms of dealing with each day. For those in less developed countries, the effects have been magnified many times over.

The prayer for today (the Collect) gives us a moment to pause and think about God's promise to a wounded and hurting world..

Perhaps you might read the prayer aloud, line by line, stopping to think about each line as you do so.

The Collect—A Special Prayer for the Day

God our Saviour,
look on this wounded world
in pity and in power;
hold us fast to your promises of peace
won for us by your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

♪♪ **O Lord the clouds are gathering**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xfv9OI59_7o

♪♪ **You who say I am**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bytj0G6RmEk>

♪♪ **Here is love vast as the ocean**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ga6Qtxzd6vk>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

As we recognise the power of the love of Christ in our lives, we freely worship him. Let us reach out to those around us and to those across the world who don't have freedom either to worship as they wish, or to determine their own lives. Let us hold them in our hearts, but also give them to our Lord, who loves us all more than we can possibly imagine.

Perhaps you might like to read aloud the following prayer that has been written for those who are concerned that nobody should be held in slavery.

A prayer for this time

God of compassion,
you set us free from sin and death,
yet many people in the world are not free.
We pray for all who work towards a more just society
where all people are valued
and nobody is considered to be worthless.
May we do all we can to share the freedom of your love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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♪♪ From the breaking of the dawn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DpSlliVwkEM>

♪♪ Make me a channel of your peace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZuk3lFz85A>

Bible Reading

Romans 6 verses 12-23

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

¹⁹ I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.

²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in ^[a] Christ Jesus our Lord.

Talk

Belinda Barwick has written this reflection.

There has been a lot of thinking about slavery – at least for me – in the past few months, with the Black Lives Matter campaign and some of the Black History programmes that have been on television. It is no exaggeration to say that the evils of slavery and its repercussions are still affecting us today. I remember being taught at school about the abolition of slavery (1807 for the trade, total abolition throughout the British Empire not until 1833), with people like Wilberforce behind it, and feeling relieved that the good old Brits were the ones that led such an important campaign. What did not emerge at the time (and this may have been said, but I didn't receive it) was that the good old Brits had also been behind the worst excesses of the slave trade and amassed great fortunes through it. A powerful lobby whose prosperity depended on the slaves in their sugar plantations resisted abolition tooth and nail, there were all sorts of loop holes (slaves were still allowed in Ceylon, for example) and – brace yourself – every C of E bishop voted against it when the bill reached the House of Lords.

To be fair to those with an early nineteenth century mindset, slavery had been a part of the way the world worked, forever. They had, quite literally, not seen the error of their ways: perhaps the fact that the fight against slavery was led by one branch of the Church might have led to resistance by the other branch or maybe the fact that they were younger sons of gentry families and an awful lot of the landed gentry had profited by slavery was also a factor. It's sin, though, isn't it? The Church is as capable of sin as its individual members, as the sex abuse scandal cases have shown in recent years.

Paul knew all about slaves and in his letter to the Romans he was not putting up an argument against slavery: it was a part of life at that time. When he used the example of being a slave to sin, he was accepting that everyone would know what it was about and what it would entail. To be a slave is to be owned by someone else, to be controlled by them and dependent on them, to have no rights and with any privileges at the disposal of the owner. It means that there isn't much point in having separate thoughts, because you will be told what to think. It means that where you go and what you do is at the whim of someone else. It is dehumanising.

For Christian being a slave to sin is giving the power in our lives to something or someone other than God. It means being ruled by temptations rather than what we know to be right and it means following the worst of our impulses. Those can be impulses to be hard on ourselves and to judge ourselves harshly as well as the impulses to give in to what are more obvious temptations. Rather than listening to the voice of God through our reading of scripture or through prayer we can become locked into a default position or mindset in which we just do not recognise what is God's will and what he is prompting us to do. Sometimes it means perverting God's will, claiming it for our own when actually it is our prejudices or our own desires that have really been behind an action.

Those things are not always easy to see, either. They become established as the way we always do things, with a particular reaction to a person or a decision which may have been good at one time, but now is just what we do, without thinking and certainly without consulting God. The sort of behaviours that can really lead us up the wrong path. The consequences can be difficult to manage, especially if we still don't see what we are doing.

I have just started my annual battle with bindweed. It starts in the same way every year – I look around the borders in early June and congratulate myself on all my hard work in getting them under control, with just enough wildness to please the hedgehogs. I have a week or two of sitting on my laurels – or at least on a garden chair – and then I put on my glasses and realise that the attractive range of greens is becoming dominated (strangled) by the dreaded bindweed. If only I had seen that before, I wouldn't be unwinding those horribly complex strands from flower stems. I wouldn't be seeing those large white trumpets opening up in the middle of the hedge. **Why** didn't I see that before? The answer is, of course, because I am far from being a perfect gardener. I am not the Alan Grey of Chedgrave.

It is true of our Christian lives too. Why didn't I see that I was being dominated by one of my besetting sins? Why did I allow myself to drift in such a ridiculous direction? Why didn't I speak out when I should have done? Why am I not more like (fill in the blank with your own standard of perfection). The answer is that quite simply we have not arrived yet. Nor, of course, has, but we can't see that. We're all on the way, getting through life with all its challenges and temptations, its upsides (glorious weather) and its downsides (Covid 19) and all the time God is with us, holding out a hand to comfort, to set us right again, to guide and (sometimes) to admonish.

That is the good news. We are no longer locked in a downwards spiral that will lead us to worse and worse decisions and actions. We have God's help to put on the brakes or even do a handbrake turn and change completely. We are no longer slaves to sin. We are a freed people, because, as Paul told the Romans, God gives freely and his gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus.

“And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

Martin Luther King, ‘I have a dream’ speech, 1963.

♪♪ **Oh kneel me down again**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDbyetEj_Tg

Time for prayer...

Let's take time to pray for:

- The leaders and decision-makers of our nation as we seek a safe, viable way out of social and economic lockdown
- Other countries of the world facing the same dilemma
- The leaders and decision-makers of the church seeking a way forward that embraces all that we have learned during the closure of the buildings
- People we know who are ill, either with the coronavirus or other ailments that haven't hit the news bulletins
- Justice for people who are repressed by others
- Our own contribution to the wellbeing of our world

Listen to this song recorded by Norwich Central Baptist Church and just think quietly about the words

🎵 **What a wonderful name**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwTy_9ZII00

You might want to pray aloud the prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples. Use whatever version or language you wish!

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is 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.

🎵 **How great is our God**

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

🎵 **Hear the call of the Kingdom**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc>

🎵 **And can it be...**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu2uA6U4Fvg>

A blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akT32E83zjl>