

# All Together Worship Are You Listening?

17th January 2021

#### Welcome

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. (James 4:8)

Lord God, we come to worship you this morning with your command to draw near to you ringing in our ears. It sounds so simple Lord, but we find it so difficult. We are worshipping in the isolation of our own homes; in the comfort of our own homes; in the distraction of our own homes. So many things get in the way: poor internet connectivity; WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, active on our smart phones; other family members; or maybe the antics of our pets. Help us this morning Lord to bring you our whole attention so that we can hear your word. **Amen.** 

#### A Hymn: Speak, O Lord, as We Come to You

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you To receive the food of your holy word. Take your truth, plant it deep in us; Shape and fashion us in your likeness, That the light of Christ might be seen today In our acts of love and our deeds of faith. Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us All your purposes, for your glory.

Teach us Lord full obedience, Holy reverence, true humility. Test our thoughts and our attitudes In the radiance of your purity. Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see, Your majestic love and authority. Words of power that can never fail; Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds; Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us. Truths unchanged from the dawn of time, That will echo down through eternity. And by grace we'll stand on your promises; And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us. Speak, O Lord, 'til your church is built And the earth is filled with your glory.

### A The Collect for Purity—A 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.

#### A The Collect—A Special Prayer for the Day

Eternal Lord, Our beginning and our end: Bring us with the whole creation To your glory, hidden through past ages And made known In Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen** 

#### Confession—We Say Sorry to God

#### A minister introduces a time of penitence.

As we become aware of God's presence with us, we realise how we fail to listen carefully to his word and to live in his ways...

#### Then all say together

Father God, we ask you to forgive us For the things we have thought And the things we have said And the things we have done That do not please you.

We are sorry.

Help us to be more like Jesus: Ready to pray, ready to help others, Ready to do your will In all things, every day. Amen.



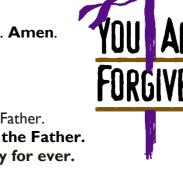
#### Absolution

May the God of love and power forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by his Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen**.

We praise God in the words of the Gloria

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Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to the Father. Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to the Father. To him be glory for ever. To him be glory for ever. Alleluia amen. Alleluia amen. [x2]



Glory to God, Glory to God, Son of the Father. Glory to God, Glory to God, Son of the Father. To him be glory for ever. To him be glory for ever. Alleluia amen. Alleluia amen. [x2]

Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to the Spirit. Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to the Spirit. To him be glory for ever. To him be glory for ever. Alleluia amen. Alleluia amen. [x2]

### Gospel Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

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

Our next hymn picks up on the words of Samuel:

#### A Hymn: Master Speak, Thy Servant Heareth

Master, speak! thy servant heareth, Waiting for thy gracious word; Longing for thy voice that cheereth, Master, let it now be heard. I am list'ning, Lord, for thee; What hast thou to say to me?

Speak to me by name, O Master, Let me know it is to me; Speak, that I may follow faster, With a step more firm and free, Where the Shepherd leads the flock, In the shadow of the rock!

Master, speak! tho' least and lowest, Let me not unheard depart; Master, speak! for oh, thou knowest All the yearning of my heart, Knowest all its truest need; Speak! and make me blest indeed.

Master, speak! and make me ready, When thy voice is truly heard; With obedience glad and steady, Still to follow ev'ry word. I am listening, Lord, for thee: Master, speak, oh speak to me!

### Talk [Rev Alison]

Here we are in another lockdown, not quite so still and quiet as before. The first lockdown was amazing in that suddenly you could hear lots of birdsong missed in the usual traffic noise; you could hear the wind in the grass and the leaves on the trees, you could make out individual footsteps. And you didn't have to listen hard to hear them.

Because listening is quite hard—good quality listening.

When I taught music to young children, we used to play listening games: there was one where we listened to the sound of a resonant cymbal, struck just once, listening until the sound completely disappeared. Of course, we discovered that the closer you were to the cymbal the longer you could hear it for, if you were really listening.

At the end of a session, we used to still ourselves for a minute or two of 'listening music'. It took a few weeks for children to learn how to be still, not to fuss one another or fiddle with the dreaded Velcro on their shoes. After a while, they relished that time; being quite upset if, for some reason or other, we couldn't finish with it.

I remember having to learn to listen when I was studying for music O-level. One of the aural tasks was to write down 4-part music as we listened to it. It was fairly easy to hear the highest and lowest parts but harder to distinguish the middle two parts. Of course, the more we practised, the better we became. I think I have probably lost some of that skill as I haven't used it for such a long time.

Then there's the skill of listening required in a choir or orchestra: listening to ensure you are singing or playing in tune with each other; listening to ensure that you are balanced in the right way—not too loud or too soft compared with other musicians.

And the luxury of being able to sit and listen to a wonderful concert—I had so missed that—when I was fortunate enough to go to a live, sociallydistanced, performance in Norwich just before stricter Covid measures were introduced. Everyone was so attentive and really appreciative.

Our reading today was about listening.

The story starts in rather a sad way: God was not often heard any more through word or vision. In fact, so rare was it that Samuel, who had been

at the temple since he was weaned, appeared never to have encountered God—he did not yet know the Lord. Sad because at that time it was believed that the temple really was God's house and a place where one might expect encounter to happen.

So when Samuel is called by God, he assumes that the voice is that of Eli, the old priest under whom he ministers. You can imagine the scene: Eli asleep and woken by Samuel, insistent that he was called by Eli. Eli sends Samuel back to bed. The same thing happens again and I can't help hearing exasperation in Eli's sending Samuel back to bed once more. And then a third time and at last the light dawns—maybe Eli's dim sight clears—'Ah! Actually this might be God. That's a bit of a surprise. Haven't heard from him in a while. But just maybe...'

I wonder nowadays if we are really expecting to hear from God; if we are even listening for God speaking our name; trying to get our attention.

Maybe we need to re-learn the skill of attentive listening; deep, focussed listening. Listening to God's voice in the depth of our hearts.

Perhaps we need to practise listening for God's voice amongst all the other 'noise' that is going on around us: texts, e-mails, Facebook, Twitter, government updates on coronavirus. Perhaps we need to practise listening for God whilst trying to silence our own inner monologue—what am I going to cook for tea tonight; mustn't forget to ring so-and-so....

If we really believe that God is going to speak to us, and if we manage to still ourselves so that we can really listen for God's voice above all the other sounds around us and within us, I wonder what God might be saying to us in this place at this moment?

Maybe it might be, "You'll never know how much I really love you; you'll never know how much I really care", as we heard at the opening of the service.

Or maybe it will be the words we long to hear:

"My peace I give to you."

"Come to me, all you that are weary."

"I will be with you to the end of the age."

"Do not worry."

"Do not be afraid..."

#### SS Hymn: Do Not be Afraid, For I Have Redeemed You

Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are mine.

When you walk through the waters I'll be with you, You will never sink beneath the waves. Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are mine.

When the fire is burning all around you, You will never be consumed by the flames. Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are mine.

When the fear of loneliness is looming, Remember I am at your side. Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are mine.

When you dwell in the exile of a stranger, Remember you are precious in my eyes. Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are mine.

You are mine, oh my child; I am your father, And I love you with a perfect love. Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are mine.

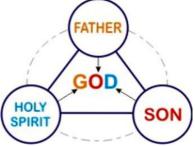
#### Creed—We Say What We Believe

#### We say what we believe

0We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.



#### We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### We Pray Together

We are going to use some of the things that God has spoken to his people through time to prompt us in our prayers today.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was shapeless, and empty; and it was very dark and deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good. [Genesis 1:1-3].

We pray for the earth; your good creation. Help us to work towards a more sustainable future, a kinder and gentler way of living on our planet. We pray that a sense of urgency will come to the leaders meeting at the climate summit in November and that out of words will come positive actions to combat the catastrophe we continue to create.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live. [Deuteronomy 30:19].

We pray for the choices that each person makes every day; some are more far-reaching than others. We pray particularly for leaders in the world all of whom have to make difficult decisions. We pray that their choices bring life to all people and not just a favoured few.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Thus says the Lord: Do what is just and right; rescue the oppressed from the power of the oppressor. Don't exploit or mistreat the refugee, the orphan, and the widow. Don't spill the blood of the innocent in this place. [Jeremiah 22:3].

We pray for the oppressed, the abused, those imprisoned on false charges, those unwelcome where they find themselves, those in trapped in war zones. We pray that justice and mercy will come to them; that they will know your peace.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

"This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" [Mark 9:7].

We pray for those who hear the words of Jesus and reject them. Open their hearts and their minds to hear his truth, his love and his call to follow him.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; [Revelation 21:3]

We pray and give thanks for the hope we have that one day all will be made new and we will live with you for ever.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

And we pray in the words that Jesus taught us:

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.

## **Sending Out**

#### **SS Final Hymn:** Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, Forgive our foolish ways; Re-clothe us in our rightful mind, In purer lives thy service find, In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard, Beside the Syrian sea, The gracious calling of the Lord, Let us, like them, without a word Rise up and follow thee. O Sabbath rest by Galilee, O calm of hills above, Where Jesus knelt to share with thee The silence of eternity, Interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness, Till all our strivings cease; Take from our souls the strain and stress, And let our ordered lives confess The beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire Thy coolness and thy balm; Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire; Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire, O still, small voice of calm!

#### **Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace.

And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.** 

#### The Dismissal

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

