

Apart but Together Worship – 3rd May

For the Beauty of the Earth - Week 3

Welcome to our service today.

The music and words of all the worship songs can be found by following the blue Youtube links.

Call to Worship : Psalm 100

Sing to the Lord, all the world!
2 Worship the Lord with joy;
 come before him with happy songs!
3 Acknowledge that the Lord is God.
 He made us, and we belong to him;
 we are his people, we are his flock.
4 Enter the Temple gates with
thanksgiving;
 go into its courts with praise.
 Give thanks to him and praise him.
5 The Lord is good;
 his love is eternal
 and his faithfulness lasts forever.



Opening Hymn : [Creation Sings the Father's Song](#)

Prayer: Dear Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth. You have revealed your beauty in creation and inspired the Bible that aids us in our understanding of you and your love. Please help us now as we consider your Word. Take us deeper into understanding more about you and your love for us. Amen.

Introduction : We continue our considerations this morning looking at the hymn - **For the Beauty of the Earth**. (Rejoice and Sing no 41.) As Jean has told us a couple of weeks ago, this hymn was written by a man called Folliot S. Pierpoint in 1864. He was 29 at the time and, looking down over the city of Bath, the view inspired him to praise God for the beautiful world we inhabit. Whilst written for communion, it does make me think about the wonder of creation, and how beautiful is the handiwork of the Lord.

We are considering **verse 3** today which is :

3) For the joy of ear and eye
For the heart and mind's delight
For the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight

*Gracious God to thee we raise
This our sacrifice of praise*

The verse makes me think of how wonderful the world is – full of beauty, wonder and **JOY**

This hymn is special to Deb and I as at our wedding over 20 years ago, the church choir sang this version adapted by hymn writer John Rutter whilst we signed the register after just getting married. (though note that in this Rutter version they don't actually sing verse 3)

Hymn : [For the beauty of the Earth \(John Rutter\)](#)

Bible Reading : Psalm 19

How clearly the sky reveals God's glory!
How plainly it shows what he has done!
2 Each day announces it to the following day;
each night repeats it to the next.
3 No speech or words are used,
no sound is heard;
4 yet their message goes out to all the world
and is heard to the ends of the earth.
God made a home in the sky for the sun;
5 it comes out in the morning like a happy bridegroom,
like an athlete eager to run a race.
6 It starts at one end of the sky
and goes across to the other.
Nothing can hide from its heat.

STOPPING TO SEE AND HEAR WHAT GOD HAS CREATED : “Be still and know that I am God”

Clearly, we are in a very difficult situation at the moment that has had a massive effect on what we regard as our “normal” way of life. This is affecting us all physically, mentally and spiritually.

However, I don't know about you but there are some aspects of the lockdown that I am actually enjoying :

- The slower pace of life – opportunity to do things at my own pace, not rushing from place to place, passing through and whizzing around.
- I have probably done less than 10 miles in a car in the last 6 weeks – I don't miss endless hours behind the wheel
- More opportunity to appreciate the small things! The birds singing, the beauty of nature, the kids helping more with the cooking and cleaning!
- Time to spend considering the word of God and appreciating his creation

The Psalmist says “How clearly the sky reveals God's glory! How plainly it shows what he has done!”

When we start to look at the world carefully, we see that nature continues regardless of everything that else – birds making nests, flowers blooming, trees growing leaves for this year. I have been trying to walk or cycle once each day, as allowed in the government guidelines. I always stay local but normally hardly ever see more than a couple of people in the distance. Isn't it strange to see everywhere so quiet? However, it has given an opportunity to notice the beauty all around us in Hornsea.

On Easter Sunday, I was able to get up early enough to see the sunrise and it was magnificent :



Isn't it amazing that whilst the world grapples with the pandemic, nature continues as designed. In fact, in many areas, air quality has improved, smog has disappeared, and murky waters have cleared.

Spring continues to blossom – look at these beautiful trees :



Deb and I took one of our exercise walks down the beach towards Mappleton and back. It was wonderful! No-one else was on the beach and the only sound was the sound of the waves crashing on the sand, and the birds singing in the air. How beautiful!

REFLECTION : Could we use this lockdown as an opportunity to consider our view of creation, and our appreciation of God's work?

God made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them in six days, keeping the seventh day, the Sabbath as a constant reminder of God as Creator.

The Sabbath was set as an opportunity each week to be set aside specifically to worship God. He set this as a pattern for us to follow that harkens back to the original institution of the Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3, where it speaks of God blessing and sanctifying the seventh day, because in it, He rested from all the work He had done. We now use SUNDAY as our Sabbath

So, we keep try to keep Sundays to remember that God is the Creator of the whole vast universe we see around us—the stars, the planets, the earth, the trees, the grass, the mountains, the oceans, the animals, and of course man. In this modern, technological age with so many people living in big cities, cut off from the land and soil and nature in general—it is very easy to forget who gave us these things.

Each Sunday is there to remind us of who produced all these things. Sunday is a day for us to renew our appreciation of God's awesome creation. Our thoughts should turn to these things on that day, but do we do this on the other 6 days? Why limit God to one day a week?

Psalm 46 verse 10 says : **“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”**

REFLECTION : Could this lockdown be like an extended Sunday?

Whilst we are not able to meet and worship together in our usual way, what are some of the things we could be thinking about during this pandemic period?

I think we can think of the size and grandeur of the universe. Take this opportunity to look online, or in that book you haven't looked at yet with amazing pictures, in brilliant colour, showing the wonders of outer space — the rings of Saturn, the milky way, black holes etc. Remember what David said in Psalm 8:3-4, when he wrote: “When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him?” These things can **humble us**, as they did David. Have we lost that sense of wonder and awe – now is a chance to re-connect not just the world around us, but the God who created it.

Another thing we can think about is the variety of trees. Consider the beautiful trees in Hallgarth park and perhaps in your garden if you have one.

How about small plants and flowers? Look at the amaryllis? It can start as a little shoot about four inches tall, nestled in a little pot of dirt, sitting on your kitchen table. Within a couple of weeks it can grow to about two and one half feet tall, and soon after you will see it burst out on top into gorgeous, brightly coloured flowers! Amazing!

When you watch something like that you are made to think of Matthew 6:28-29, where Christ said: “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” So we can see spiritual lessons even in plants and in the trees.

How about animals? Psalm 50:10-11 tells us that all the animals belong to God. The variety He has created is mind blowing. There are still species that we have yet to discover all over the world.

I watched a documentary the other day about the Loch Ness Monster – someone was investigating whether there is anything in the Loch, and what it might be – I will let you consider whether you believe in its existence.

There are things under the ocean that man has never even seen, yet God knows about them and cares for them. The Bible talks a lot about animals, and we can learn spiritual lessons from them.

We are told to go to the ant to learn about diligence and hard work. We also read about the nature of lions, and how Satan's nature can be reflected in them.

We can learn from pets. Many of you will no doubt have dogs or cats. We can marvel at the skills and personalities God has put in these creatures. The Bible also tells us how God feeds the creatures of the wild, and shows us that if He does this for them, He will certainly take care of our need.

This lockdown is a great time to read about these things, to learn about them or research them, and reflect on them. God is an artist! He loves beauty. He created the beautiful world for us to enjoy each and every day. A new appreciation for his work awaits us if we just take the time to look and listen.

Verse 3 of the hymn we are considering says :

3) For the joy of ear and eye
For the heart and mind's delight
For the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight

*Gracious God to thee we raise
This our sacrifice of praise*

REFLECTION : How are we **raising our praise** to God at the moment? Let's take this opportunity to step back, slow down and worship God for the beautiful world he has given us.

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will **be** exalted among the nations, I will **be** exalted in the earth."

Whilst we are not together in our building, we are together in Spirit and in Christ. **AMEN**

HYMN : [Be still for the presence of the Lord](#)

Prayer of Intercession:

Please name aloud those you want to pray for. We offer a prayer of thanksgiving and intercession:

Dear Lord and heavenly Father.
For the health workers tending the seriously ill
for the scientists working on a vaccination

for the researchers analysing data and identifying trends
for the media outlets working to communicate reality
for the supermarket workers, hygiene and sanitation providers
for the good news stories of recoveries and effective planning
for the singing from balconies by locked-down communities
for the recognition that isolation doesn't need to mean loneliness
for the notes through letterboxes offering help and support
for the internet and telephones and technology that connects
for the awakened appreciation of what is truly important

Thanks be to God.

For those who are unwell and concerned for loved ones
for those who were already very anxious
for those immune suppressed or compromised
for those vulnerable because of underlying conditions
for those in the 'most at risk to coronavirus' categories
for those watching their entire income stream dry up
for those who have no choice but to go out to work
for those who are afraid to be at home
for those who are more lonely than they've ever been
for those who are bereaved and grieving.
God be their healer, comfort and protection,
be their strength, shield and provision
be their security, safety and close companion

And raise up your Church
to be your well-washed hands and faithful feet
to be present to the pain
to respond with love in action
if even from a safe distance.

God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.
AMEN

(prayer based on one from Christian Aid website)

CLOSING HYMN: I have decided to use a hymn of Joy, expressing God's glory and victory! Join in if you can, play along if you can, make a joyful noise to the Lord

Hymn : [Mine eyes have seen the glory](#)

Blessing : To him who is able to keep you from falling and to bring you faultless and joyful before his glorious presence, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from all ages past, and now, and forever and ever! Amen.