



**Order of Worship : Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2022 at 10:30am**  
**Led by Rev'd Bekkie Wright, Minister in the Stamford Methodist Circuit**

**Youtube Link:**

*[When reading the order of worship on a computer, laptop or smart phone, click on the YouTube links to play the hymns. Remember to turn up the volume!]*

**Welcome**

Welcome to online worship for Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August. My name is Bekkie Wright and I am a minister in the Stamford Methodist Circuit. It really is a pleasure to be worshipping with you today.

Our worship this morning contains quite a challenging reading which calls on us to respond to God, to claim God, either once again or the first time, as our God, as your God and to rededicate and renew your faith. We therefore begin our worship with a beautiful song of praise performed by Chris Tomlin: Indescribable, uncontainable, you placed the stars in the sky and you know them by name.

**Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLMVqNwypjA>**

From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea  
Creation's revealing Your majesty  
From the colours of fall to the fragrance of spring  
Every creature unique in the song that it sings  
All exclaiming

**Chorus**

*Indescribable, uncontainable,  
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name.  
You are amazing God  
All powerful, untameable,  
Awestruck we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim  
You are amazing God*

Who has told every lightning bolt where it should go  
Or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow  
Who imagined the sun and gives source to its light  
Yet conceals it to bring us the coolness of night  
None can fathom

**Chorus**

*Written by Laura Story  
Performed by Chris Tomlin*

## **Prayer of Adoration**

All-encompassing God, we bow in adoration.

There is no need of sun or moon in the radiance  
of your majesty.

We bow in adoration, basking in the light of your love,**and exalting your name.**

Son of God, we bow in adoration.

Lamb of God, you light up our world with your glory.

We bow in adoration, basking in the warmth  
of your saving grace,**and exalting your name.**

Holy Spirit, we bow in adoration.

Blessing of God's goodness, you cause our hearts to leap for joy.

We bow in adoration, basking in the power of the river of life,**and exalting your  
name.**

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

we bow in adoration, basking in the eternal light,**and exalting in the powerful  
glory of your radiance.**

**Amen.**

## **Hymn 77 StF**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUH\\_NzfRmbs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUH_NzfRmbs)

Give thanks to the Lord our God and King

His love endures forever

For He is good, He is above all things

His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise

With a mighty hand and outstretched arm

His love endures forever

For the life that's been reborn

His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise [2x]

## **Chorus**

*Forever God is faithful*

*Forever God is strong*

*Forever God is with us*

*Forever*

From the rising to the setting sun

His love endures forever

And by the grace of God we will carry on

His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise [2x]

## **Chorus**

## **Prayer of Confession**

God of flame, your life has flowed through our history,  
leaping from one generation to another,  
releasing captives, affirming the poor, welcoming outcasts.  
Upon this day you spoke with the accent of all people  
in displaying your love for all life.

We confess to you and each other  
our drabness and uniformity,  
our desire to control rather than share life;  
to reproduce the past rather than explore the future.  
We confess the narrowness of our vision,  
and our choosing of the most comfortable path.

God of flame and colour,  
dance around us, enchant us;  
quicken us and, above all, forgive us  
for painting your gospel  
in the dowdy colours of our limiting culture.

In the name of Christ,  
release us from the prisons of our own making.

How shall we speak the name beyond all names?  
We will light a flame and proclaim God is amongst us.

How shall we praise the one  
who knew the embers of death for us?  
We look into the consuming flame and say  
'Behold the Lamb of God'.

How shall we celebrate the Mystery,  
the Spirit, the Companion among us?  
We clap the hands of our hearts,  
for she it is who makes each one a home for Christ.

God of fire, we shrink from your justice  
but adore the love which fuels it.

Christ, the blaze of God's fire spent on our darkness,  
we are stilled and silenced by your passion and death.

Dancing Spirit flame,  
you awaken us to the risen Christ,  
you invite us to sing and dance in our heart;  
and for this -  
we open the most secret places of our being  
in adoration and wonder.

## Hymn 477 (StF)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZ-Nw6C46M>

Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart  
Teach me to move in the power of your Spirit  
Teach me to walk in the light of your presence  
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart

Teach me to love with your heart of compassion  
Teach me to trust in the word of your promise  
Teach me to hope in the day of your coming  
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart

You wrote the rhythm of life  
Created heaven and earth  
In You is joy without measure  
So, like a child in your sight  
I dance to see your delight  
For I was made for your pleasure

Let all my movements express  
A heart that loves to say 'yes'  
A will that leaps to obey you  
Let all my energy blaze  
To see the joy in your face  
Let my whole being praise you  
Praise you

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Now we turn to the reading on which our worship today is based. On the face of it this reading says some difficult things, but please bear with it, listen to it and afterwards we will unpack together what God is saying to us through it.

## Reading: Luke 12:49-55

<sup>49</sup> "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!  
<sup>50</sup> But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! <sup>51</sup> Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. <sup>52</sup> From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup> They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

<sup>54</sup> He said to the crowd: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. <sup>55</sup> And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. <sup>56</sup> Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of

the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?

## **Sermon**

Okay, let us dive right into this reading and see where God is taking us with it.

Taken at face value it comes across as extremely harsh and opposite to what we like to understand about Jesus. Jesus came to bring peace and harmony, healing, wholeness, united communities. Even his death on the cross and his resurrection are understood as part of a process of atonement where creation is brought back into connection with God.

But here, we have Jesus claiming that he is bringing fire to the earth and he wishes it was already here. He is being constrained until he has undergone a baptism. He is not coming to bring peace; did you really think he was? Instead, he is planning to divide families, separate people from each other. And just in case that message was not enough, he wants to remind us that we are hypocrites who cannot understand anything that God is doing in our world. I can see myself slowly backing away from Jesus in the force of this tirade ("I'll come back when you're feeling a bit more like yourself, Lord").

Except, this is not what is happening in this passage. This is not a frustrated Jesus, who is so angry that he is giving up on us. What is happening with each of the comments made is that Jesus is connecting with prophecy and messages which have gone before. He is using them to explain what is really going on in the world and to further explain our relationship with God.

Jumping straight to the end of the passage, we, who can see one cloud rising in the west and think "it's going to rain today," or feel a change in the wind and know it's going to be hot can work to make adjustments and change our plans to suit the weather. We need to be doing the same with scripture, seeing the small cloud, feeling the change in wind which tells us that we are not quite on the right track for understanding God and realising that we need to develop our understanding, spend time listening to God, exploring scripture with each other, hearing the truth of God at work in our present time. We have all the tools we need to do this; we just need to use them. So let us begin by using them in what Jesus is saying in our passage today.

That first cloud; that change in the wind; appears in Luke's gospel in the birth narratives. As Jesus' parents take him to the temple to be presented, circumcised, recognised as a Hebrew child of God, they meet Simeon, an elderly man who is coming to the Temple every day because God has promised him that he will meet the Messiah. The story is told in Luke Chapter 2. As Jesus' parents enter the temple, Simeon takes the child in his arms and says this:

"My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

In the arms of Simeon, Jesus is named before he is even presented to the priests for the proper ceremonies.

Simeon then goes on to bless the child's parents and he says to Mary: "this child is **destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel**, and **to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.**"

In the words of Jesus in today's reading "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division." This is not a threat from Jesus, not a punishment, not God destroying our lives by separating us from those we love. It is simply a statement of fact, that in a world which has turned from God, which tries to thrive on human hierarchies, human power, human wealth, human greed, which prioritises the individual at the expense of everyone else, when the Word of God tells us that this is not the way life should be and we listen and respond we are immediately in conflict, in a different place to all those who still prioritise the systems of the world.

Look where Jesus says the divisions are: "father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

Right from the Old Testament, from the time of the Israelites crossing the wilderness and entering the Promised Land, over and over again as the people have returned to God and taken on God's teachings as their own, scripture tells us to pass our understanding down to our children. Just one example from Deuteronomy, chapter 11:

"<sup>18</sup> Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.<sup>19</sup> Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

But that has somehow been lost along the way and now this connection of parent and child is broken and laws which should have and would have united them will divide them as some choose to follow Jesus and others choose not to. And the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law? I am taken back to the book of Ruth. Naomi and Ruth, Naomi living a life in God and Ruth adopting it for the love of her mother-in-law. Both are blessed and Ruth (a Gentile, not a Jewish woman) becomes one of the ancestors of Jesus. But now look, that symbol of unity in God is destroyed as the people have become lost to God and only some make the decision to return.

This is the reality of turning to faith in God and taking up our cross; our discipleship. Not an easy run of just hedging our bets for the afterlife, an insurance policy so that life might be a bit easier for us because God will sort it out when we get stuck. Instead, it is a commitment to live, follow, speak, love God even into situations which then separate us from others, from the securities of our world.

For the people who first heard Luke's gospel, this was a reality of life. Following Jesus meant being rejected by family and community. Being thrown out of synagogues, of places of worship, of communities. Of being rejected because you were seen as having rejected your family and friends. For us, particularly in the west today, the division is not quite as severe, although so many of us feel the heartache of our children and our partners not accepting Jesus and we live with that pain.

But here is where the message of hope comes in and it is actually in the first sentences of our reading, because here is the promise that we do not face this separation alone. Here we are taken back to Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, told in Luke chapter 3. John baptises the people in water, a sign of their commitment to God, but he tells them "one who is more powerful than I is coming – he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire".

Not the fire of destruction but the fire of the Holy Spirit, the fire of purification, the fire of salvation, of being at one with God, the fire which burns off all that separates us from God. The fire which we will see in Acts chapter 2 at Pentecost. This is the fire that Jesus is longing for and the fire which sustains each one of us when we open ourselves up to God and claim it for our own.

At this point in the story of Jesus, he is constrained; that fire will not come whilst Jesus is still physically living amongst us. He needs to face a baptism, not of water, but a baptism of death and resurrection. Dying, metaphorically entering the waters of death but rising back above them in new life. And as he goes through this so we too receive new, eternal life.

As Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist and came out of the water, the heavens opened and the "Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove." As Jesus enters and rises from the waters of death the Holy Spirit descends again upon the world. As we recognise that sign as the sign of God changing and renewing ourselves and our world, so we too receive the fire of the Holy Spirit and we are at one with God.

And so my prayer for us today: not the ease of perfect relationships which come from silence, from denying God, from hiding our faith, from maintaining the status quo. But instead the courage fuelled by the fire of the Holy Spirit to openly and repeatedly claim God as our God, Jesus as our saviour and the Holy Spirit as our companion on our journey of faith. Amen

**Hymn:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWDcL-SpprY>

Spirit of God, bring freedom to every heart  
Spirit of God, bring freedom to every heart  
Holy counsellor, lead us, lead us into truth  
Holy counsellor, lead us, lead us into truth  
Awaken us life-giving breath of God  
Awaken us life-giving breath of God  
Spirit of God, bring freedom to every heart  
Spirit of God, bring freedom to every heart

### **Prayers of Intercession**

'A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord." '

Lord, we pray for the church  
as we seek to proclaim our faith in you.  
Help us to make new inroads  
into parts of our community which have become  
a wilderness to your word.....

Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

'Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together.'

Lord, we long for the day  
when the human family will stand shoulder to shoulder,  
sharing a common vision  
revealed through your glory.  
We pray for those working for peace and reconciliation in our world.....

Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

"Comfort, O comfort my people," says your God.'

Lord, we pray for those in need of comfort:  
for the hungry and homeless who need the physical comfort of food and shelter;  
for the lonely and rejected who need the comfort of love;  
for the sick and suffering who need the comfort of healing;  
for troubled souls who need the comfort of faith.....

Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

'The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.'

We remember those who have died  
and pray for those struggling with bereavement.  
In the face of the fragility of human life,  
remind us that our life in Christ will stand forever.

Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

'See, the Lord God comes with might and his arm rules for him.'

We offer our prayers in the name of Jesus, and in anticipation of the day when the  
only prayers needed will be those of adoration and praise.

**Amen.**

And so we draw our worship to a close with a final hymn. This is actually an Easter  
hymn and speaks some of the Easter story, but it also speaks the hope which our  
passage gave us today in the baptism of Jesus and our own baptism with the Holy  
Spirit.

### **Hymn 309 Stf**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LgE\\_E7yaz4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LgE_E7yaz4)

See, what a morning, gloriously bright  
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem  
Folded the grave-clothes, tomb filled with light  
As the angels announce, "Christ is risen"

See God's salvation plan  
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice  
Fulfilled in Christ, the man  
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead

See Mary weeping, "Where is He laid?"  
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb  
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name  
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again

The voice that spans the years  
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us  
Will sound till He appears  
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead

One with the Father, Ancient of Days  
Through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty  
Honor and blessing, glory and praise  
To the King crowned with pow'r and authority

And we are raised with Him  
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered  
And we shall reign with Him  
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead

### **Blessing**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has blessed us in Christ.

We have heard the word of truth,  
the gospel of our salvation, and we have believed.  
Go, and live to the praise of his glory. **Amen.**