

## Glenkens Worship Resources for Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020

I lift my eyes  
to the quiet hills  
in the press of a busy day;  
as green hills stand  
in a dusty land  
so God is my strength and stay.

I lift my eyes  
to the quiet hills  
to a calm that is mine to share;  
secure and still  
in the Father's will  
and kept by the Father's care.

I lift my eyes  
to the quiet hills  
with a prayer as I turn to sleep;  
by day, by night,  
through the dark and light  
my Shepherd will guard his sheep.

I lift my eyes  
to the quiet hills  
and my heart to the Father's throne;  
in all my ways  
to the end of days  
the Lord will preserve his own.

### **Prayer**

Lord, we lift our hearts to you, open to receive your strengthening words to us. May we rest secure in your good will towards us, loving Father, rest in the centre of your loving purposes towards us. Guide us in the way we should go, the things we should do, the words you would have us say. We would place ourselves under your care so that we might receive of your wisdom and strength to help us fulfil the responsibilities that lie upon us. We are weak, but you are mighty; hold us with your powerful hand.

We recognise that at times we have failed you and failed one another. That at times we get so caught up in our own little worlds that we trample on others thoughtlessly and do or say things that bring hurt. We are sorry for the ways we have failed others, and you. Help us to forgive others when we feel they have failed us. We are sorry for the way we have often tried to live our lives without you. Help us to return to your Fatherly welcoming arms. We thank you that you do not hold the past against us, but are the God of new beginnings. We all need new beginnings in different areas of our lives. May your love rest upon us and your strength empower us so that we may step forward into the future with a new confidence and resolve. For we ask this as we pray and say,

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:  
For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,  
For ever. Amen.

**Song**

I have a Maker,  
He formed my heart;  
before even time began  
my life was in his hands.  
*He knows my name,  
He knows my every thought;  
He sees each tear that falls  
and He hears me when I call.*

I have a Father,  
He calls me His own;  
He'll never leave me,  
no matter where I go.

**Psalm 67 (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face shine on us—  
<sup>2</sup> so that your ways may be known on earth,  
your salvation among all nations.
- <sup>3</sup> May the peoples praise you, God;  
may all the peoples praise you.
- <sup>4</sup> May the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you rule the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations of the earth.
- <sup>5</sup> May the peoples praise you, God;  
may all the peoples praise you.
- <sup>6</sup> The land yields its harvest;  
God, our God, blesses us.
- <sup>7</sup> May God bless us still,  
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

**Philippians 2: 12 – 18 (NIV)**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.

<sup>14</sup> Do everything without grumbling or arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky <sup>16</sup> as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour in vain. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. <sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

## Reflection

Many in our society are unwilling to take responsibility for their actions. Rather than accept responsibility there is a tendency to try and shift responsibility, whether to blame the government, employers, doctors, teachers, children, parents, husbands, wives – there is always someone else to blame rather than admit one's own responsibility. Of course this goes right back to the story of the Garden of Eden. When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit in the garden, he blamed the woman for giving it to him to eat. And the woman? She blamed the serpent for deceiving her. All of us find it easy to point the finger at someone else when we're blamed for something to try and lessen our own responsibility.

But Paul does not take the Philippians down this route. He urges them to take responsibility for their lives and to take a responsible attitude to the society around them. And he starts the section we read out today with the words, 'Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to work for his good purpose.' He starts off by saying 'therefore'; and what he says follows on from the previous passage we looked at last week where he speaks of Jesus humbling himself and taking the nature of a servant and being obedient even unto death – death on a cross. It is because Jesus has set us an example that we are to follow his example and in obedience work out our own salvation under God's guiding hand. Indeed, you could say it is the only appropriate response to Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf.

'Salvation' perhaps for some of us has become a bit of meaningless religious jargon. 'Are you saved?' What exactly does it mean? A word to use in its place could be the word 'freedom'. To be saved by Jesus Christ is to be set free. Jesus sets us free from our guilt, our addictions, from our fears, and, above all, from our fear of death. He sets us free to know God, to love others and to be our true selves, as God made us and meant us to be. So what Paul is really saying here in Philippians is 'Therefore, my dear friends, continue to work out your freedom with fear and trembling...' This is different from working *for* our freedom. We are not trying to earn our freedom, earn our salvation. Rather our freedom in Christ is a possession that we already have as Christians and that we need to explore and enjoy ever more fully. It's a bit like marriage. Marriage once possessed is possessed in full, but merits a life time of exploration, enjoyment, development and discovery. So we need to work out our freedom in Christ day by day, entering ever more fully into its reality and claiming its benefits ever more fully, as we put to death our fears and guilt.

But we need to remember that God has set us free for a purpose – to know his love, and then in the security of his love to go on to find creative fulfilment as we give of ourselves in love and service to others. That is why we need to work out our freedom in fear and trembling. It is possible to have a saved soul and a wasted life.

There is a careful balance in Paul's wording of this sentence. We are to 'work out' our salvation because it is God who 'works in' us. Our freedom is a gift from God and even in the working out of it we need his help. God's work in us includes our wills. He works in us 'to will and to act according to his good purpose'. Sometimes we're afraid to trust God with our futures, because we fear that God will make us do something that we have no desire to do. But that fear is groundless. If our will is surrendered to his will, God will give us the desire to do whatever he is calling us to do. If we surrender to his will, he will work out 'his

*good purpose*'. What he wants for our lives is good. It won't necessarily be easy, but we won't be able to improve on his purpose. In fact, working out our salvation means fulfilling our potential as the whole person we were created to be.

Paul calls us to live blameless and pure lives that we might become children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation. Here are two descriptions of young people in society:

'I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words... When I was young we were taught to be discreet and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly impatient of restraint.'

Those words were penned by Hesiod, a Greek poet of the eighth century BC. Here's a more recent description:

'The children now love luxury; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in the place of exercise. Children are tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs and tyrannise their teachers.'

That one comes from Socrates in the fifth century BC. Nothing has really changed! In a world that always was like that and always will be like that – a world that is in rebellion against God will always be like that – we are called to shine like stars in the universe as we hold out the word of life. As Christians we are called to live lives that are noticeably different from those around us – not in a self-righteous kind of way. We are called to do everything without complaining or arguing - not to be those who always murmur against God and against other people, not to be those who are difficult to keep company with. Rather praise of God and of others should characterise our lives, so that we 'may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault'. As children of God we are called to bear more and more the likeness of our Elder Brother, even Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of the Father who came down to us to lead us back to God.

We are called to be in the world but not of the world - to take on responsibilities within our communities and seek to influence things for good, to do our bit for our fellow men and women. Sadly too many in our day are unwilling to take on responsibilities. We all have a role to play within our communities. God never intended us to live isolated lives cut off from our fellows behind the closed doors of our homes. Thank God that in the current pandemic we have other ways of networking with others!

Our responsibility involves not just our lifestyle but also our lips. We have a responsibility to 'hold out the word of life' to a society desperately needing God. Many around us are dissatisfied because they have never found the relationship with God for which they were made. Rather than timidly keeping that good news to ourselves for fear of offending others or being rebuffed, we need to be bold to point others to the God who loves them and has good purposes for them, even as one hungry beggar might show another hungry beggar where to find food. May you go in God's strength to live for him and serve him. In that is life, life in all its fullness.

## Song

We have sung our songs of victory,  
We have prayed to You for rain;  
We have cried for Your compassion  
To renew the land again.  
Now we're standing in Your presence,  
More hungry than before;  
Now we're on Your steps of mercy,  
And we're knocking at Your door.

*How long before You drench the barren land?  
How long before we see Your righteous hand?  
How long before Your name is lifted high?  
How long before the weeping turns to songs of joy?*

Lord, we know Your heart is broken  
By the evil that You see,  
And You've stayed Your hand of judgement  
For Your plan to set men free.  
But the land is still in darkness,  
And we've fled from what is right;  
We have failed the silent children  
Who have never see the light.

But I know a day is coming  
When the deaf will hear His voice,  
When the blind will see their Saviour,  
And the lame will leap for joy.  
When the widow finds a Husband  
Who will always love His bride,  
And the orphan finds a Father  
Who will never leave her side.

*How long before Your glory lights the skies?  
How long before Your radiance lifts our eyes?  
How long before Your fragrance fills the air?  
How long before the earth resounds with songs of joy?*

## Prayer

Lord, we pray that many more people might find a place of belonging within the family of your people and know your love reaching to them right where they are. We pray that many prodigals might find a way home from their wanderings to know the embrace of you, their Heavenly Father. May we enthrone you in our hearts and go wherever you may lead us – learn to be responsive to your still small voice nudging us within and showing us the way we should go, the people we could give a helping hand to, the folk to whom we could give an encouraging word. May your Spirit empower us to step out beyond our comfort zone and prove your faithfulness in new ways.

We pray for those who mourn, that they may be comforted. We pray for those who need to know your healing touch upon their lives, that they might know your healing in spirit, soul or body. We pray for those overwhelmed by events in their lives or in the world. Speak words of hope and reassurance to them; set them free from their fears and help them to entrust themselves into your hands. Lord Jesus, you are the Light of the world, and you have shone your light into our hearts and lives. May we reflect it out into the lives of those we are in

contact with in the coming days, that you might give them a fresh vision for their lives and they might come to know the good purposes that you have towards them. May your guiding hand be upon all those seeking to defeat the coronavirus, and may you help us all to work with them to more speedily reach that goal. With your help may we build more compassionate and caring societies throughout the world and break down barriers that divide people one from another. May your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. We ask these things in your name and for your glory. Amen.

## Hymn

Rejoice, the Lord is King! your Lord and King adore;  
mortals give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore;  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice, again I say, 'Rejoice!'

Jesus, the Saviour, reigns, the God of truth and love;  
when he had purged our stains he took his seat above;  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice, again I say, 'Rejoice!'

His kingdom cannot fail, he rules both earth and heaven,  
the keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given;  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice, again I say, 'Rejoice!'

He sits at God's right hand till all his foes submit,  
and bow to his command, and fall beneath his feet:  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice, again I say, 'Rejoice!'

Rejoice in glorious hope! Jesus the Judge shall come,  
and take his servants up to their eternal home.  
We then shall hear the archangel's voice;  
the trump of God shall sound, 'Rejoice!'

And now may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.