

Worship for Sunday 6th June 2021
from Brian & Clare Kennard

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”
(Psalm 42: 1-2)

Suggested Hymn: *Great is Thy Faithfulness*

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my father
There is no shadow of turning with thee
Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not
As thou hast been thou forever wilt be

Great is thy faithfulness
Great is thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed thy hand hath provided
Great is thy faithfulness
Lord unto me

Summer and winter, springtime and harvest
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love

Chorus

Pardon for sin and peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside

Chorus

Prayer time:

*Be still and focus on the awesome God we serve:
great beyond all words, but revealing Himself
through His Word, and most clearly through the
Word who became flesh - the Lord Jesus Christ.
Express your adoration, worship and praise in
whatever ways you can.*

The Bible says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”
(1 John 4: 8-9)

*Let God speak to you about the attitudes and actions
that need changing in your life. Confess to Him your
weaknesses and failures, and receive His cleansing
and forgiveness as He has promised.*

Prayer for today (“Collect”):

God, faithful and true,

You call every generation to make a pilgrim journey.

Guide our feet along the road of faith,

that we may put our whole trust in You;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

If you have a Bible of your own, please read **Psalm 138**

Reading: Acts 11: 1 - 18

The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

⁴Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ⁵“I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. ⁶I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. ⁷Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

⁸“I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

⁹“The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ ¹⁰This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

¹¹“Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. ¹²The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. ¹³He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. ¹⁴He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’

¹⁵“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came

on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?"

¹⁸When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."

Reflection: Conversion

"When you are converted, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32)

These were the words spoken by Jesus to Peter, predicting his denial but at the same time offering a way back. So, to our reading today, where Peter is having to explain to some of his aggrieved colleagues why he engaged with non-Jews and even ate with them (making Peter "unclean" in the terms of the day). Peter first explains that this wasn't his idea, indeed he was reluctant, but that God had spoken to him in prayer.

Two things to notice here: first, if you want God to speak to you, you'd better be praying, and prayer means being open to God and dependent on God. Second, it is God who takes the initiative, not Peter. Prayer leads us to fit into God's plan for us, it is not a means of getting God to side with our agenda. What you and I need are not just "good ideas" but rather "God ideas".

Very few of you are old enough, but I remember our house being converted from Town gas (made from coal) to natural gas...same pipes and appliances usually, but with a new source of power. Isn't that just a great picture of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives? Same person, but a new source of energy, direction, love. Peter had of course experienced the Spirit of God before (like Pentecost, Acts 2) but now he had seen miraculous evidence of God at work amongst non-Jews. Notice how the activity of the Spirit confirms the word of God - compare v.15 with Jesus' word in Acts 1:5. A funny quip, not original to me, goes: if we emphasise just the written word, we dry up; if we emphasise only the Spirit, we blow up; but if we emphasise both the Word and the Spirit, we **grow up**.

We usually think of "conversion" as the beginning of the Christian life, and we rightly emphasise this because Jesus tells us, "Unless you are converted....you will never enter the Kingdom of

Heaven" (Matthew 18:3), but here Peter is being moved on to a deeper level of discipleship, and is discharging his responsibility to "strengthen his brethren" that they may move deeper too. Lots more to say and no room to say it as usual, but ask yourself: am I converted? Am I open to hear God speak? How can I "strengthen the brethren"?

Prayers of intercession

In your own words, remember before God...for a genuine and lasting peace in Israel..those in authority in this country and around the world grappling with the present crisis, especially just now in India,all those "on the front line" whether NHS staff, transport workers, shop workers, the emergency services...those most personally affected by the Covid-19 outbreak: the bereaved, those seriously ill, those who have already lost their jobs.. the Church of Jesus Christ as together we seek to witness to the love and care of God in word and action....and the many other difficult problems humanity faces...and for yourself and your family. Remember, too, thankfulness!

The Lord's Prayer (traditional version):

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,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The blessing: Now may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with and remain with us always. Amen.

Worship/teaching activities on the wings.

Although we still have no date for the resumption of worship together, I will be leading a small group on each of the wings in turn, starting with "A" wing on the afternoon of Sun 27th June. We won't be able to sing, but those on "A" can meet together for prayer and study of the Word. Limited to ten people, so you will need to put your name down if you want to attend.

Brian