



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 11th May 2025

compiled by Rev. Melvyn Cooke

Call to Worship

Lord, teach me to seek you,
And reveal yourself as I look for you.
For I cannot seek you unless you first teach me,
Nor find you unless you reveal yourself to me.

St Ambrose (340 – 397)

Hymn: 25 Singing the Faith

1] God is here as we his people
meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure
what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us,
all our varied skills and arts.
wait the coming of his Spirit
into open minds and hearts

2] Here are symbols to remind us
of our lifelong need of grace;
here are table, font and pulpit;
Here the Word has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
here in silence, as in speech,
here in newness and renewal,
God the Spirit comes to each.

3] Here our children find a welcome
in the Shepherd's flock and fold.
Here, as bread and wine are taken,
Christ sustains us, as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant,
seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living
to believe and to adore.

4] Lord of all, Church and Kingdom,
in an age of change and doubt,
keep us faithful to the gospel,
Help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication,
all we have to give, receive:
we, who cannot live without you
We adore you! We believe!

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

Prayer

Our Father God, who gives us so much, help us to give to you.
Help us to give you our love every day of our lives.
Help us to give you our time to pray and give thanks to you.
Help us to give you our work by helping other people.
Help us to give you our hearts by sharing your love.
Help us to give you everything.
Our father God, who gives us so much, help us to give to you.

Reading Acts 9:10 – 19

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord - Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here - has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Hymn: 691 Singing the Faith

1] What shall our greeting be:

Sign of our unity?

JESUS IS LORD!

May we no more defend

Barriers he died to end:

Give me your hand, my friend:

One Church, One Lord!

3] He comes to save us now:

To serve him is to know

Life's true reward.

May he our lives amend,

All our betrayals end:

Give me your hand, my friend:

JESUS IS LORD!

2] What is our mission here?

He makes his purpose clear:

One world, one Lord!

Spirit of truth descend,

All our confusions end:

Give me your hand, my friend:

JESUS IS LORD!

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

Reflection

For many years I have held true to a personal motto – *I’d rather take a risk, than miss an opportunity!* This motto or personal philosophy was the outcome following a period of reflection at a conference that I attended in the Crystal Cathedral in Los Angeles. The story behind the building of this magnificent glass structure is a testament to the power of positive thinking. Revd. Dr Robert Schuller, the founder of the Cathedral was a minister of the Dutch Reform Church, who had the vision to build a 2500-seater Church in Orange Grove. The money was to be raised by donations. The original cost was estimated to be in the region \$9 million. Robert Schuller tells the story that he was asking a particular donor if they would donate \$1million to the project, the donor said he needed some time to think about making such a large donation. After leaving the donor’s office Schuller discovered that the original estimated cost was way off the actual cost, thought now to be in the region of \$18 million, and so he returned to tell the donor that the Cathedral was not likely to be built as he could not envisage raising the extra millions of dollars now needed, and so he was

going to abandoned the project. The donor's response was to say that he would give the first million dollars, and challenged Schuller by asking, "would a million dollars dig a hole big enough for the foundations, whilst you raised the rest of the money required?" Three years later the Cathedral was dedicated.

I think that Ananias must have been that sort of person who was on the lookout, or more accurately was open to possibilities the God would send his way. This familiar story following on from the conversion of Paul, could have a very different outcome for the life of Paul, and subsequently the life of the Church if Ananias had acted differently. What if Ananias had decided that the reputation of Paul, or as he was still known Saul was such that he could not be trusted? What if Saul was using an experience as a scam or form of entrapment? What if Ananias was more concerned with the safety of the newly formed band of believers rather than be concerned about the life of a relatively unknown person?

The foundational truth of this story is that Ananias trusted Jesus more than he distrusted Saul. The vision, the dream, the listening ear of prayer, meant that he was willing to make the most of a moment, rather than live with the regret of what might have been, and consequently we can say that literally the whole face of Christendom was changed. Ananias had his doubts and concerns, that is evident, but he was willing to be available and respond to a moment, to take a risk and for me the most powerful action is in the act of greeting Saul as a brother, no timidity, no apprehensiveness but to reach out touch him and call him brother.

How often the small inconsequential acts can be the turning point in another's life. By how we conduct ourselves, what we do or do not do. I recently met with a lady who having been a church attender for all her life, moved house some 10 years ago, and seeking a new place of worship attended her local church for the first time. She told me she sat amongst a group of "hat wearing "women, (not that there is anything wrong with hat wearing!) But that they spoke freely amongst themselves, but not to the new stranger in their midst. Needless to say, she has not been back to that Church since.

Often it is not the great and glorious, the grand gestures that make the biggest difference, but the small almost imperceptible gesture, act or word that could transform the life of another.

Where is God's moment for you to touch the life of another by a touch or the equivalent phrase of Brother or sister! I commend to you my motto – I would rather take a risk than miss an opportunity - for Jesus.

Prayers

Gracious God, who gave your Son that we might be free, and your Holy Spirit that we might be bold, forgive us when we have been so concerned with our own position, or intimidated by the story of others that we have failed to make the most of opportunities presented to us to share the good news of your love and grace in our lives.

In the stillness and quietness of our prayer life, so attune ourselves to what you are saying, that we block out the noise and clamour of our own anxieties, and so learn to trust you, rather than mistrust ourselves to the views and opinions of others.

May we live our lives that others see in us the rhythm of a life marked by your presence, and may we be ever mindful of every opportunity, and moment to offer love, forgiveness and hope to those around us.

Amen

We say together the **Lord's Prayer** in the version, and language you are most comfortable using.

Hymn: 410 Singing the Faith

1] Lord, your church on earth is seeking
power and wisdom from above:
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accents of your love.
We will heed your great commission
sending us to every place-
'Go, baptize, fulfil my mission;
serve with love and share my grace!'

2] Freedom give to those in bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin;
give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within.
Light for darkness, joy for sorrow,
love for hatred, peace for strife-
these and countless blessings follow
as the Spirit gives new life.

Blessing

May the warmth of Christ heal you,
The eyes of Christ gaze on you,
And the peace of Christ shine through you
Today and evermore.

3] In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely dwell
let us show the saviour's pity
let us of his mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races
we will serve and seek to bring
all the world to render praises
Christ, to you, Redeemer King.

Hugh Sherlock (1905-1998)