



Staying Connected Week Beginning Sunday 6th September 2020 A Call to Prayer

Call to worship: Psalm 136

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.
His love endures forever.

² Give thanks to the God of gods.
His love endures forever.

³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords:
His love endures forever.

⁴ to him who alone does great wonders,
His love endures forever.

⁵ who by his understanding made the heavens,
His love endures forever.

⁶ who spread out the earth upon the waters,
His love endures forever.

⁷ who made the great lights—
His love endures forever.

⁸ the sun to govern the day,
His love endures forever.

⁹ the moon and stars to govern the night;
His love endures forever.

StF 82 O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USM71JqV30o&list=RDUSM71JqV30o&start_radio=1&t=91

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze

And when I think of God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home what joy shall fill my heart
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim my God how great thou art

A Prayer of Gratitude for Creation

God of the universe, we thank You for Your many good gifts -
For the beauty of Creation and its rich and varied fruits,
For clean water and fresh air, for food and shelter, animals and plants.

Forgive us for the times we have taken the earth's resources for granted
And wasted what You have given us.

Transform our hearts and minds so that we would learn to care and share,
To touch the earth with gentleness and with love, respecting all living things

We pray for all those who suffer as a result of our waste, greed and indifference,
And we pray that the day would come when everyone has enough food and clean water.
Help us to respect the rights of all people and all species. And help us to willingly share your gifts
-today and always. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Reflection – these thoughts come from a desire for a deeper walk in prayer with God

During the warm weather, this summer Graham and I have walked from Rowsley along the fields by the river and emerged by the hump-back bridge where you can enter the Chatsworth estate. We continue to stroll by the riverbank till the wonderful view of Chatsworth House emerges.

It seems that many visitors have found this a place to dabble their feet in the river from the bank. As the hottest weather came, we found others paddling out into the river and have been surprised on some days to see many people swimming in the deepest parts. I've never swum in a river – I think I would be quite nervous although I do enjoy swimming.

Who taught you to swim? I so clearly remember my Dad teaching me– in the shallow end - and then he wanted me to jump in – moving a bit further up the pool all the time. I was constantly worried I might end up being in over my head! My Dad always caught me though.

As I wrote in our SC letter, I've been thinking about prayer and drawing closer to God and how willing we are to do that, or how nervous we may be for what that might mean. I'm thinking about us wading in a bit deeper with God.

The River Derwent which runs behind our house and flows down from Chatsworth, took me to thinking about another river from Scripture and what it might say to us and mean for us.

Let's read: Ezekiel 47: 1- 12

The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. ² He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.

³ As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. ⁴ He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. ⁵ He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross. ⁶ He asked me, "Son of man, do you see this?"

Then he led me back to the bank of the river. ⁷ When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. ⁸ He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. ⁹ Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. ¹⁰ Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. ¹¹ But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. ¹² Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."

We respond: This is the Word of the Lord - Thanks be to God.

Ezekiel's vision is of the river from the temple and comes to him from an angel – a heavenly being. This river is similar to the River mentioned in Revelation 22: 1-2 *"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."* Both rivers are associated with the river in the Garden of Eden – Genesis 2:10 *"A river watering the garden flowed from Eden"* The river symbolises life from God and the blessings that flow from his throne. It is a gentle, safe, deep river expanding as it flows.

Ezekiel is led into the river, the water was ankle-deep, knee-deep, and then up to his waist and he was shown that wherever the river flows everything will live. It's a picture of the life-giving nature of the water that flows from God's temple. A picture of a supernatural river that will flow from the throne of God in the Temple in Jerusalem. This river of God is the river of living water. This living water is the Holy Spirit. It's a picture of God desiring us to trust him as he leads forward into deeper things.

God carried Ezekiel out into the water. He was certainly wading out. We begin our journey through life with Him, stepping into the water in faith, dabbling our toes from the bank and getting our feet wet. As we grow in the Lord and learn to trust Him, He begins to take us a little deeper as we walk with Him.

In the River of living water, we finally have to let go of ourselves and let the Spirit take us where He wants and trust that God will hold us fast (Just like my Dad – he always did)!

I'm thinking about us – Christian believers - the ones who God calls MY people , who are called by MY name, us, as the Methodist church, us, as the people of God, us as individuals – *"Wading Deeper into the River of God"*. As believers we are already in the River. Are we are willing to step further..... Will we wade in deeper with God?. ... How deep are we, at the moment in the River of Living Water.? Ankle-deep, Knee-deep, Waist-deep or Swimming. How deep have we allowed the Holy Spirit to flow into our lives and help us to grow?" **Come Holy Spirit, Come!**

When we draw close to God in prayer we sense His Spirit and we are able to listen for the 'still small voice' that encourages us to move on with Him – to seek forgiveness and renewal and new hopes, dreams and visions that he will show us. Ways that we can serve him and bless others along the way. My own testimony is that as I have been able to allow God's Spirit to lead my life – he has taken me to some amazing places to serve him, but he has never let me down. The joy of God's Spirit at work sustains me every day, and so I give thanks and praise to Him.

Jesus himself used the term 'Living Water' to refer to the Holy Spirit (John 7: 37-39) and proclaimed that belief in Him would cause rivers of Living Water to flow from within us and out to

others. I believe we have a great opportunity during this time of pandemic to show to the world around us that God is at work and that Jesus has come to give us all “life in all its fullness”. Our openness in prayer for this to happen should take us deeper into prayer for God’s guidance on how we live our lives in this time so we can best glorify Him. **Come Holy Spirit, Come!**

It’s a challenging thought, to wonder how far we will be willing to go, as we trust God more and more in our everyday lives. One thing is certain though, Our Father will always catch us if we wade out in faith. **God bless each of us as we give time to ponder these thoughts.**

The words of this next hymn are a personal prayer

Hymn: River wash over me

Cleanse me and make me new.

Bathe me, refresh me and fill me anew,
River wash over me.

Spirit, watch over me,

Lead me to Jesus' feet.

Cause me to worship and fill me anew,
Spirit, watch over me.

Jesus, rule over me,

Reign over all my heart.

Teach me to praise You and fill me anew,
Jesus, rule over me. **Amen**

A prayer for God to break through in our lives and the life of our churches:

God of love, God for all,

your purposes are more beautiful than we can possibly imagine.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit. Help us let go of all that holds us back.

Open our lives and our churches to new seasons of humility and faith, of change and growth.

Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and show us the way. **Amen**

StF 465 Guide me O thou Great Jehovah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4n1hGjDDg>

Guide me O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land

I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thy powerful hand

Bread of Heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore, feed me now and evermore

Open thou the crystal fountain whence the healing stream shall flow

Let the fiery cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through

Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield, be thou still my strength and shield

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside

Death of death and hell’s destruction, land me safe on Canaan’s side

Songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to thee, I will ever give to thee.

Blessing: The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and evermore. Amen