



Ripon & Lower Dales Methodist Circuit

With God in the City, Towns, Villages and rural areas

Week beginning 14th of August 2022

**Welcome to Worship at Home
'Pilgrims to God's Kingdom'**

'God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.'

Let us pray...

Lord God, we thank you
for calling us into the company
of those who trust in Christ
and seek to obey his will.
May your Spirit guide and strengthen us
in mission and service to your world;
for we are strangers no longer
but pilgrims together on the way to your
Kingdom.

Amen. *(Prayer from Churches Together in England)*

StF N°161 Speak, O Lord, as we come to you

¹Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.

²Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.

³Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.

Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Psalm 84 *(New International Version)*

- ¹How lovely is your dwelling-place,
LORD Almighty!
- ²My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.
- ³Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young –
a place near your altar,
LORD Almighty, my King and my God.
- ⁴Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you.
- ⁵Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
- ⁶As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
- ⁷They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.
- ⁸Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty;
listen to me, God of Jacob.
- ⁹Look on our shield, O God;
look with favour on your anointed one.
- ¹⁰Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of
my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.
- ¹¹For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favour and honour;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose way of life is blameless.
- ¹²LORD Almighty,
blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Reflection

Over the last three months of my Sabbatical, I have been exploring pilgrimage exercised locally taking advantage of the beautiful landscapes found in and around the North Yorkshire Dales. I think pilgrimage put simply is about being open to God. This is something we can do anywhere and at any time. I suppose the question we might want to answer is, 'what does being open to God look like?'

I would suggest openness to God includes the act of seeking God in discernment for something, with an openness beyond one's biases.

Pilgrimage is embarking on a journey of discovery. In terms of Christian pilgrimage, it is a desire to discover something of God through such journeying.

Psalm 84 captures beautifully the heart of a pilgrim, expressing the yearning of the soul, heart, and flesh, all directed towards discovering our living God.

Like many Psalms, the use of imagery draws parallels to convey something that words can only grasp at conveying. The visual contemplation of the surroundings, along with smells and sounds all add to enrich and enable the pilgrims journeying, awaking all our senses to seeking and engaging with our Creator. I believe this approach enhances greatly our ability to be open to God.

Verse five talks about those whose strength is found in God and whose hearts are set on pilgrimage as being blessed. I'd be inclined to agree and would add that we need to broaden our understanding of pilgrimage to include anyone who is seeking God.

I wonder how the term pilgrim sits with you personally. We identify as Christian, as we follow the way of Christ, but do we also identify as pilgrims. Do we yearn for the courts of the Lord? Do we yearn for God above all else? Do we actively seek God anew?

Those who came to faith in Jesus Christ at Pentecost would identify as belonging to 'the way' which gives a sense of movement and a direction of journeying. Our journeying is to become more Christlike in our living. The journeying or pilgrimage is key because until we come face to face with Jesus, we remain a pilgrim till reaching home.

I believe pilgrimage is available to all people whatever our circumstances. It might include donning walking boots, or it might be how we shape our day in the home. There are different approaches, and everyone is different, finding what works for you is part of the pilgrimage.

Ultimately, what matters is whose strength we are drawing upon and who we are seeking. Whilst I have suggested that pilgrimage put simply is

about being open to God, I would add that the Christian pilgrim actively seeks to choose God. 'Obviously', I hear you say and yet whilst it is obvious to the Christian of sober heart and mind, it is something we fail to do in the frailty of our humanity.

When our hearts and minds choose greed, self-ambition, dishonesty, and those things that serve self before God, we are not choosing God. Often, these things come when we are tired, busy, distracted by the burdens of daily life and can creep in at the edges. By the grace of God, we can turn from these choices, seeking and knowing forgiveness for our sins through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. This is good news for all people.

Of course, we strive not to sin, yet we and the world fall short. In our repentance we are choosing to turn to God. In turning to God, we are preferring to be a doorkeeper in the house of God over being in the tents of the wicked. As a pilgrim we live each day open to God putting into practice holy habits that keep our hearts and minds seeking God always. Might we echo the psalmist is declaring LORD Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you. Might we be pilgrims who live out the transformational love of God. **Amen.**

StF N°611 Brother, Sister, let me serve you

¹Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

²We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

³I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

⁴I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

⁵When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

⁶Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

Richard A. M. Gillard (b. 1953)

Prayers for others.

Let us pray for all people everywhere according to their needs. (Please use the headings or your own prayers)

We pray for our family, friends, and neighbours.

We pray for all living in poverty and the increasing anxiety caused by the cost-of-living crises.

We pray for all who are ill.

We pray for those lonely and bereaved.

We pray for the Ukraine and war-torn countries.

We pray for the victims of human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

We pray for the climate crises; for the healing of the earth and those suffering its injustices.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

StF N°662 Have you heard God's voice

¹Have you heard God's voice; has your heart
been stirred?
Are you still prepared to follow?
Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
though the way be rough and narrow?

Chorus

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?
Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow?*

²Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
when the multitudes are silent?
Will you make a choice to stand your ground
when the crowds are turning violent?

³In your city streets will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?
Will you stop and eat, and when friendships
start,
will you share your faith with the faithless?

⁴Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
and believe it could be different?
Will you share your views using words of grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.
We will trust in One who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow.*

Jacqueline G. Jones

A Sending Blessing

Loving God, aid us to set our hearts and minds
on pilgrimage to seeking you in all we do.

May the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and
Holy Spirit be with you and all those you love
now and always. Amen.