



Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit
with God, in the City, Towns, Villages, and Rural Areas

Week beginning 18th June 2023

Worship at home

We give thanks to you, Lord God
Almighty, the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great
power and have begun to reign.
Rev 11:17

StF 69

Ye holy angels bright,
who wait at God's right hand,
or through the realms of light
fly at your Lord's command,
assist our song,
or else the theme
too high doth seem
for mortal tongue.

Ye blessed souls at rest,
who ran this earthly race,
and now, from sin released,
behold the Saviour's face,
his praises sound,
as in his light
with sweet delight
ye do abound.

Ye saints who toil below,
adore your heavenly King,
and onward as ye go
some joyful anthem sing;
take what he gives,
and praise him still
through good and ill,
whoever lives.

My soul, bear thou thy part,
triumph in God above,
and with a well-tuned heart
sing thou the songs of love.
Let all thy days
till life shall end,
whate'er he send,
be filled with praise.

Let us pray

Almighty God, we approach you now in
worship.

You are all knowing,
you are all powerful
and you are present everywhere.
Our thoughts are not large enough to
grasp all that you are and yet we know
your presence.

We know that you know us in and out,
the good and the bad,
our well-intentioned actions
and those things we get wrong.
You are with us in gladness and
sadness.

You are our awesome God
but we are not afraid of you
for you are love.

Again and again, you show your love for
us, your people.

We acknowledge that we are not
deserving of such love.

We ask now that you forgive us for the
things we have done which we should
not have done and the things we have
not done which we know we should.

In quietness now we acknowledge our
wrong doings and ask that you reach
through the barriers we put between
ourselves and you to forgive and help
us begin again.....

We thank you reach out to us
for our lives are nothing without you.

Thanks be to God. Amen

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in
heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the
glory are yours
now and forever. Amen

Revelation 12:7-12 NIV

⁷ Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power

and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Messiah.
For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.

¹¹ They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.

¹² Therefore rejoice, you heavens
and you who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has gone down to you!
He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.”

The words of this next hymn perhaps help to explain how we might feel, as Christians, in a world where so much seems to be wrong. Then perhaps we can link its words with our own feelings when we reflect on the situations around us.

StF 625

Deep in the darkness a starlight is gleaming,
calling us out from the safety of home.
God of the questions, the mystery of dreaming,

lighten our journey into the unknown.

Out of the darkness the voices are crying,
terror and fear screaming loud in the night.

God of the hurting, of innocence dying,
fire us with anger to struggle for right.

Still in the darkness we search for your healing,
hoping for meaning to comfort our fear.
God of the silence, of unspoken feeling,
teach us the wisdom to make your truth clear.

On through the darkness we follow your leading,
searching for joy and a refuge to stay.
God of our longing, the bliss we are seeking,
journey with us to the brightness of day.

Reflection

The book of Revelation is difficult for us to read with understanding. It helps if one is well versed in the style of apocalyptic literature and is able to interpret the signs and times seen by John in his vision. Very few of us have that knowledge, I certainly haven't, and yet it has been suggested that it is important that we study it during Bible Month. So why might this be?

Perhaps it is that when we look beyond the often-obscure imagery and the frightening battles we see revealed the truths of God's faithfulness and purposes for our fallen race.

Our reading speaks of a battle between good and evil in heaven as a consequence of which Satan is expelled and comes to earth to carry on his evil works. I like the last two lines of our reading,

“He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.”

Satan is running out of time in which to complete his plans and we know, through faith and through Jesus that ultimately God will triumph.

So where does that leave us? It leaves us with 3 Ws –Witness, Worship and Waiting.

Unless you are a fan of some of the sci-fi films and computer games, dragons and magical beasts with superpowers will not figure largely in your thoughts or experience. And yet without doubt we are in a situation where we can see evil/Satan at work.

Our dragons are cruel dictators who ravage whole countries in the pursuit of power. They are found in apathy and selfishness which are destroying our planet and making natural disasters worse. I'm sure you could list more.

We know that we are weak and often look for an easy option rather than slaying these 'dragons' ourselves. Nevertheless, we are in a position to combat these evils because we know what the end of the story will be and who will eventually be the victors. We are followers of Christ who is revealed in this book.

How is this to be done? Firstly, when all around are losing hope and seem helpless we can witness to what we know of God's actions through his people throughout the Bible and, of course, in all we know of Jesus. We are **witnesses** to the hope that is within each one of us.

Even when life is very hard and our hearts are broken, that spark of faith remains and can be fanned back to life, often by other believers who reach out to help us. How we live through these situations is a witness to our faith.

Secondly by our **worship**. We know where our hope comes from and, like so many before us, we respond spontaneously.

I was reminded how Paul and other early church leaders so often break into prayer and praise even in the most difficult circumstances. And when God reaches out to us do we not respond with joy? How often do the words of a hymn or prayer touch us and bring a response from deep inside as we connect with the power of God that is reaching to us. Perhaps at those times we find it easier to understand something of John's vision.

The quote I referred to at the beginning speaks of Satan's fury which is unleashed on the earth because his days are numbered. We **wait** now with endurance, with confidence for the time to come when the earth will be filled with the glory of God and every tear is wiped from the eyes of suffering humanity.

For that to happen we must play our part against the forces of evil, sometimes with a kind word or a smile, sometimes with political action, sometime with humanitarian action but always with a willingness to explain the hope that is in us as we witness constantly praising God.

Prayer

Therefore, keeping faith when all seems to be against us, let us consider our world and, as inhabitants of that world, prayerfully bring all our needs to the God who is, was and will always be.

Imagine our planet spinning through space. Each of us a tiny dot on its surface but each of us, in good times and bad, known to God.

As each country passes before our eyes pray for its people –

Some, like us, are living in kindly states where the vulnerable are cared for, where most are content and where

practicing one's faith is tolerated and even encouraged. And yet, even here, we know that many may slip through the net and need help.

Lord of all, let us never become complacent but always remember that, although we may seem few, we are your workers and witnesses for the good of all.

As the world spins, we see many who are facing difficult situations – the results of poor governance or natural disasters made worse by humankind's mistakes. There are wars and cruel leaders.

As we begin Refugee Week we pray especially for all who must flee their homes and seek sanctuary away from poverty, drought, flood and fire or because their homes have been destroyed. They seek safety in places where they are not always welcome. Work in our hearts that we are open to their needs.

Lord of all, let us never become complacent but always remember that, although we may seem few, we are your workers and witnesses for the good of all.

And now pray for ourselves and those we know who are in difficult situations at the moment. Let us name them quietly in the presence of God knowing he cares, knowing he already knows their need but asking him to guide us in the words we say and in the things we do.

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Lord of all, let us never become complacent but always remember that, although we may seem few, we are your workers and witnesses for the good of all. Amen

StF 489

All I once held dear,

built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.
Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.

- 2 Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.
- 3 Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Blessing

And now may the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit remain with all of us who prayerfully reflect on these words. May the God, who was and is and is to be, encourage us in worship, strengthen us in action and remind us of the hope we have in Jesus. Amen.