

NAURC @ Ipswich Road
Sunday 26th September 2021
Including Holy Communion

Led by Revd John Potter

(The hymns have internet links to versions of them on the internet. On a pc, hold down the 'Ctrl' key and click on the heading in blue with your mouse and the hymn should open)

Welcome

Lighting of the peace candle

The call to worship: Psalm 33

- ¹ Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
⁴ For the word of the LORD is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.
⁵ The LORD loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.

Opening prayers

(based on hymn by hymn by HF Lyte)

Praise the Lord! God's glories show, Alleluia!
Praise from saints above and below, Alleluia!
Praise by angels and all who share God's love. Alleluia!

Praise from Earth to heaven, Alleluia!
Age to age, God's mercies trace, Alleluia!
Praise God's providence and grace! Alleluia!

Strings and voices, hands and hearts, Alleluia!
in the concert, bear your parts, Alleluia!
All that breathes, your Lord adore, Alleluia!
singing praise forevermore, Alleluia!

God of all people times and places we gather in praise and worship
offering ourselves, our words, our hymns, our thoughts and our prayers
as we gather in the name of Jesus today.

As high as we aim in our discipleship we want to say how sorry we are for the times
when we fall short of you hopes for us.
For the times when we have turned away, when we have felt the burden to be too
great and helped only ourselves we ask for forgiveness.
We ask now that your healing touch be upon our sinful waywardness and the fresh
opportunity to begin this week as the disciples of Jesus in today's worlds of need.

In Jesus name we pray Amen

Bible reading: Psalm 19 7-14 A musical version of this Psalm may be found [here](#)

The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul:

The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart:

The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes.

⁹The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever:

The ordinances of Jehovah are true, *and* righteous altogether.

¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb.

¹¹Moreover by them is thy servant warned:

In keeping them there is great reward.

¹²Who can discern *his* errors?

Clear thou me from hidden *faults*.

¹³Keep back thy servant also [Ⓜ]from presumptuous *sins*;

Let them not have dominion over me:

Then shall I be upright,

And I shall be clear from great transgression.

¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in thy sight,

O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer.

Introduction for all ages followed by children leaving for Junior Church

Bible reading: James 5: 13-16

¹³ Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Hymn: R&S 373 [Lord Jesus Christ](#)

The sermon: Psalm 19: 7-14 & James 5: 13-16

Ingredients for worship

> Sometimes the words of the Bible just speak for themselves and very little input is needed from a preacher – this week is just such an example.

> But I guess that just stopping right now might leave some of you feeling a bit short changed!

> Both Bible passages that I have chosen for us to base our worship on today are from the readings set for today, and when I first thought about what to share with

you, they seemed to fit so well together as a reminder of the ingredients that make up our worship time together.

> I'm no kind of cook, so won't keep with the ingredients' metaphor much longer, but let's begin with the most important one which comes from Psalm 19.

“⁹ Reverence for the Lord is good; it will continue forever.”

> That's the main reason we are here!

> A different translation in the Contemporary English Version makes it a bit clearer;

“Worshipping the LORD is sacred; he will always be worshipped.”

> The only comment I wish to make on this point is a reminder that the word 'Lord' is used here because, for the Jewish faith, that the Psalms originate from, God's name is so Holy that it cannot be said, so 'Lord' is substituted instead.

> The problem I have with this is that it immediately adds a human gender to God, and I think imaging God as only male, limits our view of our creator whose being is far beyond human imagination. As a counter-balance, Jesus referred to God as his 'Father'. The choice is yours, but let's get back to the first point – we gather to worship God.

> The second point flows naturally from the first – and that is to trust in God's commands. As Jesus reminds us through the words of Matthew's Gospel:

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’

> Clearly the Psalm was written a long time before He spoke those words, so the 'commands' refer to the Torah contained in the first five books of the Bible that are the expression of the covenant between God and humanity. But we benefit from both the Old and New Testaments in finding guidance for our faith.

> And there is another, important, aspect of honouring God's commands that the Psalmist expresses – that they will provide wisdom and understanding – this is not a case of faith merely being a case of following a set of rules for the sake of it.

> Living in covenant with God gives us joy and also the ability and enthusiasm to want to find out more.

> Another part of gathering for worship is not just to renew our commitment to God's commands, but to explore them – to think and reflect on them – and this is not just the task of the minister or the preacher – this is something we all should do as part of our lives of faith, and comes over clearly in the last line of the Psalm:

“May my words and my thoughts be acceptable to you, O Lord, my refuge and my redeemer!”

> It's a phrase that Revd Stuart Jackson who was the minister Warwick Rd URC in Coventry, which is where I first became a member of the URC, used to pray before every sermon.

> It's something we could recall each time we gather for worship and listen to the Bible readings, for ours is an engaged, thoughtful faith.

> The next aspect that I'd like to draw out from the Psalm links into our faith lives – judgment.

> I'm not going to dwell on this for too long, other than to remind us, that judgment of actions and behaviour is a role for God – not us and not the church. We are judged and just as everyone else is.

> In fact, imposing our own judgment criteria on others could lead to us turning away for God and into sin.

> But we are all very well aware, if we are honest with ourselves, that we aren't perfect – we do make mistakes, even wilfully go astray sometimes. Being open and honest with God is part of our gathering for worship, that is why we have prayers of confession in each service.

> This is part of our faith, admitting what went wrong last week and seeking God's forgiveness – it sounds rather like the sort of thing a Victorian 'fire and brimstone' preacher would come up with shouting about 'miserable sinners!' It's not about that, but is a matter of our orientation toward striving to be better people and disciples.

> As v 12 reminds us:

“None of us can see our own errors; deliver me, Lord, from hidden faults!”

> This aspect of the practice of our faith is also mentioned in the reading from the letter of James:

“So then, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you will be healed.”

> What we know of as the book of James is a letter, possibly written by one of Jesus' brothers (see Mark 6:3) and it is a general sort of letter written to advise early churches on faith practice.

> The section that we are looking at reminds us of the high importance of prayer in the Christian community the next important ingredient of worship.

> The verse about prayers of confession comes from v16, but there are several other aspects in the passage which remind us of other aspects of gathered worship.

> There is the reminder to “sing praises”.

> It's not all doom and gloom confession of sin – praise is important too – we may not always feel in the highest of spirits when we arrive at church, and the worship I compile tries to blend a variety of tones but, yes, we should sing praise to God as part of worship together - we are allowed be by joyful and exuberant – in fact the Bible encourages us to do so. But with all things in life, it's a case of balance.

- > Next on my list of ingredients of worship is the need to pray for each other, to pray for healing and to offer up our own troubles and concerns to God.
- > The prayers of intercession may come out sounding rather like a long shopping list of requests – and I admit that I occasionally struggle to concentrate on them when listening in services that I am not leading – but they are important because prayer is so very important.

- > Prayer is a way of keeping open that channel of communication with God – it forms us as people and our community as a church.
- > The power of prayer is something that all Christians share, and it is a privilege to be a part of the whole church in its widest sense in this way.
- > To quote a hymn: ‘the voice of prayer is never silent’ for our prayers are part of that continuation right from the earliest days of Abraham and Sarah, through God’s Son, Jesus, all the way to right here, right now as we join in with sisters and brothers in a multitude of churches right across the globe.
- > Isn’t that incredible!
- > Another aspect of our prayers in worship, and our own when we are alone – are part of the priestly function of church.
- > One of the roles of any church community is to be there for the wider community we are set in. It is our job to enable that connection between the sacred and the secular and prayer is an essential part of that.

- > As we gather week by week, may we worship God, and as we do so, may we sing our praises, open God’s word in Holy Scripture and reflect on it in our hearts. And may we continue the continuum of prayer so that our worship lifts up to God our lives of discipleship and this complicated world of ours.

Amen

Hymn: R&S 413 [What a friend we have in Jesus](#)

Prayers of intercession

(pray with eyes open to look at what is in the IR sanctuary)

God who came to earth and to live a human life, we look up to the image of the cross and wonder at your love for us.

We thank you that Jesus went to a cross knowing full-well what it meant and did it bearing the weight of the sins of all humanity.

We pray for those people who are falling for temptation, those heading away from the way of love and into violence and exploitation.

Our gaze continues on the cross and we see it is empty.

Loving God, we thank you that the cross was emptied of its power, that the tomb of Jesus was found empty too and that goodness is stronger than evil and life of stronger than death.

Each of us has been filled with new life because of the gift of Jesus.

We pray for those who struggle to cope and to experience that new life.

We pray for those nearing death. We pray too for those who grieve the loss of a loved one.

As we look at the border of the cross banner and see all the intricate designs we thank you God for the inspiration of your creativity.

We pray for all who share their creative gifts, especially the ones that enhance our worship, poets, artists and musicians.

We look at the font and rejoice in the cleansing, renewal it represents and pray for all who have been baptised recently and for parents waiting expectantly to become a family.

We look at the candle, that delicate flickering flame that reminds us of the wonder of Jesus the light of the world.

We pray for those who are surrounded by the threatening storms of life; those who are stressed, depressed or unwell.

We pray especially for Dannie after another bad accident.

We pray for Carole Pearle after her accident, and for Simon and Vicky in their wider family who are suffering other significant troubles.

We look across at the other banner and pray for the Holy Spirit to empower us and those we have prayed for as we seek the pilgrim way once more and put into action the words on the boxes by the entrance; "Love God and love others."

Finally, we look at the tree of life banner and recall the saints who have gone before us, and look forward in hope to the continued growth and fruitful life of our church.

And we say together the words on the tree – the words of the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father

Hymn: R&S 438 [An upper room did our Lord prepare](#)

Holy Communion

Hymn: R&S 530 [Living God, your joyful Spirit](#)

Dedication of the offering and the blessing