

Welcome to Worship

Today is World Population Day. A day to reflect upon how we, who populate this earth, take care of one another and indeed of God's creation. The Gospel story we listen to, will show us that people have not always looked well after one another. Today we may ask the question whether we have learned the lesson, as we notice that some people like to 'Lord it over others'. We pray today that all people will think before they act, in order that we can live together in harmony and peace.

Let us be still as we bring ourselves before our heavenly Father, who cares for us. We can light a candle which reminds us that the warmth and light of god is always there for us.

CALL to WORSHIP

**As we come together today,
let us be mindful of our words and actions
and the impact they have on those around us.
Let us seek God's wisdom and love
to guide us in all that we seek to do,
today and in days to come.**

HYMN: All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name StF 342
<https://youtu.be/tmxCpX28-Gc>

1. All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall,
bring forth the royal diadem
to crown him Lord of all.
2. Crown him you morning stars of light,
who fixed this floating ball;
now hail the Strength of Israel's might,
and crown him Lord of all.
3. Crown him, ye martyrs of your God
Who from his altar call;
Praise him whose way of pain ye trod
and crown him Lord of all.
4. Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget
the wormwood and the gall,
go spread your trophies at his feet
and crown him Lord of all.

5. Let every tribe and every tongue,
to him their hearts enthral,
lift high the universal song,
and crown him Lord of all.

A prayer of adoration

Mighty God, we adore you.

We thank you that we can come to you
knowing that you care about each and every one of
us, and all our needs, however big or small.

You created the heavens and the earth.

You put stars into space and filled the mighty seas.

Your power and your greatness is all around us – from
mountain-tops to the intricacies of a tiny flower.

Thank you that your power is limitless.

We are so small in comparison, but you love us all the
same.

We adore you, Creator God.

Amen.

A prayer of Confession and an Assurance of forgiveness

Powerful God, forgive us when we have not used our
power to influence for good,

but for our own purposes;

when our actions have hurt and excluded others;

when we have allowed greed, fear and pride

to get in the way.

God, forgive us.

Let our thoughts, our words and our actions

glorify you and reveal your presence and purposes.

Amen.

Pause for quiet reflection

Assurance of forgiveness

The almighty and powerful God forgives us our sins.

When you have put yourself before others,

God forgives you and heals you,

giving you grace and mercy,

and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

HYMN: The Kingdom of God is Justice and Joy StF 255
<https://youtu.be/mOrkdW5NAM0>

1. The kingdom of God is justice and joy;
For Jesus restores what sin would destroy.
God's power and glory in Jesus we know;
And here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.

2. The kingdom of God is mercy and grace;
The captives are freed, the sinners find place,
The outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share;
And hope is awakened in place of despair.

3. The kingdom of God is challenge and choice:
Believe the good news, repent and rejoice!
God's love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross:
Our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.

4. God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal;
In Jesus begun, in heaven made whole.
The heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call;
And all things cry "Glory!" to God all in all.

Bryn Rees (1911-1983)

Gospel Reading: Mark 6.14-29

John the Baptist beheaded

¹⁴ King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying,^[a] 'John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.'

¹⁵ Others said, 'He is Elijah.'

And still others claimed, 'He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.'

¹⁶ But when Herod heard this, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!'

¹⁷ For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.'¹⁹ So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to,²⁰ because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled^[b]; yet he liked to listen to him.

²¹ Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² When the daughter of^[c] Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, 'Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you.'²³ And he promised her with an oath, 'Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.'

²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?'

'The head of John the Baptist,' she answered.

²⁵ At once the girl hurried in, to the king with the request: 'I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a dish.'

²⁶ The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison,²⁸ and brought back his head on a dish. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. ²⁹ On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

REFLECTION



The beheading of John the Baptist

The reading of Mark's Gospel gives us a picture who Herod was. We know that Herod was put in charge of that territory by the Romans, succeeding his father Herod I or as he was called Herod the Great. Like his father, Herod Antipas was a great builder and he succeeded keeping the rich Judeans on his side in support of the Roman Empire.

From the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke we glimpse that this man Herod was in awe both of John the Baptist as well as Jesus. Herod was definitely curious about Jesus, as we see in the opening lines of this passage of Mark's Gospel. But this passage is less about the person of Jesus. It wants to tell us the story

of John the Baptist's death. Mark tells us the story retrospectively, as the death has already taken place. Yet there are various truths in the story which we need to take a look at.

Firstly, we see that John the Baptist, who himself of course is the fulfilment of several prophecies, is a preacher who is bold and preaches God's word without holding back, no matter who is before him. It is clear from the story that Herod had committed adultery and John had pointed this out to him on several occasions. Herod did not like it and had put John into prison, much to the distress of his wife Herodias who wanted John dead.

In a way we may say that up to then Herod had listened to God's messenger and had tolerated his message. Now, because it hit him personally, he began to be resentful.

For us, local preachers and ministers, who preach God's word, we may ask ourselves are we as bold as John the Baptist? We are asked to preach the truth in the knowledge that our words may meet with resentment or may even fall on deaf ears?

We then see in the story that Herod's wife is looking for a reason to get John the Baptist killed. Up to this point John the Baptist still finds a certain protection from Herod. However, Herodias knows how and when to fulfil her desires. The opportune moment is her husband's birthday. She uses her daughter to get what she wants. How low can one stoop? She asks her daughter to dance in front of her intoxicated father and his guests who obviously are deliriously happy. So much so that the father tells his daughter that he will give her anything she will ask for. Daughter goes back to mum and mum sets her up! Give me John the Baptist's head on a plate! How devious of both mother and daughter. But we can also examine Herod's response. He could have told the girl that she could not ask for a murder to be committed as no-one can be put to death without a trial first. However, here we see that his conscience died in the same way as John the Baptist died, in a cowardly act.

We hope, that by sharing the Word of God, we can help people to form their conscience, rather than let it die. We pray that people will turn away from evil deeds and do good. However, the contrary happened here. Had Herod listened carefully enough to John the Baptist, he would have been able to convince both his wife and daughter that such a request was not possible in any way, shape or form. Unfortunately, he did not want to lose face with his guests. Here we see how he deemed his role of power as a so-called king, more important than the life of an innocent man.

Being a messenger who brings God's word into the world is not always easy. But if we listen well to God's word and allow the Holy Spirit to have a place in our hearts, we will never have to be afraid. John the Baptist carried God's Spirit within him, and although he knew that God's message would not always go down well, he persevered in his task.

Are we bold and strong enough to speak God's word even in the knowledge that we will set people against us? It is not easy, but the reward will be great.

What did Jesus say about John the Baptist according to Matthew in his Gospel Chapter 11 vs 11?

Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!

Therefore, let us try to imitate the example of John the Baptist. Our reward will be great in heaven. AMEN

HYMN: Make me a channel of your peace StF 707
<https://youtu.be/2svZhZT6Pro>

1 Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there is doubt true faith in You.

*Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul*

2. Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is despair in life let me bring hope
Where there is darkness only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Oh, Master grant that...

3. Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
It is in giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

Oh, Master grant that...

Sebastian Temple (1928 – 1997)

Prayers of intercession

We pray for children who are adopted or fostered, that they will find the love and security they need.

Bless them, good Lord.

We pray for social workers and organisations that work to bring families together. May love and deep understanding guide their steps.
Bless them, good Lord..

We pray for parents who have difficult choices to make for their families. Be in their thoughts and decision-making.
Bless them, good Lord..

We pray for those who have yet to find their purpose in life, or those who live each day without hope.
Bless them, good Lord.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that we have been chosen by you. May our lives be worthy of our calling.
Bless us, good Lord.

Together we pray the Lord's Prayer: **Our Father.....**

Blessing of our gifts:

God our Father, you offer a redemptive inheritance sometimes beyond our imagination. You graciously bestow each of us with your wisdom, grace, forgiveness, and love. Joyously, we share our offerings, our time and our talents in order that your church may grow. As you call us to give, you remind us to place our hopes and dreams in your love and grace which you offer us in Jesus your Son. **Amen.**

Hymn: Take my life and let it be. StF 566
<https://youtu.be/Of4I5bTdZ8M>

1. Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee
Take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.
2. Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for Thee.
3. Take my voice and let me sing
always, only for my King;
Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from Thee.

4. Take my silver and my gold,
not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
every power as Thou shalt choose.

5. Take my will and make it Thine,
it shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
it shall be Thy royal throne

6. Take my love; my Lord I pour
at thy feet, it's treasure store;
Take myself and I will be
ever, only, all for Thee

Frances Ridley Havergal. (1836 – 1879)

Prayer of Dismissal:

Heavenly Father,
from the very beginning of Genesis,
we see the relationship between word and action –
you spoke and it was so.
As we leave this place,
may we be aware of our words and actions.
May the Holy Spirit guide us,
so that what we say and what we do
builds up your kingdom,
and breaks down barriers.
This we ask in Jesus' name.
Amen.

The Grace:

We say together the words of the grace:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all evermore. Amen**

Prayers were taken from ROOTs on the Web