

Wednesday Worship 9th September 2020

'Liturgy of the Ordinary' - Waking

Introduction

In this and following weeks I'd like to think about worship in the context of ordinary moments of our lives. Sometimes we might have an unconscious feeling that some parts of our lives are more about God than others. In fact, though, we're always with God and everything good can be done for him. These services will be based on ideas from the book 'Liturgy of the Ordinary' by Tish Harrison Warren, and we begin today by thinking about waking in the morning.

Opening prayers and lighting of a candle

O Lord, let our souls rise up to meet you
All as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.
All Amen.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee:
All let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Blessed are you, God of compassion and mercy,
to you be praise and glory for ever.
In the darkness of our sin,
your light breaks forth like the dawn
and your healing springs up for deliverance.
As we rejoice in the gift of your saving help,
sustain us with your bountiful Spirit
and open our lips to sing your praise.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
All Blessed be God for ever.

At the dawning of creation

sung by St Martin's Voices

- 1 At the dawning of creation
when the world began to be,
God called forth the world's foundations
from the deep chaotic sea.
- 2 When the Lord delivered Israel
out of Egypt's bitter yoke,
then the parting of the waters
of the living water spoke.

- 3 Water from the rock of Moses,
water from the temple's side,
water from the heart of Jesus,
flow in this baptismal tide.
- 4 Thus united in this water
each to all, and each to Christ;
to his life of love he calls us
by his total sacrifice.

David Fox (1956-2008) © Executors of Rev David Fox

Prayer

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
in the silence, let us pray with one heart and mind.

[Silence]

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

Ist Reading: Genesis 1.1-27

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Prayer of response

Lord, you made the world and saw that it was good.
Help us to rejoice in your good gifts every morning, and to care for all your creation.

All **Amen.**

Psalm 118.1-9, 19-25

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever!
Let Israel say,
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'
Let the house of Aaron say,
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'
Let those who fear the Lord say,
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'
Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.
With the Lord on my side I do not fear.
What can mortals do to me?
The Lord is on my side to help me;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to put confidence in mortals.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to put confidence in princes.
Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.
This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

Prayer of response

Saving God,
open the gates of righteousness,
that your pilgrim people may enter
and be built into a living temple
on the cornerstone of our salvation,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

2nd Reading: 2 Peter 1.16-21

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Prayer of response

Lord, we wait in eager longing
for the morning star to rise in our hearts.
May we always be attentive to your word
and ready to do your will.

All **Amen.**

3rd Reading: Matthew 3.1-6, 13-17

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight." '

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

Prayer of response

Lord, when we need repentance, stir us,
when we need a new start lead us,
and when we need to remember who we are
remind us that too are your beloved.

All **Amen.**

Hymn: Lord of the dance

Recorded remotely by the Choral Scholars of St Martin-in-the-Fields in their homes, and edited together.

- 1 I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,
at Bethlehem I had my birth.
Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.
- 2 I danced for the scribe and the pharisee,
but they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me.
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John -
they came with me and the dance went on.
Chorus
- 3 I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;
the holy people said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me on high,
and left me there on a cross to die.
Chorus
- 4 I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black -
it's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,
but I am the dance, and I still go on.
Chorus

5 They cut me down and I leapt up high;
I am the life that'll never, never die;
I'll live in you if you'll live in me -
I am the Lord of the dance, said he.
Chorus

Sydney Carter (1915-2004) © 1963 Stainer & Bell Ltd

Reflection

Are you a lark or an owl?
I'm an owl, myself, so mornings aren't my best time.
I wake up a bit groggy and everything's blurry because I'm also short-sighted.
As I lie there getting to grips with the idea of being awake, listening to my pets starting to demand breakfast, I am once again in my most basic, human state.
Everyone, from children to world leaders, has this moment.
Yawning and blinking, in our pyjamas with unbrushed teeth, we're not busy, productive citizens, diligent students or hardworking homemakers.
We're simply normal, vulnerable human beings.
Soon enough we'll be up and about, clothes on, breakfast eaten, made to look presentable, with our public images attached and a long list of tasks to do.
But for now, we're not really doing anything but dozing under the covers in our warm beds.

When Jesus comes to John on the banks of the River Jordan, he hasn't yet done anything. John has been busy.
He's been baptising, warning, stirring up the crowds and making enemies among the rich and powerful.
But Jesus is right at the beginning of his ministry and turns up with no such list of achievements behind him.
He may have been a good carpenter, working alongside Joseph, but here he is, just one more person in the crowd who goes out to work every day, has his dinner, gets tired and goes to bed.

So, Jesus goes down into the water with all the others, comes up and hears his Father announce, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'.
Only then does Jesus go out to do his public ministry.
Not to gain his Father's love and approval but because he's grounded in the certainty that he already has it.

This is where all ministry starts: with the knowledge that we are the beloved.
In the Church of England, we baptise babies.
Babies can't understand the Gospel, declare faith or contribute to the Church.
Yet, they are accepted as part of God's people because grace and acceptance don't depend on our achievements but on God's love for us.
Often, the fonts where babies are baptised are placed near the entrance to the church.
This reminds all of us that our journey of faith starts here, in an act of grace which welcomes us into God's family without us having to do a thing.
In some churches people dip a finger in and make the sign of the cross to remind them of this.

As Christians, we awaken every morning as baptised people.
We wake up as people united with Christ and called beloved by the Father, even before we're fully conscious.
We have an unchanging, unshakeable identity, whether we start the day full of joy or can barely open our eyes until we've had coffee.
Before we do anything at all, we are beloved.
Before we begin dressing children, answering emails, going out to work or school or university, cleaning the house or cooking meals, we are beloved.
Before we pray or read the Bible or go to a church service, we are beloved.
We're not defined by what we do, and we don't have to do things to earn points with God.
Our identity comes from being united with Christ and loved by the Father.
It's easy to forget this as we get caught up in the busyness of daily life but in the first few moments of waking, when we can do nothing but lie there, it creeps back in.

And each day, even the days which seem like another dull, routine cycling through the week, is a gift from God, made specially by him for us.
We tend to want an exciting Christian life, full of great deeds and heroic adventures of faith, and if that doesn't happen, which is the case for most people, we feel disappointed and unimportant.
But God made us to spend time working, resting and playing, looking after our bodies and minds, as well as our friends, families and neighbours.
And what if all the boring, ordinary things matter to God?
What if a normal life doing normal things is hugely important in ways we can't understand?

Those years before Jesus was baptised weren't just him biding his time before doing something important.
All that growing up, learning a trade, going to work and being part of an ordinary family are part of the story of salvation as well.
By being part of normal life Jesus showed that this is important to God as well, that everything matters to God, however small or routine it is.
You might know the story of Brother Lawrence, a lay brother in a Parisian monastery who spent much of his life working in the kitchen and wrote a well-known prayer about finding God in among the pots and pans of his ordinary work of cooking and washing up.
We too can find God in the ordinary things.
Each day when we wake up and get going we can choose to work, play and live remembering that God is in everything, however small, and that we are always the beloved, even if we're just emptying the bins.
On both good days and bad we're in Christ and Christ is in us, urging us on to live faithfully the life that's in front of us, being faithful in all the small things for the sake of God and his kingdom.
For how we spend each ordinary day in Christ is how we will spend our lives as Christians.

Intercessions

We pray for God's faithfulness to be known in our world.
Faithful God

All **glorify your name.**

In a world of change and hope,
of fear and adventure,
of daily tasks and common routines;
Faithful God

All **glorify your name.**

In the common life of our society,
in prosperity and need,
among neighbours and friends,
in all acts of kindness,
in work done well and honest living,
in work and school and play;
Faithful God

All **glorify your name.**

In our times of joy,
in our days of sorrow,
in worry and sickness,
hopelessness and despair,
through your care for us
and in our care for others;
Faithful God

All **glorify your name.**

In our strengths and triumphs,
in our weakness and at our death,
in the coming of your kingdom
and in the everlasting light of your presence;
Faithful God

All **glorify your name.**

Our Father...

Hymn: *Morning glory, starlit sky*

Recorded remotely by the Choral Scholars of St Martin-in-the-Fields in their homes, and edited together.

Morning glory, starlit sky,
soaring music, scholar's truth,
flight of swallows, autumn leaves,
memory's treasure, grace of youth;

Open are the gifts of God,
gifts of love to mind and sense;
hidden is love's agony,
love's endeavour, love's expense.

Love that gives, gives evermore,
gives with zeal, with eager hands,
spares not, keeps not, all outpours,
ventures all, is all expends.

Drained is love in making full;
bound in setting others free;
poor in making many rich;
weak in giving power to be.

Therefore he who shows us God
hangs upon the tree;
and the nails and crown of thorns
tells of what God's love must be.

Here is God, no monarch he,
throned in easy state to reign;
here is God, whose arms of love
aching, spent, the world sustain.

William Hubert Vanstone (1923-1999) © J W Shore

Closing prayers

Prayer of Brother Lawrence

O Lord of pots and pans and things,
Since I have no time to be
a great saint by doing lovely things,
or watching late with Thee,
or dreaming in the dawnlight,
or storming Heaven's gates,
make me a saint by getting meals,
and washing up the plates.

Warm all the kitchen with Thy Love,
and light it with Thy peace;
forgive me all my worrying,
and make my grumbling cease.

Thou who didst love to give men food
in room, or by the sea,
Accept the service that I do-
I do it unto Thee.

All **Amen.**

May God keep us in all our days.
May Christ shield us in all our ways.
May the Spirit bring us healing and peace.
May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from us
and pour upon us blessing and light.

All **Amen.**

We go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory.

All

Amen.