**Morning Praise Sunday 22nd August 2021**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Hymn Teach me, my God and King**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  **Amen.**

### Bible Reading Psalm 84

### Hymn My song is love unknown

### Bible Reading John 6:59 – 69

**Reflection** Our reading from John this morning is an unusual one: - so far on this gospel we have seen Jesus besieged by crowds wherever he goes, his regular following was probably several hundred people, but in this passage, they leave. It is just too much to hear all this talk of eating flesh and drinking blood, it doesn’t fit with their understanding of what a Messiah should be saying, and Jesus has gone too far for them.

John points out that Jesus knows who believes and who doesn’t but he doesn’t say how Jesus feels about this. It must have been disheartening to say the least, to speak God’s word and perform miracles, and then be deserted.

And this week we’ve been reading a lot about desertion and abandonment with the tragic unfolding of events in Afghanistan.

Regardless of the rights and wrongs of a military presence in foreign countries, the fear and desperation displayed by the Afghan people is heartbreaking to see. Indeed, it can almost seem too much, we see so much tragedy and we feel powerless in the face of it. Reading the news night after night can make us feel anxious and fearful, particularly when you add in current worries around Covid that we all have.

Recently I read an article from a psychologist on how to cope with the anxiety created by the constant news cycle of bad news.

She says it’s worth considering whether there are things that you’re worrying about that are within your control: “Of course you cannot assume responsibility for the entire climate crisis, but [you can do your bit in terms of recycling and reducing carbon footprint](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/joe-biden-boris-johnson-prime-minister-co2-food-and-agriculture-organisation-b1835838.html). There are aid organisations like the Red Cross that you can donate to for crises like Afghanistan and the Haiti earthquake,

“This not only helps give some back a feeling of control and empowerment but also the sense of connectedness and belonging we get from being part of a common goal and working towards a greater good can be hugely beneficial to our mental well-being.”

And as Christians, we have a huge weapon in our arsenal- prayer. Praying for all these situations allows us to give the situation to God, we may feel powerless but he certainly isn’t. Sometimes it’s difficult to know what to pray. Pete Grieg of the 24/7 prayer moment has this helpful advice.

First-hand insights from someone whose organisation needs to remain anonymous for obvious reasons: “The fear for the Afghan people is not so much the unknown, but rather the known: a brutal regime where daily life is filled with unbearable tension: regular public executions, oppression for women, fear of a knock at the door from the Taliban. For too long people in Afghanistan have looked for salvation from Western powers. Well, that hasn’t worked. It’s failed spectacularly. We need our brothers and sisters in the global church to take spiritual responsibility and stand with us in prayer. “

Let’s lift our prayers urgently to heaven for:

1. The Afghan church. Protection, peace and courage for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are understandably terrified. Let’s pray that they experience the Lord walking with them and among them, saying: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

2. Political and humanitarian solutions for the vast number of Afghan refugees, ordinary people suddenly displaced from their homes by the terror the Taliban.  May they discover that “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who take refuge in Him.” (Nahum 1:7)

3. Wisdom for world leaders as they seek to respond diplomatically, building an essential international consensus for peace. “Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power. By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just”(Proverbs‬ ‭8:14-15‬)

And the 12 didn't abandon Jesus, they knew who he was. And we can be assured that we have a God who will never forsake us or abandon us.

**Song Immortal, invisible, God only wise**

 **Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

 **We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ

known in the world? **We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Prayers of intercession**

Mighty God, in you is our hope and our strength. You are a very present help – in all our troubles. Grant that putting on the whole armour of God, we may be able to stand against the powers of darkness and proclaim your saving gospel of love and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Holy God, holy and strong one, holy and mighty one, all power, all might and all strength comes from you; equip us to stand against all the evils of our time. Give us the shield of faith, the sword of the spirit, the helmet of salvation, the girdle of truth, the breast-plate of righteousness and protect us with the gospel of peace, that we may remain loyal to the end. Strengthen all who are working in places of degradation, all who are facing daily pain, danger, violence and oppression.

**Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer!**

Lord, guide all who are leaders in our world today, and all politicians especially those of the free world.

We pray for the people of Afghanistan as they face being overrun by the watching world.

We pray for wisdom and direction as a human catastrophe unfolds before the eyes of the world. We pray that good may overcome the evil forces that have so far shown no respect for human life or dignity.

Lord, be with those who must now try and save Afghanistan from total destruction. We remember all who have already given their lives to bring peace to that country and all those who must now feel powerless and await the reactions and help of world leaders.

**Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer!**

We pray for all who have revealed your power and presence to us. We pray for all religious teachers and church leaders, may they encourage a sense of awe and wonder. We remember all schools as they prepare to open up for the coming autumn term, with the continuing threat and presence of the covid virus. We pray that as we face the winter months, they will be approached with common sense and respect for one another. We ask your blessing on all our homes and our loved ones.

**Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer!**

Healing God, be with the broken hearted and all whose spirits are crushed, both here and abroad, remembering particularly the people of Haiti. Bless all who are facing difficult times ahead, all who are struggling to survive, all who are fearful and anxious. We pray for all who are in sickness, in hospital and in nursing homes and for those that we name quietly in our hearts. May they know your presence in their daily lives and remember that you are our hope and that all our strength comes only from you.

**Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer!**

We remember those who continue to mourn after last week’s shootings in Plymouth. We rejoice with all who have triumphed – and are now in your nearer presence. We join with all who have found their strength in you and we pray for our loved ones who are in your glorious kingdom. Amen.

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

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Song Fight the good fight**

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be,

that you may live and work to his praise and glory,

and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**