

Call to Worship

Psalm 145:1-3 I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and exalt your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

Prayer

Father God, I can't fathom the unending love you have for me, I can't fathom the mercy and forgiveness you show to me. I can't fathom your greatness and my praise seems inadequate, but I do praise you with overwhelming gratitude for what you have done for me, for your plan for my life. So, I praise you Lord, I extol your name, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus my Lord. Amen

Song: "Blessed be Your Name" by Matt & Beth Redman

1. Blessed be your name in the land that is plentiful,
Where your streams of abundance flow, blessed be your name.
Blessed be your name when I'm found in the desert place,
Though I walk through the wilderness, blessed be your name.
Every blessing you pour out I'll turn back to praise,
When the darkness closes in Lord, still I will say:

Chorus

Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be your name.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be your name.

2. Blessed be your name when the sun's shining down on me,
When the world's "all as it should be", blessed be your name.
Blessed be your name on the road marked with suffering,
Though there's pain in the offering, blessed be your name.
Every blessing you pour out I'll turn back to praise,
When the darkness closes in Lord, still I will say:

Chorus

You give and take away, you give and take away,

My heart will choose to say, "Lord blessed be your name". (Repeat)

Chorus

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Prayer of Intercession

Father, my heart breaks for brothers and sisters in the Persecuted Church.

I pray for the brick kiln workers in Pakistan, forced into binding debt and generational slavery. Thank you for the debt-cancelling gifts from Barnabas Aid. Thank you too for the Barnabas provided Christian schools for the kiln-workers' children, breaking the cycle of illiteracy.

I pray for Christians in Nigeria and several other sub-Saharan Africa who endure incessant deadly attacks from Muslim militants, driving them away from their

The Heart of God (2)

livelihoods and into hunger. Thank you for Barnabas's emergency aid for Christians who have lost everything. Thank you too for its support of education, apprenticeships, skills training, and sustainable agriculture practices to establish future resilience and sustainability.

And Lord, I pray for my closer brothers and sisters in my church or fellowship; I pray for those who are in "the land that is plentiful", that they may be blessed with open and generous hearts.

And I pray for those "found in a desert place" and "on the road marked with suffering", that they may be comforted, surrounded by the love that drives away loneliness.

And I pray for myself, that whatever I face, I may not lose the desire to worship and praise you, Almighty God

Amen

Bible Reading:

- **John 10:25-37**

On one occasion an expert of the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied, "How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind", and "Love your neighbour as yourself." You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?"

In reply Jesus said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expenses you may have.'

Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the Law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go, and do likewise."

Song: "My God is All I Need" (City Alight)

1. Dark, dark is the valley, faint, the light at my feet,
But whatever may face me, my God is all I need.
Bright, bright are the treasures life may offer to me,
But whatever the pleasure, my God is all I need.

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*He is my strength when I cannot go on, peace when all my power is gone,
Hope, although the night is long and deep, He is my song, for he has rescued me.
Joy now he has set me free, praise, praise to my Father be, my God is all I need.*

2. Brief, brief are my days here, soon my journey complete,
But I look to my Saviour where God has met my need, yes, He has met my need.

Chorus

3. My God is so big, so strong and so mighty there's nothing my God cannot do.
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty there's nothing my God cannot do.
The mountains are His, the valleys are his, the stars are His handiwork too.
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty there's nothing my God cannot do.

Chorus

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Message: "The Heart of God (2)"

Another story from a concentration camp in WW2. In 1941 there was an escape from the Auschwitz camp, and as a reprisal and a warning to others, the Nazi guards randomly selected ten men to die. One of the ten, Francis Gajowniczek, cried out in anguish, "Oh, what is to become of my poor wife and children, they will never see me again." Another man, a Catholic priest, Maximilian Kolbe, spoke up and said, "I have no family – I want to die instead of that man." To everyone's amazement this was accepted, and the ten men were thrown into a starvation bunker and left to die. Maximilian Kolbe turned that bunker into a place of worship and prayer. After three weeks the bunker was needed for some other unfortunate souls, so each of the men were killed by an injection of carbolic acid.

Francis Gajowniczek survived Auschwitz, and for the rest of his life he widely shared his story and his debt to Maximilian Kolbe. In 1982 in St Peter's Square in Rome, with a crowd of 150,000 and hundreds of bishops, Archbishops and cardinals, and Francis Gajowniczek, the Pope, John Paul 2, recognized the sacrifice of Maximilian Kolbe with the words, "It was a victory like that one of our lord Jesus Christ."

That was what Jesus did for me and for you – he died in my place, in your place, and took the entire burden of our sin upon himself. It is a sacrifice like no other. **BUT THAT IS THE HEART OF GOD.**

And because it is the heart of God it should be our heart too. It takes the shape of a willingness and desire to totally commit ourselves to he who has sacrificed everything for us. Do you have a deep desire to spend time in worship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Do you have a deep desire to go to your church and worship with others? Do you have a deep desire to spend your resources of time and money to bless others. Do you have a deep desire tell others of Jesus and what he has done for you? Not easy in a world that elevates "self" to a pinnacle and makes satisfying self the main aim of life. A L'Oreal cosmetic advertisement says you should buy this product "because you deserve it."! We are constantly encouraged to have more and more. Happiness is linked closely to what we have. **Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.** That is having the heart of God.

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My father-in-law died of pancreatic cancer many years ago in his mid-60s. Although he went to a Salvation Army Sunday school in Moonta he did not continue in the church or have a faith. My wife became a Christian in her teens and prayed for her father for many years, but he showed no interest. A few months before he died, he was in the Royal Adelaide Hospital where he had just received the diagnosis of inoperable cancer. One day a nurse from another floor of the hospital, for no particular reason, walked into his room and he shared the news with her. She said to him, "Are you a Christian?" He replied that he wasn't, so she said, "Well we had better do something about that." And right there and then he gave his life to Jesus. Although we were rejoicing and didn't need any convincing, he told us this was a genuine decision. He said, "I haven't done this just because I'm sick you know." A few short months later he died. Some might be cynical about such "deathbed conversions". After all, he spent so little of his life serving God, did he deserve all the riches of God's Kingdom? Yes, he did, BECAUSE THAT IS GOD'S HEART! He keeps coming back, he doesn't give up on us.

Jesus gave us a parable that wouldn't get much traction in the trade union movement! The parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16) has the owner hiring workers at various times during the day right up to the final hour, and then paying them all the same wage. The message is that we're not being rewarded for works, but our inclusion in the Kingdom of God is completely, totally about grace. THAT IS THE HEART OF GOD. Do I expect God to be super-pleased with me because I have been serving him for so long? No, I should regard my time and place in the Kingdom of God to be solely an act of God's grace and Jesus' sacrifice. And I should regard my service to be such a joy and blessing that I desire it for others. THAT IS GOD'S HEART! Is that my heart? Is that your heart?

I can remember our youth group acting out the parable of the Good Samaritan (above) in church services where we explored the idea of identifying our neighbour. We identified the poor and the destitute, and even visited places that fed and cared for the homeless the alcoholics and others that couldn't cope with life. I can remember eating with them and telling them about Jesus. I have no idea whether this made a difference, but I do know that now there is a distance between me and my lifestyle and those who are "down and out". It is easy to be insulated and tell myself that my taxes and donations take care of these people through state and welfare organisations, and it's easy to dismiss them for the poor decisions they have made, their poor use of money, for their choices that have led them to where they are. I find that I sometimes lack a heart of mercy.

But focusing on the disadvantaged, and identifying them as neighbours, is only part of what Jesus intended in this parable. He didn't ask who the man thought was his neighbour. He asked, "Who do you think was a neighbour to the man....?" Jesus told this parable to challenge the attitude of the heart of the teacher of the law whose question inspired the parable. He correctly identified the Samaritan, who *acted* as a neighbour by showing mercy when it was called for. Although he couldn't really bring himself to say, "the Samaritan", and it must have galled him that it was his own kind, Levites and teachers of the law, that walked on by. Those who should have known God best didn't know him at all. He didn't understand that mercy is the heart of God. **Micah 6:8. He has shown you oh**

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man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Do I act justly and love mercy? Do you?

Jackie Pullinger, as a young woman, was led by God to work in Hong Kong in the infamous walled city amongst the drug addicts, prostitutes, and warlords of that terrible place. She has brought the gospel to that difficult area for many years and has seen countless lives changed. She says, "Many of us have hard hearts and soft feet, when God wants us to have soft hearts and hard feet." THAT IS THE HEART OF GOD.

The parable of the Good Samaritan introduces another aspect of God's heart - inclusivity and impartiality. Jesus, by word, spoke into the political climate of the day by giving kudos to the Samaritan in the parable, and in deed, by engaging with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). These were quite radical acts in Jesus' time because of the antipathy between Jews and Samaritans, and it would have been very challenging for the teacher of the law because he would have been only too aware of **Deut 10:17-15. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless, the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you. And you are to love those who are foreigners residing among you, giving them food and clothing.** THIS IS THE HEART OF GOD even though it's in the context of warning after warning about letting foreigners influence his people's belief in God and being drawn away to worship other gods and idols.

This speaks directly into our situation in Australia. We have a huge number of foreigners in our country (30% born outside of Australia) and there is an underlying sense of xenophobia (a word we are now aware of since Pauline Hanson was ambushed by it several years ago!). We look darkly on the effect on housing, education, economics and even community safety. And there is a case to say that our now multicultural society has caused us to be drawn to other "idols" like other religions, the pre-eminence of self, and money. But we are asked to love them and feed them and clothe them if that is needed, because THAT IS THE HEART OF GOD, and it should be our heart too, not forgetting that loving them means sharing our faith in God with them.

The more I have delved into the heart of God the more I have been challenged about how my heart reflects God's heart. It should. My prayer is that those reading or hearing these words will also be challenged. When David was chosen by God to be the next king it wasn't because of his size, intelligence, or handsomeness, but because he was a man after God's heart. Would that we be men and women after God's heart as well.

Song: "Hosanna" (Brooke Ligertwood)

1. I see the King of Glory coming on clouds of fire,
The whole earth shakes, the whole earth shakes
I see his love and mercy, washing over all our sins.
The people sing, the people sing

*Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.*

The Heart of God (2)

2. I see a generation rising up to take their place
With selfless faith, with selfless faith.
I see a new revival stirring as we pray and seek.
We are on our knees, we are on our knees.
Chorus.
3. Heal my heart and make it clean, open up my eyes to the things unseen.
Show me how to love, like You have loved me.
Break my heart for what breaks yours
Everything I am for Your Kingdom's cause, as I walk from earth to eternity.
Chorus.

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Benediction

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 2 Peter 1:2 Amen

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA