

Call to Worship:

We come aside for a few minutes, maybe an hour, to worship God our Maker, to hear from God our Father, and to petition God our Protector. And from whatever we have put aside for this time, let us nestle in the arms of God our Saviour, hearing the words of Nehemiah, "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength".

Prayer

Lord, give me a sense of your presence. Come Holy Spirit. Increase my faith to grow in the knowledge and understanding of your ways. Comfort me where I grieve. Fill me with your joy and strength, and release me into service and discipleship which will bring glory to you. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

Song: AHB 25 "Sing Praise and Thanksgiving" (Paul Gerhardt)

1. Sing praise and thanksgiving, let all creatures living
Now worship their maker with gladness and song;
All glory and honour we come to him bringing:
O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!
2. Our lives of his making he brings to their waking;
In darkness he held us in his gracious care,
Now into the light we are called from our sleeping.
O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!
3. Lord, frame our desiring to do your requiring,
That unto your glory be all that we do;
And where we have faltered, give strength and give healing:
O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!
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Prayer of Intercession

Lord, I pray for my church fellowship, my friends and my family.

I pray for those at work in paid employment, that as they work for others they will be devoted to their job and that they will labour as your servants.

I pray for those that work in their own businesses or farms, that they will be principled and will labour as your servants.

I pray for those unemployed, that they will be tireless in their search for work, and that they will be fruitful in all that they do as your servants.

And I pray for those retired, that they will be fulfilled in the work they do as volunteers and in your service.

I pray too with those of the Persecuted Church who are denied work by discrimination, displacement and disaster with the consequent poverty and hunger.

Thank you for the Barnabas programmes that are providing food for Christian widows in Egypt, that are funding an orchard in Turkey for Armenian Christians returning after an

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earlier genocide, that are providing food for Uzbek Christians, converts from Islam, that are providing building materials and food for Hmong Christians in Vietnam after devastating landslides.

Lord, fill my heart with compassion for my brothers and sisters as I support them in prayer and giving.

Hear my prayer O Lord. Amen

Bible Reading:

- John 14:15-21

If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will also live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

Song: “Cornerstone” (Myrin, Morgan, Lijero)

1. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness
And I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly trust in Jesus name.
2. When darkness seems to hide his face I rest on his unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil.
*Christ alone, cornerstone, weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm, he is Lord, Lord of all.*
3. His oath, his covenant, his blood support me in the 'whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way, he then is all my hope and stay
*Christ alone, cornerstone, weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm, he is Lord, Lord of all.*
4. When he shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in him be found
Dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless stand before the throne.

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Message: “Don't worry, God's got this”

Recently we have been praying for a young girl of 14 years who suffers seriously from epilepsy which causes her to have regular seizures. 3 or 4 years ago, after the seizures became more frequent, she had a couple of surgeries for a brain tumour in an attempt to fix the problem. After battling through rehab, such as getting an arm to regain full function, the seizures returned with a vengeance. Despite being on the maximum preventative medication she was having seizures daily and sometimes more frequently.

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You can imagine the worry that her Mum, Dad, sister and brother were and are experiencing. The family is one of great faith, and in a conversation, her Mum shared with us that when she expressed her concern to her daughter she replied, "Don't worry Mum, God's got this." What an expression of faith. She attended a mission conference with us and it was a blessing to see her worshipping God so wonderfully and openly despite her affliction.

And the reason for our recent prayer vigil? She and her Mum went to another city for further surgery where 18 holes were drilled into her head and probes inserted. Then her medication was reduced to induce multiple seizures so that they could map the results to try to find a way to manage her epilepsy. As we have prayed together we encourage one another with her words – "Don't worry, God's got this."

What an encouragement to my and our faith she has been. What glory she has brought to God through her faith in him. I have been thinking how easy it is to maintain faith when the shadow of death has is not hanging over me. How easy it is to be strong when in my small sphere things are going well. How would I fare if some diagnosis, some life-threatening circumstances were visited upon me. How do I feel when I look at the world and so many things are going so badly. The war in Ukraine shows no signs of abating, international relations are on a knife's edge, the news is full of arson, car theft, assaults, family and school violence – I don't need to go on!

I recently read a quote from author Paul Tripp – "Much of our regular anxiety, worry, fear and discouragement is the result of thinking when things are out of our control, they are out of control." The big picture is that God has a plan for this world, he will establish "a new heaven and a new earth", he has dealt with sin and death through the cross and resurrection, and he is coming again. It may not be happening as fast as we would like but God is in perfect control and his timing is perfect. And that is where my young friend's faith has encouraged me with, "Don't worry, God's got this."

And in all these so called "out of control" circumstances another "faith factor" stands tall. In everything, God has been, is, and will be glorified! In church my friend who is dying of cancer stood up and testified - and God was glorified! Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried - and God was glorified! Persecuted Christians face deprivation, discrimination, disease and death – and by these God is glorified!

We are familiar with the story of Peter when he and the disciples met Jesus on the beach after his resurrection. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. Peter was hurt by the persistent questioning and was no doubt reminded of his three denials on the night of Jesus' trial. Jesus then hints to Peter the means by which he will die (**John 21:17-18 – Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.**). Christian tradition has it that Peter died in Rome, crucified upside down because he didn't think himself worthy to be crucified as Jesus was. What is sometimes missed in Jesus' rather graphic prediction is in verse 19. **Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God** (italics mine). **Then he said to him, "Follow me!"**

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In these words, Jesus made it crystal clear what following him means. It means total surrender. It means things won't always be easy. It means our very purpose in receiving new life is to glorify God – and in so doing we too are glorified! It meant that for every disciple (again according to Christian tradition), with the exception of John, they would suffer death through martyrdom. And we can add Stephen and Paul.

Sounds grim? Not according to Paul.

Romans 8:18 **“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”**

Philippians 3:7 **“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”**

Not according to James (Jesus' brother).

James 1:2 **“Consider it pure joy my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of any kind.”**

Not according to Peter.

1 Peter 1:6 **“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”**

And not according to Jesus.

Matthew 5:11 **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven ...”**

Paul lists a whole heap of afflictions he suffered through his life and through which God was glorified – whippings, beatings, stonings, shipwrecks. Most of us won't experience those. Peter was crucified upside down by which God was glorified. None of us are likely to experience anything like that. Today our persecuted brothers and sisters are beheaded, bombed, shot, tortured, starved, put out of work. Most of us won't experience the severity of the things they suffer, and through which they bring glory to God. More commonly we suffer from cancer, heart disease, job losses, floods and droughts, painful family relational breakdown, ridicule. None of what we suffer can be diminished because it's different to the sufferings of Peter, Paul and others, but in every instance we are able to say, “Don't worry, God's got this.” God's in complete control, especially when we aren't.

You have no doubt read the poem “Footprints” by Carolyn Carty. The author writes of a man who reminisces on his life, and he sees two sets of footprints in the sand representing God walking with him. He notices times, particularly when the going was tough, when there was only one set of footprints, and he asks God why he left him when he most needed him. God replies that he hadn't left him, that's when he was carrying him. God's got this!

We are assured of the presence of Jesus in the Holy Spirit in our lives all the time. Jesus said, **“I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to be help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.”** And God is glorified by this.

We are assured of joy and peace and all the fruits of the Spirit. And by this God is glorified. We are assured of abundant life (John 10:10). Abundant life not grounded in the false satisfactions the world promises, but in the wonderful restored, redeemed relationship with the Father through Jesus our Saviour.

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And in all this God the Father is glorified. Praise his name!

Whatever our current situation we can confidently say to ourselves and others, "Don't worry, God's got this."

Song: "Blessed Assurance" (Frances Jane van Alstyne)

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine: O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God; born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long.
2. Perfect submission. Perfect delight, visions of rapture burst on my sight;
Angels descending bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long.
3. Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Saviour am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above, filled with His goodness, lost in His love.
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long.

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Benediction

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA