

### Praise – Call To Worship

Blessed be the Lord! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.  
The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;  
my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

*Psalm 28:6-7*

Hymn: by William Kethe (16<sup>th</sup> century)

1. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;  
Him serve with fear, his praise forth tell, come ye before him, and rejoice.
2. The Lord, ye know, is God indeed, without our aid he did us make;  
We are his folk, he doth us feed, and for his sheep he doth us take.
3. O enter then his gates with praise, approach with joy his courts unto;  
Praise, laud, and bless his name always, for it is seemly so to do.
4. For why? *(I.E. why is it “seemly so to do”? It’s because ...)*  
The Lord our God is good: His mercy is for ever sure;  
His truth at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure.

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### Prayer

O Lord God, my Father, you are holy and righteous in all you do. Through your son Jesus my Saviour you have forgiven me, reconciled me to yourself and given me life and hope. Through the Holy Spirit I am guided and helped and comforted. Through the Scriptures I am strengthened and encouraged, reading all I need to know about you and your ways. Accept my thanks for all of this.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

### Scripture Readings

- Jeremiah 36 and 45

Prayer for Suffering Christians: *(Barnabas prayer for 26/2/2023)*

Our God of justice and mercy, we pray for Christians who suffer as victims of violence and injustice. We ask You to protect those for whom the threat of violence is a daily experience, whether from authorities, hostile local communities or extremists.

We remember Your people who have been displaced, and often bereaved through raids on their communities in Nigeria, Mozambique and other countries in Africa.

We pray for Christians in South-East Asia ejected from their homes because of their faith in You.

We lift before You believers in Pakistan whose devotion to You is falsely labelled as “blasphemy”.

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We entrust all these to You, the faithful, righteous God of the whole world, who will always will do right, in the name of Your holy and righteous Son Jesus Christ.

Amen.

*(Proverbs 16:8, Genesis 18:25)*

Hymn: (MHB 604) *by Horatius Bonar*

1. Fill thou my life, O Lord my God, in every part with praise,  
that my whole being may proclaim thy being and thy ways.
2. Not for the lip of praise alone, nor e'en the praising heart,  
I ask, but for a life made up of praise in every part:
3. Praise in the common things of life, its goings out and in;  
Praise in each duty and each deed however small and mean
4. Fill every part of me with praise;  
Let all my being speak of thee and of thy love, O Lord, poor though I be and weak.
5. So shalt thou Lord from me, e'en me receive the glory due  
And so shall I begin on earth the song forever new.
6. So shall no part of day or night from sacredness be free,  
but all my life, in every step, be fellowship with thee.

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Message Baruch – Faithful Servant

Baruch, whose name means “blessed”, was a faithful servant of the Lord. He was closely connected with the great prophet Jeremiah and had connections to the king’s court through his brother Seraiah. He lived in Judah around 600BC by which time the northern kingdom of Israel had been destroyed for well over 100 years, and Judah itself was facing its own destruction which was repeatedly spoken of by various prophets, particularly Jeremiah.

We are introduced to Baruch in Jeremiah 32:13. The time was around 590BC. (Because the events recorded in Jeremiah are not in chronological order, this first recorded event was actually after the events recorded in Jeremiah 36.) Jeremiah had purchased a block of land at a place called Anathoth, about five kilometres north east of Jerusalem. It was a Levitical city and Jeremiah’s birth-place, and his part time home town. The settlement of the sale was effected in the presence of witnesses at Jerusalem and two sets of signed title deeds, the sealed and unsealed, were given to Baruch who was entrusted with the responsibility of placing them in a safe place where they would “last a long time”. It is evident that Baruch was a responsible and trustworthy man.

It was about fourteen years earlier that Baruch was filling the role of scribe for Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36). He had the job of writing down on a scroll “all the words the Lord had given Jeremiah” as they were dictated by Jeremiah to him. After the writing was completed Jeremiah wanted the words to be read at the Temple for all to hear, in the hope that “each

will turn from their wicked ways”. But because Jeremiah himself was unable to do so, probably because he had been disallowed access to the Temple, he told Baruch to read it on his behalf. It was about a year later, when there was a large gathering of people “from the towns of Judah” that Baruch “did everything Jeremiah had told him to do”. From a room above the courtyard he read the whole scroll. There was at least one person in the crowd, Micaiah, son of a prominent citizen and public servant called Gemariah, who thought that the senior officials of the royal palace needed to hear what he had just heard. As a result, Baruch was summonsed to read the scroll to those palace officials, which he did. They were deeply affected by what they heard and after confirming that Jeremiah was the author, they determined that the king, Jehoiakim, needed to hear the same message. Knowing the likely response of the king, they told Baruch he best depart and that he and Jeremiah hide themselves. “Don’t let anyone know where you are” they said to Baruch. So Baruch left and the scroll was taken and read to the king by one of the court officials. But instead of heeding the message, the king had the scroll burned and ordered the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch. But they were not found because “the Lord had hidden them”.

When Jeremiah learned that the scroll had been destroyed by the king, the Lord told him to repeat the whole work of dictation and recording. So Baruch was called into service again and wrote everything down a second time; this time “many similar words were added”. Baruch completed this possibly tedious job, writing out again those words of judgment, albeit tinged with mercy. He showed by his action that he was willing to do this work under threat of imprisonment, in difficult circumstances, knowing that most likely he and Jeremiah were also going to suffer as a result of God’s judgment on the nation if there was no general repentance. Baruch served faithfully under difficult circumstances.

It was some time later that Baruch was confronted by those who opposed Jeremiah’s message. They falsely accused him of “inciting Jeremiah against us” (43:3). Jeremiah himself had earlier been accused of deserting to the enemy (37:13). So the outlook for Baruch, the faithful servant, as well as for Jeremiah, was looking bleak.

Baruch’s response to his circumstance was: “Woe is me! The Lord has added sorrow to my pain. I am worn out with groaning and find no rest.” And perhaps this is how the faithful servant of the Lord does feel from time to time: “I’ve worked hard and diligently for the Kingdom of God. The work has at times been tedious. I, or perhaps the person I have been supporting, has not been listened to. My work has incurred unjustified anger towards me by those opposed to the message. And I fear for the future because it looks like things are going to turn out badly.”

We are told that the way Baruch felt was conveyed to Jeremiah by the Lord. And with it came word of what the Lord himself was going to do for Baruch. That in itself was an act of mercy from the Lord for Baruch’s benefit, and I think we can correctly assume that this was the best way that Baruch could be helped. Jeremiah subsequently relayed to Baruch what he had learned, about how Baruch felt, (which might have been embarrassing for Baruch) and secondly what the Lord was going to do for him, which was that Baruch was going to “escape with your life wherever you go”. We might be tempted to think that this word may have been of little comfort for him: Where was he to live? Where was food and money

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coming from? What about the Babylonians? What would living in Egypt be like? But Baruch had heard all he needed to hear from the Lord. Like Paul, it was sufficient.

Maybe it's the same today. Years of faithful, sometimes tedious and demanding work. Yes, there has been joy in service to the Lord, but ...!

But what?

But the Lord hears. That's what! The Lord hears all who cry to him. That's what we heard in our Call To Worship.

The Lord hears the cry of despair or disappointment or frustration from his faithful servant, and he wants to speak a word of encouragement. Look out for it. It may not come loud and clear like Elijah's fire or hurricane or earthquake, but in a quiet way that you may miss if you are not listening for it. Even then, it may not be all that you would like to hear or experience, but when it does come, and whoever or however it comes through to you, it will be sufficient. God will answer. God does and will help. He will respond in his way and in his time through the channel he chooses.

And it will be sufficient.

Amen.

Hymn: (MHB 572) *by Charles Wesley – note the repetition of "all"*

1. Behold the servant of the Lord! I wait thy guiding eye to feel,  
To hear and keep thy every word, to prove and do thy perfect will,  
Joyful from my own works to cease, glad to fulfil all righteousness.
2. Me if thy grace vouchsafe to use, meanest of all thy creatures, me,  
The deed, the time, the manner choose, let all my fruit be found of thee;  
Let all my works in thee be wrought, by thee to full perfection brought.
3. My every weak, though good design o'errule, or change, as seems thee meet;  
Jesus, let all my work be thine! Thy work, O Lord, is all complete,  
And pleasing in thy Father's sight; Thou only hast done all things right.
4. Here then to thee thy own I leave; Mould as thou wilt thy passive clay;  
But let me all thy stamp receive, but let me all thy words obey,  
Serve with a single heart and eye, and to thy glory live and die.

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### Benediction

May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

This service prepared for HopeNet SA by Warren Mack