

PRAYERS FOR WORSHIP:

Lord, be with us in this time of worship. It is our privilege to ask that your Spirit be our companion and guide. May the words and thoughts of this shared time be acceptable to you our God. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

HYMN *by Charles Wesley 1707-1788*

1. And can it be that I should gain, an interest in the Saviour's blood,
died he for me, who caused his pain, for me, who him to death pursued
Amazing love, how can it be, that thou, my God shouldst die for me!
2. Tis mystery all the immortal dies, who can explore this strange design,
In vain the first born seraph tries to sound the depths of love divine,
Tis mercy all let earth adore, let angel minds inquire no more.
3. He left his Father's throne above, (so free so infinite his grace!)
Emptied himself of all but love, and bled for Adam's helpless race.
Tis mercy all, immense and free; for, O my God it found out me.
4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night:
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke: the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose went forth, and followed thee.
5. No condemnation now I dread, Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine
bold I approach eternal throne, and claim the crown, through Christ my own.

BIBLE READING

- Mark 10: 17—27

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.”

And he said to him, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.” And Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You lack one thing. Go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have new treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were amazed at his words.

But Jesus said to them again “Children how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.”

And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said “With men it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”

The salutation: “Good teacher”. The reading opens with a sense of urgency because the young man ran up to Jesus – he may have been trying to speak to the travelling rabbi without success, and now he’s about to leave Jericho, so maybe this was the last chance.

The question: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” It was common in that time for a person to ask a religious figure such a question. The man: apparently a good living person obeying the mosaic law and probably the extra laws laid on by the Pharisees. He wanted to know about the kingdom.

Could there be another reason for his question? After all, there was confusion between the Sadducees’ and Pharisees’ understanding of afterlife.

Jesus looked at him and loved him (Romans 5: while we were yet sinners Jesus died for us). Jesus understood the man’s crisis, just as he understands our own struggle - think Emmaus road (Luke 24). Meaning in life cannot be found in worldly values which become barriers, preventing a right relationship with our Lord.

When a Christian friend was in the process of adopting a Thai girl, he asked the Thai children’s home to see the child who had been rejected the most, that is, the one with the most barriers to adoption. They brought out a little 4 year old girl with a very obvious hair lip and cleft palate. In Thai culture this was a bad omen, a barrier, a sign that she was being punished for a past life, for sin by her or by her family. She was accepted by the Christian family and treated in Australia for her affliction.

Barriers to faith are found in Paul’s letters to the early church in Asia. Corinth, Apollo; Thyatira, Jezebel; Ephesus, Artemis mother goddess. Greek gods and goddesses were usually known for their cruelty and vengeance. So Paul had to talk about the saving power of the blood of Christ and how it broke the bonds of sin and the world’s values — their world. What a contrast to the blood sacrifice (including children) in the temples.

Do you ever think there are barriers in your spiritual life?

Post modernism is the dominant culture in today’s world. It promotes an understanding that MY truth, MY understanding matters, much of it coming from the toxic social media world. Belief and faith has no chance for many devotees.

For the young man seeking guidance the essence of his misunderstanding lies in the word “Do”. We can’t “do” anything to earn eternal life. Only when we let go of the futility of holding onto life barriers, in his case wealth, but even then Jesus is clear it’s not a tick the box issue. It’s a soul matter.

So Jesus addresses “those who heard him”(Luke), “the disciples” (Matthew /Mark) with the challenge. How hard it will be to enter the Kingdom of God with earthly life barriers. (NT Wright calls it “the seduction of wealth”) The disciples are bemused. Who then can be saved? Who doesn’t like money? (especially the poor disciples.)

Their astonishment is settled. God makes it possible through Christ. The “result” as it were, is that it’s not wealth, or the divestment of wealth that can “do” it for anyone. It’s only grace achieved through the atonement – where Christ gives his all without any barrier for us.

What a blessing!!

PRAYERS FOR THE PERSECUTED:

Lord our God, we turn our thoughts to the Christian community in Myanmar. They are under military attack, often left in a place with nothing to give. We thank You lord that through Barnabas Aid you have supplied food and medical help. Over 200 families are affected. Lord we pray for generosity of spirit and purse from all those who can give. Father walk with them as they flee, comfort, and sustain them, in Jesus’ Name we pray.

Amen

HYMN *by Julia Howe 1819—1910*

1. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
he is tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored:
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.
2. He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
he is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment seat:
O be swift, my soul, to answer him: be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.
3. In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
with a glory in his bosom which transfigures you and me:
as he died to make men holy, let us live to make men free,
While God is marching on.
4. He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave:
he is wisdom to the mighty: he is succour to the brave:
so the world shall be his footstool, and the soul of time his slave:
Our God is marching on.

BENEDICTION:

But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. (1 John 2:18)

Amen.

This service prepared by Grant Jewell for HopeNet SA Inc