

**Worship @ Home**  
**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020**  
**Led by Alan Eccles**

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**Call to worship (based on Psalm 105)**

Give thanks to the Lord,  
call on his name;  
**make known among the nations  
what he has done.**

Sing to him,  
sing praise to him;  
**tell of all his wonderful acts.**

Glory in his holy name;  
**Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.**

**STF 593 – Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour.**

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=lord+enthroned+in+heavenly+splendour&ru=%2fvideos%2fsearch%3fq%3dlord%2benthroned%2bin%2bheavenly%2bsplendour%26FORM%3dHDRSC3&view=detail&mid=5F198FF52AB9D9FC97415F198FF52AB9D9FC9741&rvmid=EB5FF2CF9A91FD6A3886EB5FF2CF9A91FD6A3886&FORM=VDRVRV>

Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour,  
First begotten from the dead,  
Thou alone, our strong defender,  
Liftest up thy people's head.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Jesus, true and living bread!

Here our humblest homage pay we;  
Here in loving reverence bow;  
Here for Faith's discernment, pray we  
Lest we fail to know thee now,  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Thou art here, we ask not how.

Paschal Lamb, Thy offering, finished  
Once for all when Thou wast slain,  
In its fullness undiminished  
Shall for evermore remain,  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Cleansing souls from every stain.

Life imparting Heavenly manna,  
Stricken rock with streaming side,  
Heaven and earth with loud hosanna

Worship Thee, the Lamb who died,  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Risen, ascended, glorified!

George Hugh Bourne (1840-1925)

### **Prayer of Approach**

Lord God we come to acknowledge you,  
All you have given,  
Through creation,  
Through your seeking,  
Through your presence,  
Through your constant love.

We praise you for Jesus Christ,  
Who came and gave himself for us,  
That we might know forgiveness,  
Reconciliation and rebirth.  
Help us to respond to this unmerited  
Love that meets us in our need.

We thank you for the Holy Spirit,  
Who comes to challenge and equip.  
Give us courage to receive what he brings of You.  
May he widen our horizons  
And show us what is possible  
As we seek to shape and serve your kingdom/

Lord God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
As we come to worship,  
May we encounter you anew.  
Teach us a new thing.  
That we might sing of Your glory  
And proclaim your name to the world.

### **Prayer of Confession**

Let us confess our sins to God.

(Silence)

For not taking time to see  
and abusing the beauty of all you have created,  
Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For not taking time to see,  
Your presence in the need of others,  
Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

For not taking time to see,  
What you desire of us in worship and for our limited expectation,  
Lord, have mercy.

**Lord have mercy.**

(Silence)

Here is good news for those that come to see Christ,  
Jesus says: 'Your sins are forgiven.'

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**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 this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen**

## **A short film about Bible mission around the world**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVpL7QP-YFE>

## **StF 530 – To Be in Your Presence**

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Noel+Richards+To+Be+in+Your+Presence&docid=608035208794214374&mid=E4947EFBA98BC8CF5BE8E4947EFBA98BC8CF5BE8&view=detail&FORM=VRAASM&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dto%2Be%2Bin%2Byour%2Bpresence%2Bnoel%2Brichards%26FORM%3DHDRSC3>

To be in your presence,  
to sit at your feet,  
when your love surrounds me,  
and makes me complete:

*This is my desire, O Lord,  
this is my desire.  
This is my desire, O Lord  
this is my desire.*

To rest in your presence,  
not rushing away,  
to cherish each moment  
here I would stay.

Noel Richards (b. 1955)

## **Exodus 16:2-15**

### **Manna and Quail**

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.'

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, 'In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?' Moses also said, 'You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.'

Then Moses told Aaron, 'Say to the entire Israelite community, "Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling."'

While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked towards the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

The Lord said to Moses, 'I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, "At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning, you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God."'

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning, there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, 'It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.'

## **Matthew 20:1-16**

### **The parable of the workers in the vineyard**

'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

'About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the market-place doing nothing. He told them, "You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So, they went.

'He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?"

"Because no one has hired us," they answered.

'He said to them, "You also go and work in my vineyard."

'When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first."

'The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So, when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. "These who were hired last worked only one hour," they said, "and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day."

'But he answered one of them, "I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

'So, the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

### StF 93 – Though the Fruit Tree Doesn't Blossom

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=though+the+fruit+tree+doeswn%27t+blossom+lyrics&qs=n&sp=-1&pq=though+the+fruit+tree+doeswn%27t+blossom+lyrics&sc=0-45&sk=&cvid=41E18B9F53FC4306989251DB2A84EFE0&ru=%2fsearch%3fq%3dthough%2bthe%2bfruit%2btree%2bdoeswn%2527t%2bblossom%2blyrics%26qs%3dn%26form%3dQBRE%26sp%3d-1%26pg%3dthough%2bthe%2bfruit%2btree%2bdoeswn%2527t%2bblossom%2blyrics%26sc%3d0-45%26sk%3d%26cvid%3d41E18B9F53FC4306989251DB2A84EFE0&view=detail&mmscn=vwrc&mid=132C4BEF2F5F5336B97D132C4BEF2F5F5336B97D&FORM=WRVORC>

Though the fruit tree doesn't blossom,  
Though no ripened grapes appear  
When the harvest fails and fields provide no food  
I'll be joyful in my Saviour  
The Lord who is my strength  
He will keep my ways and lead me in His truth

*Yet will I praise him, I will lift my hands to my Redeemer  
Yet will I praise him, my Creator and my Lord  
Yet will I praise him, I will put my trust in my Provider  
Yet will I praise him, my Saviour and my God*

When the night is overwhelming  
And the day is far from clear  
When my heart is restless for the peace of God  
Let your word Lord, through the ages  
Be the word that now I hear  
Come remind me once again to trust you Lord

Be the strength Lord in my weakness  
Let your song be in my night  
Be my rock when all around is sinking sand  
Be the light Lord in the darkness  
Be the vision of my eyes  
In my passing days you are the great 'I AM'

*Yes I will praise you; I will lift my hands to my Redeemer  
Yes I will praise you, my Creator and my Lord  
Yes I will praise you; I will put my trust in my Provider  
Lord I will praise you, my Saviour and my God.*

Geraldine Latty (b. 1963))

## Reflection –

### Grumbles

Do you ever grumble? I'm going to be honest and confess that I can grumble. I tend to do so particularly when I am tired.

A national newspaper reported the average worker spends the equivalent of two weeks grumbling - with the top gripes about IT, air conditioning and printers.

Researchers say the typical employee will also find time to whine about unnecessary all-staff emails - and uncomfortable chairs.

Other problems which drive staff mad are the temperature of the office, commuting, people pulling sickies, and a phone call just as you're about to leave.

Common gripes, which generally take up a total of 20 minutes of the working day, include the amount of junk mail received, being copied into emails that are of no concern and someone using your favourite mug.

Grumbling is a skill that we learn fairly young. Some phrases that come to mind that I employed at an early age are: 'I don't want to', 'I'm bored' and the one possibly employed the most 'It's unfair'.

'Its unfair that I have to go to bed now.'

'Its unfair that I can't go out to play like all my friends'

'Its unfair that I have to do my homework before watching the television.'

'Its unfair that I have to eat up all my dinner when you have left some.'

'Its unfair that I have to do as you say, rather than as you do!'

As a child there can be much invoking of justice to the side of your cause.

It's unfair!

Both of our set lessons for today are full of grumbling. Full of people thinking that they have been dealt a bad hand. Full of people thinking that it is just unfair. The striking thing about this is how God responds.

Departing from the oasis at Elim (Exodus 15:27), the people arrive at the “Desert of Sin” on the way to Sinai. The people are in the between place - between departure and destination - between liberation and covenant. We are told that these events take place a month after their departure from Egypt.

I am sure that all of us have experience of long journeys in difficult circumstances bringing out the worst in people. I am sure we have all said at some time in our life – ‘Are we nearly there yet?’

The Israelites find themselves in a strange, harsh and uncertain environment. This leads them to complain to those in charge, Moses and Aaron.

*“The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death’” (Exodus 16:3).*

In this moment, the people have put to one side the work that God had done to persuade the Egyptians to allow the Israelites to be free. In this moment, the people put to one side the fact that God had parted the water to enable them to escape from the Egyptian army who were after them. In this moment they put to one side that God had provided water that was drinkable. The Israelites were unused to being free, they are hungry, they are in the desert. They are in a place and situation that they had never been in before.

As they grumble and murmur, the Israelites are selective in what they remember. Forgotten are the years of domination, terror, and enslavement under Pharaoh. All the Israelite community can remember about Egypt is that they had full bellies at the end of the day. Nostalgic longing for a misremembered history is a powerful and dangerous force, especially in an environment of scarcity and adversity.

Our gospel reading is a parable of Jesus. A landowner hires workers, in the early morning, to bring in the harvest at the vineyard. The landowner agrees to pay them what amounts to the daily wage of one denarius. The landowner then goes back to the marketplace at nine o’clock, at noon, at three o’clock and at five o’clock on each occasion hiring more workers to bring in the grapes. On each of these occasions the landowner states that he will pay the workman what is right.

The landowner ends up paying each of the workers, starting with those hired last, and each one irrespective on when they were hired gets one denarius. This results is the workman that were employed early in the morning, and who are paid last. are not happy and grumble. The Greek word used means; to murmur, mutter, grumble, say anything in a low tone. It means of cooing like dove, of those who confer secretly together and of those who discontentedly complain.

Each of us can probably sympathise with the workman who have worked all day. Its all about the value of hard work and getting a just reward. The workman that were hired first have worked more and the more productive you are the more you ought to get paid. This is the complaint of those that worked all day: “You have made them equal to us.”

The parable takes us back to our grumbles of childhood, when one sibling gets a better perceived outcome than another, the one who feels cheated screams: “But that’s not

fair!” And so it goes: Some seem to get more than they deserve while others get less. It’s just not right.

“Hey, that’s not fair!” they complained. The landowner was not playing by their rules.

But Jesus instructs us that the Kingdom of Heaven is like this!

## **Generosity**

The Israelites grumble in the desert. What is God’s response? He hears them.

The people cried out in slavery in Egypt. God heard them.

The people cried out by the sea when the Egyptian army were after them. God heard them.

The people cried out when they had no water fit to drink at Marah. God heard them.

The people grumbled and God heard.

God is patient and commits to offering the Israelites regular provision for their journey: “I will rain down bread from heaven for you” (Exodus 16:4). This heavenly provision, however, must be gathered and prepared in a very particular manner, with special consideration for the demands of the Sabbath: “The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days” (verses 4-5; see also 21-26).

In God’s generosity each gets exactly what they need. They were to gather a set measure, ‘*an omer*’ for each member of their household. We read:

*The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.*

Everyone had what they needed. Everyone had their daily bread.

We know that God was generous in his provision because some tried to hoard of this provision and set aside more than they needed for the day. Was this because they were fearful as to what would happen tomorrow? “However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them” (Exodus 16:20).

God’s faithfulness and generosity was such that he provided for them daily for forty years until the people came and settled in Canaan.

The labourers in the vineyard that had worked all day from early morning were unhappy with their lot and grumbled:

*“These who were hired last worked only one hour,” they said, “and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.”*



The landowner's response is to remind them that they received what he had agreed to pay and says:

*"Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?"*

We need to recognise that these labourers were day workers. They would wait in the marketplace hoping for someone to come along and hire them for the day. If they were not hired, they would not earn and if they did not earn they would not be in a position to feed the family. A denarius was equivalent to the minimum wage and it was just enough to survive for the day.

Throughout the world there are many who are dependent on daily wages today, who each day wait hopefully for work, knowing that if none comes there will be nothing to buy food.

This gospel parable presents a vision of generosity. The landowner goes out throughout the day and hires all he finds. The landowner in his generosity gives everyone irrespective of when they are hired the minimum wage needed to feed the family. The landowner gives a gift to the vast majority of those hired, giving not necessarily what they earned, but what they needed. Even, those who worked all day get the wage they had agreed on at the beginning of the day.

And Jesus tells us that this is what the Kingdom is like. The Gospel presents a picture of divine generosity. While such practices of giving different workers different hourly rates, might lead to litigation today, this is the way of God's realm. God responds to our needs and this cannot always be presented in terms of today's rational expectations. God responds to our needs. God provides our daily bread.

The scriptures invite us to trust God's abundance: the creative wisdom that brought forth the universe will respond to our needs.

There's a play based on this parable in which he depicts two brothers vying for work. John is strong and capable; Philip is just as willing but has lost a hand in an accident. When the landowner comes, John is taken in the first wave of workers, and as he labours in the field, he looks up the lane for some sign of Philip. Other workers are brought to the field, but Philip is not among them. John is grateful to have the work but feels empty knowing that Philip is just as needful as he. Finally, the last group of workers arrive, and Philip is among them. John is relieved to know that Philip will get to work at least one hour. But, as the drama unfolds, and those who came last get paid a full day's wages, John rejoices, knowing that Philip – his brother – will have the money necessary to feed his family. When it comes his turn to stand before the landowner and receive his pay, instead of complaining as the others, John throws out his hand and says with tears in his eyes, "Thank you, my lord, for what you've done for us today!"

## **Grace**

The parable is our gospel reading today, is immediately preceded by the very familiar story of a rich young man who asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. After preliminary answers, Jesus instructs him to go, sell all that he has, give it to the poor, and to follow him. The young man went away grieving because he had many possessions. The disciples follow with a comment that they have given up everything. Jesus' reply to them ends with the paradox of discipleship – many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first.

The question "what good must I do to inherit eternal life?" – shapes the doing-centred work of the labourers. It does not, however, shape the grace-centred allocation of the homeowner. We cannot earn our place in the Kingdom of God. It cannot be the result of

what we feel we deserve. It is a generous gift of God that we respond to and humbly receive. This is God's undeserved grace that he lavishes on each one of us. God's kingdom is radically not about what we do, but what He gives.

We need to see this parable as one of God's grace. Webster's New World College Dictionary provides this theological definition of grace: "The unmerited love and favour of God toward human beings; divine influence acting in a person to make the person pure, morally strong; the condition of a person brought to God's favour through this influence; a special virtue, gift, or help given to a person by God."

The story is told of a man who died and went to heaven. St. Peter met him at the pearly gates and asked to examine his qualifications. "We have a point system," St. Peter said, "and only those with enough points are allowed to enter."

"Points?" the man asked, "I don't know what you're talking about."

St. Peter explained, "It's simple. We determine how many points you have by the life you've led. We require a hundred points to get in. Tell me about your life, and I'll add up your points."

The man thought for a moment and said, "Well, let's see. I was a faithful member of my church for over forty-seven years. I served as a deacon and an elder, and I taught Sunday School."

St. Peter said, "Very good. You get one point."

The man said to himself, "Oh, my! Well, let's see, I was a good husband and a good father. I gave a tithe to the church, and I contributed to all sorts of charities. I helped with various civic projects, and I served on several committees. Doesn't that count for anything?"

St. Peter said, "Indeed it does. You get another point."

The man's face sank, and he said, "I can see now, I'll never make it. The only way I'd ever get into this place is by the grace of God."

St. Peter smiled and said, "And that, my friend, is worth ninety-eight points. Welcome!"

We may feel that at the moment we are in the between place. Between lock down and what may come beyond. We may have nostalgic reflections on what the world, our community, our church was before Covid. This may all lead us to grumble.

God out of his great generosity, God out of his extraordinary grace, has sent us his Son, who is with us and travels with us.

God in his generosity hears our groans.

God out of his grace gives out daily bread.

God doesn't look towards what we have earned, but what we need.

God challenges not to look back, but to look forward trusting in Him that he will provide until we reach Canaan.

## **Response**

*(A moment to respond.)*

## **Prayer**

Lord, help us to recognise that it is not through merit or hard work that we enter into your kingdom, but by accepting the free gift of Your grace. We acknowledge all that Christ has done for us. We recognise that Christ has ultimately met our need. You gave your only Son that who so ever believed in Him would not die, but have eternal life. **Amen**

## **StF 565 – Only by Grace**

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=only+by+grace+can+we+enter&&view=detail&mid=A04AA27FF4ED2882AA3EA04AA27FF4ED2882AA3E&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Donly%2Bby%2Bgrace%2Bcan%2Bwe%2Benter%26FORM%3DHDRSC3>

Only by grace can we enter  
Only by grace can we stand  
Not by our human endeavour  
But by the blood of the Lamb  
Into Your presence You call us  
You call us to come  
Into Your presence You draw us  
And now by Your grace we come  
And now by Your grace we come

Lord if You marked our transgressions  
who would stand?  
Thanks to Your grace we are cleansed  
by the blood of the Lamb  
Lord if You marked our transgressions  
who would stand?  
Thanks to Your grace we are cleansed  
by the blood of the Lamb

Only by grace can we enter ...

Gerrit Gustafson

## **‘The Good Shepherd’ – a Spoken Word piece by Dai Woolridge**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tilv0-LYXpw>

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord, there are times that we grumble -

We pray for your church,  
The body of Christ on earth.  
Help us, who are living bricks,  
To be in the right place

To meet the challenge of this time.  
Let us not be afraid to reinvent ourselves.  
Help us to live mirroring Your grace,  
Seeking to meet the daily needs of your people.

Lord God,  
**Hear our cry.**

Lord, there are times that we grumble -

We pray for the nations of the world.  
We yearn for peace,  
We yearn for justice,  
We yearn for a fair use of resource.  
Be with those affected by fire,  
Be with those that seek to rebuild,  
Be with those seeking to heal the world.

Lord God,  
**Hear our cry.**

Lord, there are times that we grumble -

We pray for those known to us in need;  
For those who are ill and in hospital,  
For those that are infirm and housebound,  
For those that are separated from family and friends,  
For those that mourn.  
Be with them in this day,  
Be with them answering daily need,  
Help them to know your presence and peace.

Lord God,  
**Hear our cry.**

Help us not to worry about what we deserve,  
But help us to meet the need of neighbour.  
Equip us for this task in Christ's name. **Amen**

## StF 65 – Sing of the Lord's Goodness

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Sing+of+hte+Lord%27s+goodness&&view=detail&mid=E02F5B823D701A3C72F5E02F5B823D701A3C72F5&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DSing%2Bof%2Bhte%2BLord%2527s%2Bgoodness%26FORM%3DHDRSC3>

Sing of the Lord's goodness Father of all wisdom,  
come to him and bless his name.  
Mercy he has shown us, his love is forever,  
faithful to the end of days.

*Come, then, all you nations,  
sing of your Lord's goodness,  
melodies of praise and thanks to God.  
Ring out the Lord's glory,*

*praise him with your music,  
worship him and bless his name.*

Power he has wielded, honour is his garment  
risen from the snares of death.  
His word he has spoken, one bread he has broken,  
new life he now gives to all.

Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow,  
Spirit of our God most high;  
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,  
splendour of the living God.

Praise him with your singing, praise him with the trumpet  
praise God with the lute and harp;  
praise him with the cymbals, praise him with your dancing,  
praise God till the end of days.

Ernest Sands (b. 1949)

## **Blessing**

Go in the knowledge that God hears your cry.

And may the blessing of God, the Father,  
God, the Son,  
And God the Holy Spirit,  
Be with us now and for evermore.  
**Amen.**