



Morning Worship

Season of Creation

*"The Earth is the Lord's
and all that fills it"*

Psalm 25:1

27 September 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Morning Worship here at the Parish churches of Coxley with Godney, Henton, and Wookey. Although we are once again meeting together physically in our church buildings we understand that some people might not be able to attend for any number of reasons. It is hoped that following this liturgy, knowing that others in the benefice will be doing so at the same time, might help provide a spiritual connection between us and bring about a sense of community between the followers of Jesus Christ.

It is suggested that alongside this liturgy you have a means to listen to the suggested hymns which have links to videos with lyrics within this document. There is a mixture of traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs. If you do not know the tune then why not listen to the hymn/song and worship through reading the words alone.

The service is designed to be used easily by one person. If there is more than one person participating, either one can lead with others joining in with the responses in **bold** OR everyone present may join in with all the words.

The sections in *red italics* are rubrics: these explain what needs to happen at various points.

Materials in this booklet are drawn from *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* which is copyright © The Archbishop's Council of the Church of England 2006; *New Patterns for Worship* copyright © The Archbishop's Council of the Church of England 2002. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version.

MORNING WORSHIP

GREETING

Praise God! For even though we are apart the Lord is in our midst!

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Lord is here!

His Spirit is with us!

Though we find ourselves isolated
in homes, apartments, and residential places,

**we look out our windows and remember,
the heavens declare the glory of God,
all creation rejoices in our creator.**

Psalms 19:1

Though we cannot be present with our church community,

**we rejoice that Christ is in our midst,
he is with us always, until the end of the age!**

Matthew 28:20

Though we have to stand at a safe distance from others,
giving space to those who pass us by,

**we recall we are all made in the image of God,
connected to one another,
connected to God.**

Genesis 1:27

HYMN: ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING

[Listen here](#)

CONFESSION AND WORDS OF COMFORT

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world
and knows our every word and deed.
Let us then open ourselves to the Lord
and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.

We are not worthy to be called your children.

We turn to you again.

Have mercy on us,

**bring us back to yourself as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

A period of silent reflection follows

Hear the words of comfort, our Saviour Christ says to all who truly
turn to him:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

COLLECT

Let us pray.

A period of silent prayer is kept.

Almighty God,
you created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them,
you created humankind in your own image, and it was very good:
grant us the courage to recognise our failure to maintain your
creation and by your grace do all that we can to halt the
degradation of this world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord
who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

HYMN: IMMORTAL INVISIBLE

[Listen here](#)

THE WORD OF GOD

Hear what God is saying to his people according to the book of Exodus.

16¹³ In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. ¹⁴ And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.'" ¹⁷ And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. ¹⁹ And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." ²⁰ But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. ²¹ Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

THE SERMON

By Revd Guy

SEASON OF CREATION

Today we reach the climax of our series on the Season of Creation. We have looked at the topics of the land, the water, and climate change. On this journey we have discovered that our duty as God's witnesses in this world is to be those who look after his creation - not abuse it for our own gain. We have re-discovered just how blessed we are by God to have ready access to housing, food, and clean water and so we have thanked him for all that he has provided for us. And we have learnt that part of what it means

to follow in Jesus' footsteps and to be salt and light in this world is to seek justice and to help those who are not as fortunate as us either by providing aid, supporting charities, or campaigning through assertive non-violence, like Jesus did when he said 'turn the other cheek', on environmental issues such as climate change.

Caring for creation is a wide-ranging and challenging call for all Christians to undertake. When we understand that God doesn't just love us, but loves all he has created, it forces us to look inside ourselves and beyond ourselves and change our behaviour so that it is less self-centred and more God-centred, seeking to do his will in this world and for this world.

THE PINNACLE OF GOD'S CREATION

Today, as we celebrate harvest as a benefice, we continue looking at creation by taking a look at the pinnacle of God's created world, humanity. God has always favoured humanity, we are the only creatures in the book of Genesis made 'in the image of God' (Gn. 1:27); We are given 'dominion' over all creation (Gn. 1:28-30), although, as we heard in our first week during this season of creation it is dominion over creation, under God's rule, it is not ours to abuse but to look after on behalf of God; and at the end of the day when humanity is created 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good' (Gn. 1:31). Not just good, like the previous five days, but very good. We, humanity, have a special place in creation and a special relationship with God.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

Let us just linger for a moment on the statement 'we are made in the image of God.' What does that mean, to be made in the image of God? Well there are many theories about what it could mean. Many link that passage with the following phrase of having dominion over creation, that to be made in the image of God was to rule over creation like God does. This is a valid interpretation because we are created to be stewards of creation. This leads to the next thing that we learn about the image of God, it is

something unique to humanity, no other creature is made in God's image. It is what distinguishes us from the rest of creation. When we observe the differences between us and other animals the biggest distinction is our relational capacity: we relate to one another and to God. God addresses humans in the Bible, gives them commands, he relates to us, he does not do this with any other aspect of his creation. Conversely, we speak, reason, and relate to one another and God. We are personal creatures.

This relational capacity is fully realised in Jesus Christ. As someone who is fully God and fully man he is the embodiment of humanity in the image of God. Jesus reaches out to people across society, he develops relationships with others, and ultimately in his death and resurrection he restores our relationship with God which we damaged when we rebelled against him and chose to go our own way.

To be made in the image of God then is to be relational with others and with God.

A CARING NATURE

Now, you are probably wondering what on earth all of this has to do with harvest? I've barely mentioned anything to do with food or plants or crops so far today. Well, our relational identity, something that is part of all of us, means that we were created to care for one another. We are creatures who when we perfectly reflect God's image care for others more than we do ourselves. As I mentioned previously, Jesus Christ is the full realisation of our Godly image; his sacrificial death means that all people can receive the gift of eternal life and a restored relationship with God - is there any better example of someone caring for others more than themselves?! This is what it means to be living as we were created to live - to care for others, in fact you could even go as far to say: to love others.

Part of what it means to love others is to share what we have with them, including our wealth, our technology, and our harvest. That is why we have taken an offering for the food bank today, as an

act of love to others, living out our lives as best we can in the image of God.

A HUNGRY WORLD

There are so many people in the world today in need of our love, who need us to be the best image bearers of God we can be.

For example, let's look at hunger. In our world there is enough food produced to feed the global population yet over 690 million people go hungry of which there are 14 million children under the age of five suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Wars, economic insecurity and natural disasters all contribute to this crisis that affects just under 10% of the world's population and as we heard last week, climate change is seen to be a big contributing factor to global poverty and so also global hunger.

Here in the UK the demand for food parcels from foodbanks has increased to record levels with demand just before lockdown being 17 times higher than last year. I can imagine that the picture has only got worse since lockdown, furlough, and redundancies have happened. And this is just looking at the hungry in the world. There are the poor, the homeless, those without access to clean water, those without access to medical care, the list goes on. There are too many people in the world who are suffering and in need of us all to take action and to love them and care for them in their need.

GOD'S PROVISION...

We truly are blessed to have all that we do. All of this wealth and prosperity that we have is a gift from God because throughout the Bible we see that God is a God who provides. In our reading today from the book of Exodus, we see God provide for the Israelites in the wilderness.

The Jews have just been released from slavery in Egypt, dramatically crossing the Red Sea and within a few months they were already grumbling about how things were better for them in

Egypt because at least they had food there. God hears the grumbles of the Jews and so provides them with bread or manna from heaven and quail to eat. This daily gift of meat and bread (except on the sabbath when they had to use the extra they were given by God from the previous day) kept hunger at bay for forty years (Ex. 16:35).

God provided for them and he provides for us as well. As Jesus says in Luke's gospel 'Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!' (Lk. 12:24). God provides for us because his character is one which abounds in generosity and love towards us, again shown in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

...OUR SIN

But if God is someone who provides for us then why do so many people in the world go hungry everyday? To answer that let us return to our discussion about the image of God. Being made in the image of God means that we are relational creatures created to care for one another. If that is the case, then why do we not always care for people? It is because we are only made on the image of God, we are not God himself. We cannot live a life perfectly in God's image and we cannot do that because of our selfishness, because of our rebellion against God's rules, because of our sin.

It is human sin that has led to our inability to live out our lives truly in the image of God. The consequence of this is that we do not love one another as we should but rather prioritise ourselves. This sinful, self-centredness has led to the unfair distribution of wealth across the world. Because we were created, not the creator, we fear loss and a lack of resources. We cannot just magic food or water out of thin air like God did for Israel in his provision of the manna and quail and so we tend to fear lacking things. We see this fear in our reading, once the manna was gathered some feared there would be none the next day and so held some back

overnight. This base fear of not being able to provide leads us to the situation we are in today where the rich get richer and the divide between rich and poor increases every year. We hold onto wealth for fear that we might lose it all.

GOD'S EXPECTATION

But this is not what God expects of us. In our reading God provides the Jews with exactly what they need, whether they gather a lot or a little each has what they need. Those who store the manna overnight find that it is useless because 'it bred worms and stank' (Ex. 16:20). This shows us that God does not want us to hoard what he has given us. Rather, God provides us with what we need, and anything extra is to be used for God's purposes of loving our fellow man. As Jesus says in Matthew 6:19-21 'do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth' and instead offers an alternative lifestyle saying 'where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' If our ultimate treasure is a perfect relationship with God then our hearts will be living out a life in the image of God and we will be loving our fellow humans rather than ourselves and seeking to act in ways that express that love.

CONCLUSION

We have delved deep into what it means to be human today. We have seen that we were created in God's image to be relational, to love one another, but that our sinfulness means that we fail to love others more than we love ourselves and this has led to a lot of the issues we see around the world to do with hunger and poverty.

We fail to trust in God's provision and so we fail to love our fellow man. So this harvest time let us be those who trust in God, who remember all that he has done for us, for the ways he has provided for us physically with all the good gifts we brought this morning, and for the provision of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let us be those who take that trust and use it as a foundation to become the people that God always created us to be, those made in the image of God, who act in ways that serve others rather than themselves. Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

INTERCESSIONS

We pray for farmers,
their families and communities and all who depend on them;
for all who are worried about tomorrow and facing difficulties
today;

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

For agricultural chaplains, rural churches,
The Farming Community Network and their partner charities;
for the communities in which they work and the people to whom
they minister;

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

For retailers and suppliers and for all involved in the processing
and transporting of food;

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

For urban communities far removed from food production;
for children and young people with little knowledge of where
their food comes from,.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

For those that go hungry and those who endeavour to feed them;
for relief agencies and aid workers;
for all those giving help and healing to those in need,
Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

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.

HYMN: WE PLOUGH THE FIELDS AND SCATTER

[Listen here](#)

DISMISSAL

God the Father,
who first sowed in your hearts the seed of eternal life,
bless you.

God the Son,
who nurtures you with the rain and sunshine of love,
bless you.

God the Holy Spirit,
who brings us all to fullness of life,
bless you.

The blessing of the one true God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you always
and that you might be a blessing to others.

Amen.