



# Morning Worship

19 July 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 currently apart due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) 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.

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 reach out and touch  
our friends and neighbours,  
**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: I WILL SING THE WONDROUS STORY

[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.*

Creator God,  
you made us in your image:  
may we discern you in all that we see,  
and serve you in all that we do;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

## HYMN: O PRAISE THE NAME

[Listen here](#)

## THE WORD OF GOD

Hear what God is saying to his people according to the prophet Ezra.

**5** Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. <sup>2</sup> Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

<sup>3</sup> At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: “Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?” <sup>4</sup> They also asked them this: “What are the names of the men who are building this building?” <sup>5</sup> But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it.

<sup>6</sup> This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the governors who were in the province Beyond the River, sent to Darius the king. <sup>7</sup> They sent him a report, in which was written as follows: “To Darius the king, all peace. <sup>8</sup> Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls. This work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands. <sup>9</sup> Then we asked those elders and spoke to them thus: ‘Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?’ <sup>10</sup> We also asked them their names, for your information, that we might write down the names of their leaders.

## A REFLECTION

*By Revd Guy*

We have been through quite a journey exploring the book of Ezra. We are now in our eighth week looking at the events that occurred all those years ago, attempting to see what they have to say to us, as God's people, today. We are told by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 that 'All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness' but I believe that the book of Ezra is the book for this time. It describes a people who are returning from exile to worship God once more, to repair their relationship with him, and to restore their identity as God's people. It is a book of new beginnings, and as a church seeking a way forward in light of the pandemic we are living through, we are beginning something new too.

Last time in Ezra we saw a second new beginning for God's people. The first was when they returned from exile in Babylon, this second new beginning was the recommencement of work on the temple which had stopped for 16 years because of the fear of the Jewish people. With a rebuke from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to remember who they were as God's people and who God was, the Jews overcame their fears and began once more to rebuild the temple, all done with the watchful eye of God keeping them safe (Ezr. 5:1).

## SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

This is where we pick the story up today. But, with every success story there is often opposition. This season, Liverpool Football Club have won the premier league title for the first time in thirty years and they have done so in magnificent fashion recording victories over every team in the league and winning the title with a record number of games still left to be played. All in all it was a remarkable season for them, yet there are those who belittle this achievement saying that COVID-19 and the subsequent adjustments to how matches are played has made their title win null and void, not a true victory in the way other teams have won the league. Success, like Liverpool's, attracts opposition and so it will not come as a surprise that as the

temple work continued at pace it attracted the scrutiny of those in power over the region - the governors of the area west of the Euphrates, Tattenai, Shethar-bozenai and their associates (Ezr 5:3).

It is likely that any activity would have caught the attention of these governors. The Persian empire had been dealing with rebellions in many of their territories during this time and so any major construction project would have been scrutinised for fear that it may have been the beginnings of fortifications and the seeds of rebellion. The governors asked the Jews two questions: firstly, whether they have permission to build the temple, and secondly what are the names of those who are building it. These responses were then sent off to King Darius to ascertain their validity (Ezr. 5:6-17).

This was the next test for the Jewish people. They had already stopped work on the temple once because of fear of persecution and intimidation - how would they fare against being questioned by the governors of the region? We all face challenges every day, perhaps not in the form of government questioning, but of one kind or another. It may be the challenge of staying in isolation when every fibre of your being wants to escape from the four walls of your house; it may be the challenge of making your furlough or pension payments stretch to provide food for the week; or it may be something deeper or more personal, the challenge of faithfully living out your life as one of God's people in a world that is opposed to so much of what we believe. When we take a moment to reflect on our day we will see we are all faced with challenges but it is in our response to these challenges that we see what our character is like.

It is no different for the Jews in Ezra's time and as we see in verse 5 they stood up to the challenge they faced and continued working on the temple. Yes, they had a bit of divine providence (the beginning of verse 5 tells us 'the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews' and so God was in control of the response of the governors) but the Jews still needed to overcome their own fears and respond faithfully to the challenge of such scrutiny from those who were in positions of power over them. We, as God's people today, can learn from how the Jews

responded to their challenge faithfully. They responded in two ways: they were faithful to God's word and they persisted in their work. Consequently, the work on the temple prospered in their hands (Ezr. 5:8).

### **FAITHFUL TO GOD'S WORD**

It is not immediately obvious to see exactly how the Jews were faithful to God's word during this time, we get no obvious mention to work being done "in accordance with the scriptures" but, as we saw in Ezra 3 when construction of the temple under Zerubbabel first began, the construction had always sought to be faithful to the methods of construction given by God to Solomon for the first temple. Here, after 16 years, when work recommences it is once again being done in accordance with God's instructions. Verse 8 speaks of the temple being built 'with huge stones, and timber laid in the walls,' the exact same methods used by Solomon's men in 1 Kings 6:36. With such a break from the construction of the temple it would have been easy for the Jews to take shortcuts so they could catch up with construction and get the temple completed sooner or to rush the construction just in case the governors of the region change their mind in the future and tell them to stop construction before it is finished. The Jews could have felt the pressure to forsake the instructions given to them by God in preference for a quicker solution. They do not, however, fall foul to this temptation, instead, they ensure that the work is done properly and in accordance with God's instructions. At this time of challenge the Jews do not crack under pressure either from themselves or from those outside of God's people, rather they remain faithful to God's word.

Likewise, when we are faced with challenges we too must remain faithful to God's word. Having God's word readily available to us in our Bibles, written in our own language, with numerous translations, footnotes, and summaries in means it has never been easier for us to get to know who God is and what his call on our lives might be. I know that many of you are missing church services as we once had them with the intercessions and hymns and the fellowship that goes along with them but this time is an opportunity for us to dig deeper into



God's word. It is the first time since I arrived in this benefice that we have consciously worked our way through an individual book of the Bible and explored the depths of what it has to say about God and ourselves. All too often we get caught up in the passages we know or the seasonal services and miss the treasure that can be found through a purposeful examination of God's word. I mentioned at the beginning of my sermon this morning the words that Paul sent to Timothy, that 'All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness' (2 Tim. 3:16); now there is so much that we can get from these words but for today I want to highlight that scripture is all of these things and more. Scripture teaches us, it challenges our behaviours, and it corrects us, all so that we might, as verse 17 goes on to say, 'be complete.' It is through following God's word that we become complete, that we become the people that God created us to be.

When we devote ourselves to God's word and remain faithful to it we are complete and so we are ready to respond faithfully to any challenges that might come our way. We will know the truth that God is with us, we will know the truth that he has provided a helper for us in his Holy Spirit, we will know the truth that death is nothing to fear because of Christ's death and resurrection. God's word can provide for us whatever challenges we might face, not necessarily in the way we might want it to or expect it to, but it will provide for us, so let us remain faithful to God's word.

## **PERSISTENCE AND PROSPERITY**

The second thing we can learn from the continued work of the Jews on the temple in the face of the challenge from the governors of the region is that they were persistent in their activity, they did not stop. Ezra 5:8 says that work on the temple 'goes on diligently.' These would have been of great comfort for Haggai and Zechariah to hear after they managed to get construction underway again after that 16 year break. Where fear once was it has now gone. They may have been fearful before (Ezr. 4:4) but now they are steadfast in their work.

It is likely that the words from Haggai are still ringing in their ears with

the truth that God was with them (Hg. 1:13) and so they had no reason to fear, no reason to stop the work that they were doing, God was with them. This is a truth that we can hold fast to today as well. Paul in his letter to the church in Rome reminds us that 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (Rom. 8:31). It is a great reminder that God is with us now in all that we do and so we have nothing to fear in doing what we are called to. But the actions of the Jews are more than a reminder of God being with us, they show us that living a life for God is more than just knowing God, knowing his faithfulness, his grace, his mercy; it is about action as well. It is one thing to know God's word, it is another thing to act on that knowledge.

When challenged, the Jews continued to follow God faithfully and work on the temple. Likewise, when we face our challenges, we too need to be those who act in a way that is faithful to God. For example, we may know the truth of John 3:16, that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,' but do we live out this truth when times become hard? Do we love God for what he has done for us, even when we are belittled for our faith; do we seek to spend time with the God who loves us when our worries about our health occupy most of our thoughts; do we thank God for his provision and continue to give financially to his church even when faced with redundancy? Persisting to live faithfully with God when faced with challenges is difficult and it most likely won't solve all your problems either (it's not like the governors suddenly left once they'd met with the Jews, they were still hanging around!) But persisting in faith through those times will be beneficial.

The final words of Ezra 5:8 tells us that the work of the Jews on the temple 'prosper in their hands.' Following God's way can lead to nothing other than prosperity, not financially as some "prosperity gospel" preachers might say, but for the prosperity of God's kingdom, the prosperity of your relationship with him, and the prosperity of the work that he is doing through his people. When we know God's word and act faithfully in response to it we are living a life that is closer to the life that God designed us for and therefore we are closer to living

life to its fullest, closer to life as it should be. So I encourage you this week to think about the challenges that you face, to seek to know God in the midst of those challenges through his Word, and to live faithfully through those times because you will find support from God through the challenges of life and you will come out the other side with your relationship with God having benefited from the process and perhaps knowing his call on your life that bit better than you did before.

Amen.

## **HYMN: ALL PEOPLE THAT ON EARTH DO DWELL**

[Listen here](#)

## **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**

*Use the silence between each prayer to bring before God your own concerns around that topic.*

Jesus, our exalted Lord, has been given all authority.

Let us seek his intercession that our prayers may be perfected by his prayer.

Jesus Christ, great high priest,  
living for ever to intercede for us,  
pray for the Church and its leaders, your broken body in the world...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, King of righteousness,  
enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high,  
pray for the world and its leaders, and make it subject to your gentle rule...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, Son of Man,  
drawing humanity into the life of God,  
pray for your sisters and brothers in need, distress, or sorrow...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus, pioneer of our salvation,  
bringing us to glory through your death and resurrection,  
surround with your saints and angels  
those who have died trusting your promises...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, Lord over all things,  
ascended far above the heavens and filling the universe,  
pray for us who receive the gifts you give us for work in your service...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ,  
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit  
and in the bond of peace,  
and bring the whole created order to worship at your feet;  
for you are alive and reign with the Father  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### **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: LORD JESUS CHRIST**

[Listen here](#)

### **DISMISSAL**

God the Father,  
who first loved us and made us accepted in the beloved Son,  
bless you.

God the Son,  
who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood,  
bless you.



God the Holy Spirit,  
who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts,  
bless you.

The blessing of the one true God,  
to whom be all love and all glory for time and for eternity,  
come down upon you and remain with you always.

**Amen.**