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#  **Safeguarding Sunday**

# **20 November 2022**

# **The Rev’d Elizabeth**

# **Gray-King**

Call to Worship

*from the Thirty One Eight Resource Pack for Safeguarding Sunday*

When we are happy, when we are full of joy and laughter: **God welcomes us**.

When we are angry, when people let us down and make us sad: **God welcomes us.**

When we are tired, when we need to stop, curl up, and rest: **God welcomes us.**

God of welcome, whose door is always open: **We are glad to meet you here!**

Prayers of Approach and Confession

God, tireless creator,

with ever new energy, you make a way for our tired souls to find you.

When we are exhausted, you wake us to the depths of your love.

When we are strong and eager, you bring us to the heights of your pain.

You who gave light as gift to the dark,

call us into your powerful reality and we praise you.

You dared flesh.

You lived it, touched it, named it, healed it, challenged it.

You named the lies and walked in truth.

Jesus Christ, flesh of all flesh, bone of all bone, life of all time, we praise you.

You dare flesh still.

Your creative eyes see through all eyes, damaged or free.

Your energy, pain and power move through the flesh that will have you;

touch the flesh which fears you.

Holy Spirit, wind of all time, breath of all life, love of all todays, we praise you.

God, tireless creator, flesh of all flesh, love of all todays, you hear us this day.

We confess our tiredness—of living, of understanding, of knowing.

We confess as we hold our breath against the realities we fear.

We complain that you are absent, that we are unknown.

Yet you do know us, and as you know us, forgive us.

In this silence, we bring our confession.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Tireless, loving, daring God.

You hear us and we praise you.

You know us and as we are afraid of this knowing, we are somehow grateful.

Let us know, O love of all todays that this day we are yours again.

You name us as your own.

We are forgiven. Alleluia, Amen.

Prayer for Inspiration

Eternal Word,

open our hearts to know you, our minds to hear you and our souls to receive you

for your glory’s sake. Amen.

Readings

*Jeremiah 23:1-6* | *Psalm 46*  | *St Luke 1:68-79*

Sermon Notes

Both Jeremiah and Luke point us to passion. Jeremiah’s passion in delivering his message and Zechariah’s passion for God. Zechariah could only open his mouth for words when the passion to speak the truth opened it. What we have in both of these passionate prophecies is the spelling out of aspiration in the midst of harsh reality.

Jeremiah’s prophecy spoke the universal truth that in the midst of human greed and control, there is a new way. Jeremiah named the harsh reality that people have ignored people in need, or worse, sent them elsewhere. That people are afraid, they know evil personally, they long for peaceful community. Jeremiah said that the Lord would provide the safety, the shelter, the community if we only did one thing – behave as if God knows us and will fill us with the power to exercise care.

Zechariah aspired, on behalf of God, for the same good news in the midst of harsh reality. Zechariah predicted that the way of being God power in the midst of evil is to see that soon, God will have brought that new way into the midst of them in human form.

God too is heartbroken by broken human aspiration and the activity of greed to continue to speak through prophets. God has to be present. So dear Zechariah’s baby boy grew to be the one to prepare the way for Jesus. With hindsight, we know that even Jesus was attacked; the powerful and greedy took action.

But, God’s reaction wasn’t to wring hands and murmur ‘oh well.’ Instead God forgave. We have a responsibility, like all good writers of laments of old, to remind ourselves and others that God did not die no matter what it feels like, that hope is tangible, that people can live without fear.

Today is Safeguarding Sunday. If ever there is a message to bring hope in the midst of trauma, it is the message that those who are victims will be heard and will eventually be safe. It is painful for us to see that that many people who ought to care don’t, many people who ought to protect others choose that very role of protection to abuse someone even more. We aspire to be a fair, safe, caring society. We aspire, as did Jeremiah and Zechariah, filled with God’s love, to be homes, families, workplaces, societies and global neighbours who will go out of our way to protect.

Let’s move beyond aspiration. Let’s dare to notice the children who may be too quiet. Let’s dare to notice the teenager who lingers. Let’s dare to notice the young adult who seems to need too much attention. Let’s dare to wonder why we haven’t seen that older person you used to. Dare to speak for yourself, to name your own truth and to ask for help. Please, take on the deep aspiration of the prophets who spoke truth to power even in the midst of the harsh realities of their own communities.

What if Jeramiah had been silent? Who would have reminded people that there is a greater love who knows our fears? What if Zechariah had remained tongue tied? Who would have seen a parent, frightened by the news of his own child’s future, telling it anyway to give hope and inspiration? God will have found other speakers. God does. Yet let us now, in the harsh realities in which we presently live, take our God power and do something. Notice. Speak. Aspire. Share hope. Find rescue.

Affirmation of Faith

I believe.

I believe that before me, before my forebears, before theirs,

there was Eternal Love, creating everything.

I believe this Eternal Love is called God.

I believe God called into being: the world on which I plant my feet, the globe on which I plot my space, and the creatures who share earth’s life.

I believe this Creative, Eternal, Loving God

honoured all life and the life I live by being human.

I affirm the name of Love in human form as Jesus, in a particular place and time.

I believe Jesus was killed by misunderstanding, greed and confusion.

I believe Creative, Loving God, Jesus changed from being dead to being alive.

I believe Creative, Loving God, who was Jesus,

is the breath I breathe and the loving life between people.

I affirm the name of Love’s life inside people as Holy Spirit.

I believe that God, Eternal God, Jesus and Holy Spirit, Three in One and One in Three,

is alive and loving in the world and my world. Amen

Prayers of intercession

Oh God of all time and this time,

eternal one, lover of all, present in each of us, draw us to you now.

It’s in this time we remember.

It’s this moment when words from a few moments ago

may have moved deeply in our deepest selves.

Thank you that we are here.

Our presence in this service is a very real sign that we have made it to this place. Whatever we thought would kill us didn’t.

We are yours and we thank you.

We think now of those who need this reassurance.

In this time of silence, we ask you to move in our minds and help us notice.

We search in our heads for the people who have drawn our attention.

Let us notice them now and inspire us with what to do.

We search in our minds for the communities we know where there is suffering.

Thank you for the relief they get and let us notice what more is needed.

If there is something we can do, move in us to know what that is.

Oh Loving God, some of us feel powerless.

Help us to notice that you have moved our hearts, you draw us to prayer,

you open our minds.

Thank you for your power in us to encourage us to feel and to think beyond ourselves. Reassure us that our powerlessness is your power,

leading us to gently and gracefully find ways to share hope.

In this silence, we bring what we feel moved to bring to you.

We draw these prayers to a close by together praying the Lord’s Prayer

in whatever language or version we prefer.

Offertory Prayer

How can we respond O God?

With some of ourselves, with some of the fruits of our time and planning,

with some of what may cost.

We give it freely with hope that it helps unpick need, pain and suffering.

We give it freely in hopes that it helps share your Good News of safety and peace.

[physical collection or silence]

Bless you God, for what you have allowed us to offer to you.

We commend it all to your service. Alleluia, Amen.

Blessing

May God who is light shine in your darkness.

May God who is love be the love between you.

May God who is life be your life everlasting.

And the blessing of God,

Creator, Christ and Spirit

be with you and remain with you

now and forever. Amen

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| **Hymn Suggestions** |
|  | RS | CH4 | StF | MP |
| Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty | 34 | 111 | 11 | 237 |
| Love Divine All Loves Excelling | 663 | 519 | 503 | 449 |
| Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you  | 591 | 191 |  | 115 |
| I heard the voice of Jesus say  | 349 | 540 | 248 | 275 |
| Inspired by love and anger  |  | 253 |  |  |
| Jesus Christ is waiting  |  | 360 | 251 |  |
| We cannot measure how you heal  | 653 | 718 | 655 |  |
| Longing for light (Christ be our Light)  |  | 543 | 706 |  |
| O God, you search me and you know me  |  | 97 | 728 |  |

RS – *Rejoice and Sing*, CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4*, StF – *Singing the Faith*, MP – *Mission Praise*

***A Dream of Dignity***

George Stuart (Creative Commons Licence)Tune: Darwall’s 148th

A dream of dignity
for all humanity;
it is a dream so bold;
‘Can’t happen,’ we’ve been told;
but we can strive
to keep alive
this hope for human harmony.

2: A dream of dignity
for all humanity;
a dream that Jesus saw
was not achieved through law;
a change of heart
can be the start
of bringing in love’s ministry.

3: A dream of dignity
for all humanity;
is Jesus’ call to care;
life can be so unfair.
He calls for change,
to re-arrange
all cultures of inequity.

4: A dream of dignity

for all humanity

is still with us today;

we find in Jesus’ way

how to respect

and thus protect

the beauty of both you and me.