

worship notes

from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 28th June
Proper 8 | Ordinary 13
The Revd Nicky Gilbert

Call to Worship

Welcome shining stars and silvery moon.
Welcome, blue skies and cloudy days.
Welcome tall trees and tiny bulbs.
Welcome people young and old.
Welcome learned and wise.
Welcome curious and learning.
Welcome: God calls us to come.

Opening Prayer

Creator God,
You called the universe into being,
You set our earth in its perfect zone.
You sang life in all its wondrous beauty into existence.
Giving us your own breath you call us to worship you.
Help us to lay down all that would stop our ears to hear your voice,
or halt our hearts from knowing your love.
Forgive us when the best person we could be is so far away.
Give us the courage to try again.
And assure us of a new beginning in your love.
We are far apart, but, time and distance are different to you,
unite us in our prayers as we say together the prayer that Jesus taught. Our Father

Readings

Isaiah 55: 1 – 5 | Psalm 89: 1-4, 15-18 | St Matthew 10: 40-42

All Age Activity

A Cup of Cold Water

Think water is ordinary, not worth giving anyone?
Water is funny stuff, try these experiments.
Ice is less dense than liquid water:
what does ice do in water? It floats!
Every other substance has a solid which is more dense than its liquid.



If it didn't float the seas would freeze over and life could not exist in water.



Water is sticky. If sticks to itself we call it cohesion. If it sticks to everything else this is adhesion. This is how raindrops can run down a window. But soap or washing up liquid break this surface tension. Try floating some glitter or pepper in a shallow dish of water, then dip your finger into some washing up liquid and put your finger in the middle of the dish,

what happens to the glitter?

You can fill a glass of water to beyond the top of the glass by carefully adding a little at a time (over a sink or bowl!) How high can you get it? Then you can slide a piece of paper onto the top of the full glass, this should be enough for you to turn the glass upside down and still hold onto the water, (again over the sink!)

You may have seen the trick that sticks a balloon to the ceiling using static electricity, well water is affected by the same force. Rub a balloon onto a nylon jumper and then hold it next to a slow stream of water from the tap. The water will be attracted or repelled by the static.



Thanks for playing along I hope it didn't make too much mess. Without these special qualities of water life as we know it wouldn't exist. Water is very important!

Sermon Notes

Isaiah 55

Isaiah seems to think that water should be available to people. Water is odd, without its strange qualities life on earth would not exist. Between 2014 – 2024, 961 million gained access to a good water supply. 30 years ago 6 out of ten people had no clean water now it is one in four, still don't have proper access to good water supplies.

Andy adds: This famous passage is from what scholars refer to as Second Isaiah and written in the middle of the 6th Century BCE around 30 years after the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. The writer concluded that the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the people (which Jeremiah and First Isaiah saw as punishment) was a process of purifying God's people. The prophet was convinced that now, in his time, the process had achieved its aim – the restoration of God's people. He may have come to his conclusion as the Medes and Persians had achieved huge victories over the Babylonians and the Persian king, Cyrus, had a policy of allowing exiles to return home. Just as First Isaiah thought that the Assyrian emperor was an instrument of God's punishment, Second Isaiah felt Cyrus was an instrument of God's favour. His message, then, was one of comfort with the famous "comfort, comfort my people" from Isaiah 40 to today's promise

of water to the thirsty and food to the hungry. Preaching comfort, however, was hard for the people to accept – as hard as it had been 200 years or so before for the people to believe Israel would fall to the Assyrians. In their awe of Babylon’s might it was hard to see its end – just as we find it hard to see the downfall of institutions and even countries we were brought up with to see as being invincible. Who remembers the USSR now? Second Isaiah’s task was to persuade the people to journey back to Israel; to fulfil their destiny they needed to return and return from a land of bondage to a land of promise. This is the setting for the invitation here, at the end of Second Isaiah, to a great banquet. It is more than this though, it is an invitation to a new way of living in a sacred way. Just as in Proverbs 9 people are invited to put aside their foolishness and dine with God. Here the people are invited to a sacred meal with God, a little later they are invited to consider who God invites to reform Israel. The previously excluded are now given an honoured place – the foreigner and the eunuch. Eunuchs could not take part in Temple worship (Deut 23:1, Lev 21: 17-23) and foreigners could not celebrate Passover (Ex 12:43, Nehemiah 9:2) but here God invites all. The people are renewed and their mission becomes ever more inclusive.

Psalm 89

The psalm is one of the kind that the people sang as they went into worship or up to the Temple. It is designed to have a call and response element, so that everyone can join in. It would have been sung to a joyful tune.

Andy adds: In the Psalm as a whole, rather than the snippet the Lectionary offers, we start with a hymn of praise and end with a complaint that God has abandoned both king and people. The writer reminds us that God’s favour on David’s line was everlasting but involved fidelity. God guarantees its permanence even though God intervened when justice and fidelity were lacking from David’s rule and later “If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges; but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips.” Just as God punished and reformed the people in Exile without ceasing to love or consider them as God’s own, so in the Psalm we see abundant love even if it seems, for a time, God’s face is withdrawn.

Matthew

This chapter is difficult, talking about difficult times and overwhelming trouble for the world and for the disciples. Jesus also spoke about going out as sheep among wolves, dependant on the generosity of the people they meet. Is this simple act of generosity one way of tell the difference? How can we show that we are different? Even in troubled times we can do these small kindnesses.

Andy adds: This passage begins with Jesus sending out the 12 disciples as his emissaries invested with his full authority, to depend, radically, on the hospitality of others. The hospitality will have radical consequences with even minimal help receiving a reward. The disciples are called “a prophet”, “righteous”, “one of these little ones” and variant forms of this latter description is used elsewhere in Matthew to mean vulnerable members of the Church.

Prayers for the World

Creator God, you made our world and set it in the liquid water zone.
Without water there would be, no sea, no fish, no plants, no life.
You have shown your care for our planet long before we could understand.
Be with us now and hear our prayers.

We bring to you those who struggle to take clean water and food to those who need it.
Give them strength to carry on.

We pray for those whose daily struggle is to find the necessities of life
and who find it difficult to provide for their children.

We pray for those in our world who cannot express their love for you in freedom,
by whatever name they call you.

We think of the people who we know do not always receive
the kind of welcome you would want them to have.
We ask that we find ways to make them welcome.

We pray that our churches become places of welcome, showing your kindness.

And we pray for ourselves.
You know the times when we have not had the things we needed
and you know when we have not felt welcome.
Help us to be true to your teaching
and give what welcome we can and share what we can
and give hope when we can.
In Jesus name, Amen.

Offering

We give in so many ways; from welcoming the newcomer to offering the simple things of hospitality. We give listening ears and shoulders to cry on. We give of our time, our talents and our treasure. We give to those we love, to charities and good causes we value and, of course, to the Church – sometimes on the plate, sometimes with those wonderful Gift Aid declarations and sometimes directly to the bank. However we give – through money, through doing things, through simply offering out time, we do as acts of

generosity to give back to God something of what has been given to us. So, let's give thanks for the gifts that have been given.

Andy Braunston

With grateful hearts and cheerful hands,
we offer our gifts, time and money and welcome.
Use them, and us to build your kingdom. Amen.

Blessing

So may the blessing of God
who made water and set our planet in the liquid water zone,
the blessing of Jesus
who gave food and shared drink,
and the blessing of the Holy Spirit
who welcomes us all,
be with those you love and pray for,
now and forever, Amen.

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
We Are Not Our Own	482			
Tell Out My Soul	740	286	186	631
Will You Let Me Be Your Servant	474	694	611	1261
O Lord Jesus Enfold Me In Your Arms		571		
If You Believe and I Believe		771		
Amazing Grace <i>or</i>	92	555	440	31
My Chains Are Gone				1151
Be still for the presence of the Lord		189	20	50
Give thanks with a grateful heart		180	78	170
Jesus hands were kind hands	197	351		
With a prayer you fed the hungry				1129
Make me a channel of your peace	629	528	707	456
Will you come and follow me?	558	533	673	
Praise To The Lord, The Almighty	74	124	88	564
Lord of All Creation To You Be All Praise	532	500	449	440

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