

## Act of Worship at Home for Sunday 5 May 2024

Wherever you find yourself taking part in this act of worship, know that you gather with others in the company of the living God.

### Let us begin our act of worship with Psalm 98:

*“Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things;  
his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.  
The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.  
He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*

*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;  
make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,  
with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn - shout for joy before the LORD, the King.*

*Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.  
Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;  
let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.”*

### Let us pray:

Lord of life, we celebrate your greatness today. Your presence surrounds us with love and delight. We acknowledge you as sovereign over life, the Lord of creation, through whom all things were made, and in whom we live and move and have our being. We acknowledge that we have failed you in so much. We have failed to love our neighbour, been slow to forgive but swift to pass judgment and careless of the needs of others. Yet through the immensity of your grace and the awesomeness of your sacrifice, you offer us redemption from all our sins and renewal of life. Lamb of God, to you be power and wealth, wisdom and might, honour, glory and blessing **Amen**.

### Reading

Our gospel reading is from John 15 verses 9-17: Jesus says to his disciples: *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.”*

Now from 1 John 15 verses 1-3: *“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands.”*

### Reflection

I never get bored writing about love! This beautiful passage from John’s gospel is so reassuring. It is a simple message that Jesus is passing on: if love lies at the centre of all we are as Christians then that centre won’t find itself far from God or, as Jesus puts it ‘Now remain in my love’.

But we know enough about Jesus to know that this love can’t be static, stationary or passive. No. This love acts; this love does; this love obeys; this love sacrifices, even unto death. This love serves and shares everything with friends.

In the text in 1 John 5 we hear more of the same – love obeys and obeying is loving one another. Except this time the teaching is couched in a beautiful picture of love that goes beyond friendship. Here we see that the fount of this love flows from is the Divine relationship of Father and Son, and we too are invited in as God’s children. This love goes beyond friendship. It makes family out of friends!

As we, who are followers of Christ, seek to apply these truths to our everyday lives, perhaps we should meet our everyday challenges with a question: ‘what does love look like, here?’ If we are found to be people who ask that question, and act on it, then we will demonstrate the love of Jesus. In the words of St Augustine of Hippo: “Let the root of love be within. Of this root can nothing spring but what is good.” Out of the love of God, let us love. **Amen**

**Let us pray:**

Loving God, wherever there is friction and conflict in the Church, wherever communities are divided and weakened, give us a greater longing for your healing and a deeper commitment to forgiving love. Wherever the ill and injured need comfort and assistance, wherever people are lonely or housebound, may we reach out with your love and help. Wherever people are travelling that last journey of death, may they be surrounded by your love and welcomed into your heaven and may those who mourn be comforted. Wise and gracious God, wherever tangled political situations seem impossible to solve, wherever conflicting interests threaten peace, wherever there is war, give wisdom to those who can make a difference that they may broker peace instead of violence. Help us, Lord, in all situations to love one another and to be peacemakers in your name.

**Amen**

**Our hymn** is number 403 in Singing the Faith: “God is love: his the care” but I have amended the wording and omitted verse two as the best You Tube version that I can find is slightly different from our hymnbook:

1. God is love: His the care,  
tending each, everywhere.  
God is love, all is there!  
Jesus came to show him,  
that mankind might know Him!

*Refrain*  
*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*  
*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*  
*God is good! God is truth!*  
*God is beauty! Praise Him!*

2. Jesus lived here for men,  
Strove and died, rose again.  
Rules our hearts, now as then;  
for He came to save us  
by the truth He gave us.

*Refrain*  
*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*  
*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*  
*God is good! God is truth!*  
*God is beauty! Praise Him!*

3. To our Lord praise we sing,  
light and life, friend and King,  
coming down love to bring,  
pattern for our duty,  
showing God in beauty.

*Refrain*  
*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*  
*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*  
*God is good! God is truth!*  
*God is beauty! Praise Him!*

**And now a blessing:**

Whoever you are, wherever you go, whatever your strengths, whatever your weaknesses, God will be with you to hold, to heal, to guide and to bless. Go, then, in peace, assured of his love. **Amen.**

*Paula Littlewood*