

Sunday 17th January 2021 (Psalm 139: John 1.43-51)

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer reflecting on Psalm 139

Loving, gracious God, you know us better than we know ourselves. You know my thoughts and the motives for the things I do.

You know what I want to say even before I speak the words, and for that I am so thankful. Even when I struggle to find the words to worship you, you know what is in my heart. So, knowing your presence will surround me, and your love sustain me, may I have the assurance you will hear and accept my spoken and unspoken words, for wherever I go, You will be there. Amen

Hymn: 366 Thou hidden Source

Sing/ Read /pray or proclaim the words:

Thou hidden source of calm repose,
thou all-sufficient love divine,
my help and refuge from my foes,
secure I am, if thou art mine:
and lo, from sin, and grief, and shame,
I hide me, Jesus, in thy name.

Thy mighty name salvation is,
and keeps my happy soul above;
comfort it brings, and power, and peace,
and joy, and everlasting love:

to me, with thy dear name, are given
pardon, and holiness, and heaven.

Jesus, my all in all thou art:
my rest in toil, my ease in pain,
the medicine of my broken heart,
in war my peace, in loss my gain,
my smile beneath the tyrant's frown,
in shame my glory and my crown;

In want my plentiful supply,
in weakness my almighty power,
in bonds my perfect liberty,
my light in Satan's darkest hour,
in grief my joy unspeakable,
my life in death, my heaven in hell.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together:

Loving God, you are always ready to hear us.

Always wanting to show us the depths of your love and your understanding of us. Always wanting to comfort us and celebrate with us.

Our words are not adequate to thank you for your forgiveness and for the privilege of knowing we are accepted as your children and, because we are your children, we can know your peace and joy and everlasting love.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament:
Psalm 139

- ¹You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
- ²You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- ³You discern my going out and my lying
down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
- ⁴Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
- ⁵You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
- ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
- ⁷Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
- ⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are
there.
- ⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
- ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

Today's Gospel Reading: John 1:43-51
(NIV)

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

- ⁴³The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."
- ⁴⁴Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."
- ⁴⁶"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

⁴⁸"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

⁴⁹Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

⁵⁰Jesus said, "You believe^[a] because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." ⁵¹He then added, "Very truly I tell you,^[b] you^[c] will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on'^[d] the Son of Man.

Time to Reflect

The first encounter Nathanael had with Jesus must have been a disconcerting one. They had never met before, but immediately Jesus commends him for his faith and his integrity. Nathanael's response shows his confusion as he asks Jesus, 'How do you know me?' Jesus explains he has seen him sitting under his fig-tree, indicating he knew Nathanael was a man of prayer. In rabbinic thought the fig tree was the place one sat to study the scriptures and so, in this initial conversation, Jesus was affirming he knew that he was meeting a man who spent time with, and who was devoted to God. Meeting someone who we feel can 'see through' us can provoke different responses. When someone says the same thing as us at the same time, it can just be something to smile or laugh at and we pass it off without thinking too much about it.

But, for Nathanael, the thought of Jesus knowing so much about him was disconcerting, as it was for the Psalmist who speaks of his inability to escape from God: 'where shall I go from your Spirit or where can I flee from your presence?' In the same way we can feel uncomfortable if we think someone knows too much about us. We may consider it an invasion of our privacy or make us feel anxious. One way of responding is to put up barriers so that person, that friend, maybe even God, can't get too close to challenge our comfort.

But there is a different way of dealing with that discomfort. It appears that Nathanael, despite that strange introduction, did not turn away (John 21.2) but stayed with Jesus. The Psalmist too, although he asks where he can go to escape from God, is also positive about the closeness of God's presence. He could affirm that wherever he was God's hand would guide him and hold him safe.

In a year when life has been so difficult, and when maybe we dreamed of escaping somewhere, the Psalmist's words still ring true, that wherever we are, in whatever circumstances, we can be assured of God's guidance and love and the conviction of God's inescapable presence.

Take a time to sit quietly:

God our companion, we bring to you all who feel alone:
For refugees who have left behind their country, their homes and all that is familiar.
For those, like the women in Saudi, imprisoned for protesting for human rights.

For those who have felt isolated because of the pandemic; for students, for those in nursing homes, for all those unable to see their families.

Ubi Caritas (*Where grace and love is, there is God*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4TG60HvsIY>

God, who rules over heaven and earth, we bring to you the USA as they prepare for a new administration.

For our government, that you will give our leaders wisdom and integrity.

For church leaders, in all denominations, that they will have a vision of your Kingdom, the courage to believe that change and transformation in the church and the world is possible, and the strength to work towards the fulfillment of your Kingdom. Amen

Ubi Caritas

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Singing the Faith 337

[\(233\) There Is A Higher Throne {with lyrics} - //Keith & Kristyn Getty\\ - YouTube](#)

There is a higher throne
than all this world has known,
where faithful ones from every tongue
will one day come.

Before our God we'll stand,
made faultless through the Lamb;
believing hearts find promised grace:
salvation comes.

Hear heaven's voices sing,
their thunderous anthem rings
through emerald courts and sapphire
skies,
their praises rise.
All glory, wisdom, power,

strength, thanks and honour are
to God, our King who reigns on high
for evermore.

And there we'll find our home,
our life before the throne;
we'll honour him in perfect song
where we belong.
He'll wipe each tear-stained eye,
as thirst and hunger die;
the Lamb becomes our Shepherd King:
we'll reign with him.

Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Kristyn Lennox

A prayer of blessing

May God's grace fill our lives,
Christ's love overflow in our hearts and
the joy and peace of the Spirit challenge
and inspire us today and always. Amen

Original Materials by Revd Dr Christine
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We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team. We aim to continue to provide these resources until the end of August 2021.

Due to Covid, some services in person are
currently suspended.
Please check local arrangements before you
leave home.



**STAY HOME, STAY SAFE,
WE WILL SEE YOU SOON**