

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use if you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Opening Prayer**

Eternal One, we gather to worship trusting in your mercy and grace and believing that it is you who have called us here. May your name be blessed in all the world.

**Hymn: STF17 With gladness we worship**

*Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words*

With gladness we worship, rejoice as we sing,  
free hearts and free voices how blessed to bring;  
the old, thankful story shall scale thine abode,  
thou King of all glory, most bountiful God.

Thy right would we give thee -- true homage thy due,  
and honour eternal, the universe through,  
with all thy creation, earth, heaven and sea,  
in one acclamation we celebrate thee.

Renewed by thy Spirit, redeemed by thy Son,  
thy children revere thee for all thou hast done.

O Father! Returning to love and to light,  
thy children are yearning to praise thee aright.

We join with the angels, and so there is given  
from earth alleluia, in answer to heaven.

Amen! Be thou glorious below and above,  
redeeming, victorious, and infinite Love!

*George Rawson (1807-1889)*

**Let us pray together;**

Living One, you are so much more than we can ever imagine. Your goodness, holiness, mercy and loving kindness are greater than we can comprehend. We kneel before your majesty and bow our heads in worship. As we seek to walk in your way and follow in the steps of Jesus, fill us with your Spirit and keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge

and love of your Son that we may truly honour him in our lives and bring glory to your name. Amen.

**Today's Gospel Reading:** Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire' .....

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

### **Time to Reflect**

In a world where even elected governments cling to power with an arrogance that is sometimes breathtaking, our reading today shows both John and Jesus

modelling a humility that challenges all our assumptions.

John's ministry has reached out across the land. Everyone from the labourer in the field to King Herod has been affected. His message didn't pull any punches and it brought many people to the Jordan in search of baptism ... in search of cleansing and a new beginning. The whole experience filled them with expectation and hope. Who is this man? Could he ... is it possible ... could he actually be the Messiah?

John could have let them go on speculating and quietly basked in the glory, but instead he replies, 'not I ... I'm not worthy to untie the thong on his sandals ... but he is coming and you need to be ready.'

And so, in the closing days of John's ministry, Jesus comes to the Jordan asking to be baptised. He, who was so much greater and holier than John in John's eyes, submitted himself to John's ministry and accepted the baptism of repentance and cleansing.

Humility is something that we often get wrong. It's not thinking of yourself as the lowest of the low or assuming that everyone is better than you. We're all called by God and humility is about having a right sense of yourself and of your calling. It's about knowing when God is

calling you to submit and when God is calling you to stand your ground ... when to speak and when to be silent ... even when that makes you vulnerable. Neither John nor Jesus was afraid to speak up and be heard when their ministry required it, but neither of them was willing to step outside of their calling and promote themselves in the eyes of the people.

‘Blessed are the poor in Spirit,’ Jesus taught us ... or as one edition of the New English Bible puts it, ‘How blest are those who know their need of God; the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.’ (Mt 5:1)

*Take a time to sit quietly*

### **A time of prayer**

Loving One, you have called us to pray for our troubled world. So today we hold before you those places where the effects of climate change are not just a theory but an everyday reality of life. We pray for those places where the land is rapidly disappearing into the sea, where wildfires and flooding are becoming annual events, where animals and people are dying because they are not adapted to the heat of summer. Help us all - leaders, businesses and ordinary people - to see and understand what changes we need to make and to have the will to make them.

We hold before you today those places where people suffer because of the actions of others ... through war, oppression, injustice, hatred, prejudice and neglect. (*Choose a place that is on your heart and hold it cupped in your hands before God*) May they know that they are not forgotten. Help us to recognize and enable those who have the voice and the strength to bring change to these places.

We hold before you today those who are struggling with life because of ill health, whether that be physical, mental or spiritual. We name those who are known to us ..... and we pray for your strength to uphold them, your peace within them, your love surrounding them and your healing touch on their lives. May those who have the care of them have the wisdom, knowledge and compassion they need to be effective.

We bring all these our prayers in Jesus’ name and we draw all our prayers for this day together in the Lord’s Prayer.

### **The Lord’s Prayer**

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn:** Listen to “I give you all the honour” by Carl Tuttle.

[I Give You All the Honour - YouTube](#)  
or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

## **A prayer of blessing**

Wherever you are today and whatever is happening in your life, as you turn to the Eternal One in worship and prayer may God bless you and keep you; may God look on you with grace and mercy; may God acknowledge you and give you peace. Amen.

Original Materials by Mary G Elms

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