

Word In Chains



Liddesdale 12th May 2013

Order of Service

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Call to worship	Invited By God
Hymn	CH4 195 Here To The House Of God We Come (Tune: Melita)
Approach	Silenced Voice
Address	My God Is Precious
Hymn	CH4 595 O Breath Of Life
Reading(s):	Acts 16:16-34 John 17:20-26
Hymn	CH4 682 Go In Grace And Make Disciples
Sermon	Come On In!
Hymn	CH4 198 Let Us Build A House
Intercession	Let Your Voice Be Heard
Offering	Wilderness Voices
Hymn	CH4 248 For My Sake And The Gospel's Go
Benediction	God's Invitation

Order of Service

Canonbie 12th May 2013

Call to worship	Invited By God
Hymn	CH4 195 Here To The House Of God We Come (Tune: Melita)
Approach	Silenced Voice
Address	The Entrance To The Church
Hymn	CH4 595 O Breath Of Life
Reading(s):	Acts 16:16-34 John 17:20-26
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Call to worship Invited By God

Invited by God

Come gather in prayer

Invited by God

Come gather rejoicing

Invited by God

Come lift up your voices

United in praise let us worship the Lord

Here to the house of God we come,
home of the people of the Way,
here to give thanks for all we have,
naming our needs for every day,
we who have roof and rent and bread,
sure of a place to rest our head.

There is a knocking at our door,
sound of the homeless of the world,
voice of the frightened refugee,
cry of the children in the cold,
asking the least that is their right,
safety and shelter for the night.

God who is shelter, who is home,
in borrowed rooms you came to live,
pleaded to save the dispossessed,
crucified, lay in borrowed grave:
these are no strangers in your eyes,
this is your family which cries.

We are all tenants of your love;
gather us round a common fire,
warm us in company with Christ,
give us the heart to feel, to share
table and lodging with free hand,
space in our living, in our land.

Approach

Silenced Voice

Lord God, you spoke Creation came to be
Your voice echoes in the vaults of eternity
Your voice rings throughout all that is
Lord, you spoke through your servant John
Your voice sang in the hearts of those who heard him
Your voice resounded and shook their souls
Lord God you spoke most fully in the life of Our Lord
Your son, our saviour Jesus Christ
Your voice of comfort of those who fear
Your voice of hope for those who are broken
Lord God you have spoken
And your word lives on
We, though, have so often stayed silent
We have stayed silent when people have mocked you
We have stayed silent in the face of injustice
We have stayed silent among those who need words of comfort
We have stayed silent for fear
Fear of being mocked
Fear of being hurt
Fear of being involved
We have not raised our voices to echo your
Forgive us
Forgive us
Forgive these faults and those we bring in silence

Strengthen our voices to echo your voice
To speak your word of justice and truth
To speak your word grace and peace
To speak your word of love
Strengthen our voices to echo your voice
The voice of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ

Address**My God Is Precious (LIDDESDALE)**

Because my God is precious
And means so much to me
I keep him in a golden box
And guard him jealously

I don't let people see him
I keep him all for me
I never even mention him
In case folk want to see

My God is very precious
And I keep him in my care
To throw folk off the scent I act
As if he wasn't there

But once a week I take him out
And polish him up bright
For an hour, and then away
Safely locked up tight

Address**The Way Into The Church (CANONBIE)**

How do people get into the church? Can someone tell me? Can someone show me? Through the door? Maybe - but people really need to be shown that they are loved - that God loves them and that they matter to you. That really is the door to the church.

Hymn

CH4 595 O Breath Of Life

O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,
Revive Thy church with life and power;
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit Thy church to meet this hour.

O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in Thy tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore, for this we plead.

O Breath of love, come breathe within us,
Renewing thought and will and heart;
Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win us,
Revive Thy church in every part.

O Heart of Christ, once broken for us,
'Tis there we find our strength and rest;
Our broken, contrite hearts now solace,
And let Thy waiting church be blest.

Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
While harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive, us Lord, the world is waiting,
Equip Thy church to spread the light.

Reading(s):

Acts 16:16-34

One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, “These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.” She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, “These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.” The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.

When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

They answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

John 17:20-26

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Hymn

CH4 682 Go In Grace And Make Disciples

Go in grace and make disciples,
Baptize in God's holy name;
Tell of death and resurrection,
Easter's victory now proclaim.
Christ's commission sends us forth
To the nations of the earth.
Go in grace and make disciples,
Midwives for the world's rebirth.

Go and follow Christ's example,
Not to vanquish, but to heal;
Mend the wounds of sin's divisions,
Servant love to all reveal.
Roles and ranks shall be reversed,
Justice flow for all who thirst.
Go and follow Christ's example,
Forge a world of last made first.

Go in Pentecostal spirit,
Many tongues and many gifts;
Feed the hearts of hungry people,
Spread the gospel that uplifts.
As disciples, teach and learn,
Till the day of Christ's return.
Go in Pentecostal spirit,
Let God's flame of witness burn.

Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened (Acts 16:16-26)

You know one of the things I find hardest to understand about the world of finance and wealth? Art. Every so often you hear that some work of art - usually a French impressionist work - has sold for more millions of pounds than it would take to feed the population of a small country and it turns out that it's been bought as an investment. That means it's going to wind up in a vault somewhere where there will be no light to risk fading its valuable pigments, in a controlled atmosphere where there will be no pollutants to corrode the fibres and no people with their unpredictable ways, and their damp breath, and the unpredictable warmth of their bodies. The investment will be safe and will - I imagine this is the idea - appreciate in value beyond the bucketload of millions it was bought for. But no one will see it. A work of art - a thing of beauty, made to be a thing of beauty - locked away where no one will see it. Am I the only person who finds that at least a little sad?

There are things, I think, that are not meant to be locked away. There are things that are meant to be seen or heard - things that are meant to be shared because they bring something precious and wonderful to those that encounter them; because they add something vital and special to the world. And so I want to take you to a prison in Philippi. It's dark - about midnight - and the only light is a small lamp in another room away from the cell we're going to visit. It's cold and the floor is hard. You can hear breathing - a few men, their feet held in wooden stocks. It's a cold, dreich, dark place - the last place you'd expect to find something beautiful and precious, but listen. First one voice, then another starts to sing. It's a hymn. It's a hymn of praise to God. Sure, maybe they aren't the kind of voices that fill concert halls and maybe a music critic could say that the words and the music aren't great art - but there's something beautiful here. Something precious. Something that can add something vital and special to the world. Something that isn't meant to be locked up. That something is the Gospel.

And so there is an earthquake . The door springs open, the stocks are broken. Paul, Silas and Timothy are free. They carry with them something precious and wonderful, something vital and special for the world. They carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ - they've been talking about it to anyone in Philippi who'll listen since they arrived a few days ago. They carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that Gospel isn't meant to be locked away. It's not meant to be chained up.

You know, sometimes I read this passage from Acts and that satirical side of my brain murmurs that clichéd line from a thousand penny dreadfuls, "With a single bound he was free". But unlike the hero from a thousand penny dreadfuls Paul and Silas and Timothy don't make good their escape. There's no cry of "Crikey! We're free! Leg it lads!". The word is free - it isn't meant to be chained up; it can't be chained. Instead of running like the clappers the three prisoners call out to their jailer who's on the verge of killing himself because he thinks he's going to get into real trouble when it seems his prisoners have escaped.

I want you to see something beautiful and precious here; something vital and special to the world. Paul, Silas and Timothy elect to stay - not to run - because they care about the man who walked them into this cell, who fastened stocks around their ankles, who locked that hard wooden door and left them in the cold and the damp on this hard stone floor. They care because God loves their jailer as much as he loves them. God loves their jailer enough to give his own Son for him. This is the Gospel and it shines in Paul's deeds and words. The word has been unchained and it has found another ear, and another heart and it has changed another life

The word, the Gospel, isn't meant to be locked up. It isn't meant to be chained. It isn't meant to be kept in the dark where no one sees it. It's meant to be offered and shown to anyone who will hear or see. But I wonder - has the church done that? Or has it chained the Gospel? And what of ourselves? Have we told others what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about? Have we shown them? I'll tell you something sort of personal, sort of not personal. For the last five years I was Convener of the Mission and Discipleship Committee of Presbytery and in that role I talked to lots of folk about mission - about getting out into communities and into public places and proclaiming the Gospel. There were times, I tell you frankly, I got the feeling I was asking them to dance naked in the streets. And in a sense, I suppose, I was. Sometimes our faith - the part of it that gives us joy - is such a personal thing that we feel that talking about it reveals us on a very

personal level.

But the costs of not being open and vocal about the Gospel are huge and damaging for the church and - I truly believe - for humanity. See, it's much easier to talk about moral rules than it is to talk about the love of God. It's much easier to talk about abstract moral values than the way that knowing God loves you makes a difference in your life. And so, it seems to me, we spend far too much of our time on rules and codes - on telling folk "Ye cannae dae this! Ye cannae dae that! And ye'll no be daeing that either!". Now don't get me wrong - I'm not saying that morality and codes of behaviour aren't important. Of course they are. But sometimes they become a way of thinking that we're revealing the will of God by focussing on them, while keeping the really precious, beautiful and wonderful part of the Christian faith chained up.

I'd love that for every time I see a story in the papers or on the news that begins "Church condemns", there were a dozen stories that begin "Church invites, or "Church embraces" or "Church welcomes" or "Church flings open its doors for". I want to hear more of that. I'd love that, for every time there's a report in the paper that begins "Church opposes..." there were a dozen stories that begin "Church speaks up for"; "Church speaks up for the poor, for the homeless, for the dispossessed and the exploited, for the demonised and the marginalised. I want to hear more of that. I'd love it if, when the Church talked about its doctrines or about codes of behaviour, it spoke a dozen times louder about the love of God - a love that breaks down the barriers that divide us by race or class or creed or culture; a love that steps over the boundaries to the most broken, most vulnerable person in the world and says "You - yes you. However small, unimportant, unworthy you think you are, you are precious to me. I am your Father and I love you." I want to hear much more of that.

And that's where you come in. We live in a world where communication of ideas is so much easier than it was in the time of Paul and Silas and Timothy. Many of you will have computers and the internet. Even if you don't - there is still pen and paper and there are still newspapers. What's to stop you writing on the countless forums there are out there, or to the papers that so often print only the negative news about the church? What's to stop you telling everyone that will listen through whatever avenues you have that they are precious and unique and loved beyond measure. What's to stop you lifting up your voice and challenging the voices that some in our society matter and some don't?

In these days we have access to far more ways of communicating ideas than was the case in Paul's time. Now is not the time to chain the Gospel. Now is the time to release it - to let it rip - to send the word out by any and every avenue; "God loves you. You matter. You are precious beyond measure". You can do that. Yes. You can. You can take a beautiful work of art from the vault and hold it high for all the world to see.

Lord may we release the Gospel in our words and in our actions. May we show others that they are loved in all we say and do.

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live.

A place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true.

Where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.

Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus;
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat;

a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.

Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space,
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us;
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone,

to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.

Here the outcast and the stranger
bears the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.

Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace.

Let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
all are welcome in this place.

Intercession

Let Your Voice Be Heard

Lord let your voice be heard

Lord let your word be proclaimed

Father God we have heard your voice
We have heard your song of love for all your children
We, your church gather as your servants
To be your hands and your voice in the world

Lord let your voice be heard

There are folk who are lonely
Some of them are bereaved. Some have been left by people they loved
Some of them are deemed weird by our society
They're all your children and you love them
We know you don't want them to be lonely

Lord let your voice be heard

There are folk who are suffering
Some of them are sick and frustrated. Some are broken by stress or overwork
Some feel that they're failures
They're all your children
We know we want them all to find strength

Lord let your voice be heard

In this world there are so many folk who need to experience justice
While people in the affluent West get fat and throw food away, people are starving
But the crops grow by your will
In developing parts of the world people cower because there's a fighting chance
that tomorrow they'll be caught up in war
While our society sells arms to both sides
But your son is known as the Prince of Peace
Across the world people are imprisoned and tortured for what they believe
But you gave us free will
All those who suffer injustice are your children
We know you want them to thrive

Lord let your voice be heard

We are your church
Give us strength to be your witness in the world
And let our neighbours know that they're your children

Lord let your voice be heard

Give us confidence to proclaim your justice

Until all the world is fed
Until all the world is at peace
Until all are free
Lord let your voice be heard

Let us be ready to be your voice in the world
As we bind ourselves to your perfect voice in the world
Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we pray
Lord let your voice be heard

Amen

Offering

Wilderness Voices

Lord God Our Father

We thank you for the voices in the wilderness

For your servants down the centuries who have passed on your word

Who have made your way straight and allowed us to find you.

We thank you for the opportunities we have in our day

To be your voice in the wilderness

And to speak of your love for us

We thank you for your constancy and for the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ

Whose coming we prepare for at this time of year

We thank you for the company of family and friends

For laughter in good times and comfort in sad times

We thank you for food and for shelter; for love and for music

For more than we could ever say

In thanksgiving we bring these offerings

We ask you to bless them and to bless us

We ask you to rededicate them and to rededicate us

To your work in the world; to the building up of your church

and to the bringing in of your kingdom

Amen

Hymn

CH4 248 For My Sake And The Gospel's Go

For My sake, and the Gospel's, go
And tell redemption's story";
His heralds answer, "Be it so,
And Thine, Lord, all the glory!"
They preach His birth, His life, His cross,
The love of His atonement,
For Whom they count the world but loss,
His Easter, His enthronement.

Hark, hark, the trump of jubilee
Proclaims to every nation,
From pole to pole, by land and sea,
Glad tidings of salvation;
As nearer draws the day of doom,
While still the battle rages,
The heav'nly Dayspring through the gloom
Breaks on the night of ages.

Still on and on the anthems spread
Of alleluia voices,
In concert with the holy dead
The warrior church rejoices;
Their snow white robes are washed in blood,
Their golden harps are ringing;
Earth and the paradise of God
One triumph song are singing.

He comes, Whose advent trumpet drowns
The last of time's evangels,
Emmanuel crowned with many crowns,
The Lord of saints and angels;
O Life, Light, Love, the great I AM,
Triune, Who changest never,
The throne of God and of the Lamb
Is Thine, and Thine forever.

Benediction

God's Invitation

You who have heard God's invitation to come to him
When you go from here his love will go with you
Love to be shared with all you meet
Love to be shared joyfully and openly
Love to be shared in kindness and thoughtfulness
When you go from here, God's love goes with you
Go now to be God's invitation to everyone you meet
And now may the breath of God the Father be ever at your backs
May the teachings of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, be ever in your minds
And may the presence and the comfort of the Holy Spirit be ever in your hearts