

No Turning Back



Canonbie United & Liddesdale 23rd March 2014

Order of Service

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Call to worship

Fed By The Lord

The Lord feeds our souls by the touch of his Holy Spirit

Let us lift our souls to God in Prayer

The Lord feeds our minds through his Holy word

Let us listen for God's voice and meditate on it

The Lord feeds our hearts in the love of Christ

Let us lift our voices in songs of praise

Fed by the Lord, let us worship him

Hymn

CH4 511 Your Hand O Lord Has Guided

Your hand, O God, has guided
Your flock from age to age;
The wondrous tale is written,
Full clear, on every page;
Our fathers owned your goodness,
And we their deeds record;
And both of this bear witness,
“One Church, one Faith, one Lord.”

Your heralds brought glad tidings,
To greatest, as to least;
They bade men rise, and hasten
To share the great King’s feast;
And this was all their teaching,
In every deed and word,
To all alike proclaiming,
“One Church, one Faith, one Lord.”

Through many a day of darkness,
Through many a scene of strife,
The faithful few fought bravely,
To guard the nation’s life,
Their Gospel of redemption,
Sin pardoned, man restored,
Was all in this enfolded,
“One Church, one Faith, one Lord.”

Your mercy will not fail us,
Nor leave Thy work undone;
With your right hand to help us,
The victory shall be won;
And then, by men and angels,
Your name shall be adored,
And this shall be their anthem,
“One Church, one Faith, one Lord.”

Approach

Turning Away

Lord God

Down the many millennia when life evolved on this planet
You waited and watched for the life that was coming
Life that you made as you made all things
As we evolved, made by love for love
You did not turn away
You watched over us as a father watches over his children
As you watch over us now, never turning away
You are faithful and you are true and you are just
You are love beyond measure and grace without limit
For our scriptures tell of your patience
Of the many times when you have offered fresh starts to your people
And they have seized them, then turned away.
And still it goes on
You call us to lives of grace
And in bitterness we turn away
You call us to lives of peace
And in hatred we turn away
You call us to lives of generosity
And in greed we turn away
You call us to lives of justice
And in fear we turn away
Lord forgive us

Lord, you do not turn away from us
Inspire us again with your Holy Spirit
Reawaken in us a sense of our true natures
As your children, meant to live in your way
The way your Son taught us
Our faces turned to you in him
Following all the days of our lives and not turning away

Address

Leonides At Thermopylae

Here, now, at Thermopylae
Perhaps we live, perhaps we die;
Perhaps tomorrow sings our praise
Or we're the fools of future days -
The Fates alone can know our ends;
But here and now I call you friends.
Men of Sparta, bend no knee
But take my hand and know you're free.
Go now, if you wish, and flee
The storm to come; or stand by me
And shield to shield, spear to spear
Side by side our place is here.
All of Persia may come on -
Thousands, tens of thousands strong -
Grinding us into the sand
But here and now we make this stand;
Though side by side our bones may lie
Lift your hearts! Raise them high!
Shout defiance to the sky
And down the centuries will fly
Echoes of Thermopylae

Address

Moving The Table

<Choose a small child>

Could you come out and do something for me? I want you to move the Communion table.

<Let him try>

Is there anything you can do?

How about if I help you?

<Help>

See, sometimes there are things in life that seem really hard to do. But the great thing about people is that we can help each other, and that means that together we can do things we could never do alone.

Sometimes it seems that God wants us to do things that seem really hard to do. But God is always there to help us.

Hymn

CH4 525 Water Of Life

Have you heard the raindrops drumming on the rooftops'?
Have you heard the raindrops dripping on the ground?
Have you heard the raindrops splashing in the streams
And running to the rivers all around?

There's water, water of life, Jesus gives us the water of life;
There's water, water of life, Jesus gives us the water of life;

There's a busy workman digging in the desert,
Digging with a spade that flashes in the sun:
Soon there will be water rising in the wellshaft,
Spilling from the bucket as it comes.

There's water, water of life, Jesus gives us the water of life;
There's water, water of life, Jesus gives us the water of life;

Nobody can live who hasn't any water,
When the land is dry then nothing much grows;
Jesus gives us life if we drink the living water,
Sing it so that everybody knows.

There's water, water of life, Jesus gives us the water of life;
There's water, water of life, Jesus gives us the water of life;

Reading(s):

Exodus 17:1-7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.

John 4:5-14

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

Hymn

CH4 268 O God Of Bethel

O God of Bethel, by Whose hand
Thy people still are fed,
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led.

Our vows, our prayers, we now present
Before Thy throne of grace;
God of our fathers, be the God
Of their succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life
Our wandering footsteps guide;
Give us each day our daily bread,
And raiment fit provide.

O spread Thy covering wings around
Till all our wanderings cease,
And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace.

Such blessings from Thy gracious hand
Our humble prayers implore;
And Thou shalt be our chosen God,
And portion evermore.

Make us water in the desert

Water of life

Lord, without water there is no life - only barrenness

Without joy there is barrenness

Without peace there is barrenness

Without justice there is barrenness

Without compassion there is barrenness

We pray, Lord, for the barren places and lives lived in them

And ask that you may make us

Make us water in the desert

Without joy there is barrenness

And so we bring lives that are touched with sorrow

We bring the lonely and the forgotten

For whom a phone call would be desert rain

We bring the bereaved and those facing death

For whom all seems lifeless

We bring the hurting and the sick

Who yearn for new growth

We bring them in compassion and ask you to touch their lives

And if you can touch them through us

Make us water in the desert

Without peace there is barrenness

And so we bring lives that are touched with violence

We bring those caught up in war

War that sears the land and soaks it in blood

We bring those who are victims of crime

We bring trafficked women and children

We bring the victims of domestic abuse

In places where love has died

We bring them in compassion and ask you to touch their lives

And if we can make a difference

Make us water in the desert

Without justice there is barrenness
And so we bring the weak broken by the strong
We bring those who are enslaved and the exploited
Left with no space to grow
We bring the imprisoned and the silenced
Left with no light to grow
We bring the homeless and the hungry
Left with no place to grow
We bring them in compassion and ask you to touch their lives
And if you can touch them in us

Make us water in the desert

Without compassion there is barrenness
You have called us to share your love for humanity
To care for the poor and the outcast
To care for the naked and the despised
To care for the thirsty and the neglected
To live lives of compassion
And so share your water of life
And so we pray for all in need and ask

Make us water in the desert

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 chances 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 191 Do Not Be Afraid

Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name; you are mine.
When you walk through the waters I'll be with you,
you will never sink beneath the waves.

When the fire is burning all around you,
you will never be consumed by the flames.

When the fear of loneliness is looming,
then remember I am at your side.

When you dwell in the exile of the stranger,
remember you are precious in my eyes.

You are mine, O my child; I am your Father,
and I love you with a perfect love.

“Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” (Exodus 17:3)

If you have been parents of young children, did you ever have those times when you were driving the kids somewhere and it seemed that all you got were complaints from the back of the car? “I’m hungry!” “Can we stop?!” “Why aren’t we there yet?”. And perhaps the most irritating of all; “Can we go home now?” There are times when I’m reading Exodus when the Israelites come across as kids in the back of a car on a long journey. “We’re hungry!” “We’re thirsty”. “Can we stop?” And yes, every now and then, “Can we go home now?” There are a couple of places in Exodus where the people of Israel, trudging their way through the wilderness, start harking back to their days in Egypt. They start going on about all the nice fruit they had to eat, and how the Nile meant they always had plenty of water, and wasn’t it wonderful back there? They seem to forget they were slaves

But there is no turning back. They are on their way to the Promised Land and the only way is forward. Not that turning back is necessarily a bad thing. There are times when you do have to turn back. When you take the wrong turning on a road then it’s probably sensible to turn round and head back to the road you were supposed to be on. There will be times on the journey to the Promised Land when the Israelites will have to do exactly that. There’ll be a point where they start worshipping a golden calf and they will have to be turned back to God.

For most of us there are times when we head off down the wrong road - when we develop attitudes and patterns of thinking and behaviour that take us further away from God rather than closer to him. It seems likely, at least to me, that the Samaritan woman that Jesus meets, with her habit of collecting husbands, may be in that position. Or maybe not. Who am I to judge? Whatever the case, Jesus makes her an offer - the water of life; a chance to be renewed. A chance to turn on the road.

And what of us? Part of Lent is about being honest with ourselves. Are there roads that we walk on that we may need to turn round on? Have we become

judgemental in our attitudes to those around us, to the people who seem different or strange to us, or whose ways of life we may not entirely approve of? Is that a road we need to turn on? It's certainly a road our media often tempts us down. Have we become possessive and selfish? Do we cling to what we have - to what we have earned - ever more tenaciously by finding reasons not to share what we have with others; maybe because we think them lazy or good-for-nothing? Is that a road we need to turn on? It's certainly a road the media tempt us down. Are there roads we need to turn on?

Even if we are on the right road, and we're making the journey, with Christ beside us, to God, sometimes we can be like the Israelites. We can be backward-looking. It's sometimes tempting, especially in the church, to look backward and think how rosy things were in the past. There was a guy I used to communicate with sometimes on the internet. He styled himself "1st Century Christian". He had this idea that if the church could just get back to what it was doing in the 1st Century - if we could just adopt the theological ideas and the religious practices of the early days of Christianity when it was experiencing explosive growth....

The trouble is, he wasn't a 1st Century Christian. Nor are you or I. We are 21st Century Christians. The past is a different country - they do things differently there. The way we understand things, the way we do things, the way we can influence the world around us have been and are shaped by the world we live in here and now, today. There is no turning back on the journey we are on.

I am struck, in the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, by the way the woman speaks of the past; of the way she looks back to that long-gone past and tries to let it inform the way she deals with things in the present day. By way of reply Jesus deals with the way things are, right here and now, and points to a time to come when all that has been - all that has divided his people from hers - will be forgotten. He offers her the water of life - the water of renewal; water that is a symbol for fresh hope. It's tempting to look back - perhaps to days when the Church was a more powerful force in society; but nostalgia isn't what it was, and the past wasn't all that golden either. There is no turning back.

Nor is there any standing still. That has to be the message we have for the world around us - the world with whom we are meant to share the water of life - the water of renewal - and for whom we are meant to offer the hope of a better

future; right here and right now.

We are not 1st Century Christians. We are not even 20th Century Christians - even if that's where we spent most of our lives. We are 21st Century Christians, living right here, right now. We are called on to make a difference to those around us right here, right now; because we live in a time and a place that desperately needs the water of life that Jesus offered the Samaritan woman - the water of renewal hope. There are folk living in our society, right here, right now, struggling to get by spending only £10 a week on food. What are we saying to them, and what are we saying to our society about how we have to change. There are folk living in our society, right here, right now, who are treated as beggars and scroungers because there is no work for them to do. What are we saying to them, and what are we saying to our society about how we have to change? When there is no money, it seems, to pay for another bedroom for those on benefits, but we are preparing to spend hundreds of billions of pounds on weapons built to incinerate cities. What are we saying to the people who make the decisions - what are we saying about the future we think God wants for us?

Maybe, for a while, the church stayed too still. Maybe we looked too much to the past while all around us while the world changed around us. Maybe we stayed in our comfort zones of familiar hymns and old-fashioned language and expected our place in society to go unchallenged. That is, I hope, a road we have turned on. The Church has to keep moving forward - there is no turning back. Right here, right now, there is a whole generation of people who need what we have to offer them - hope. Hope that the world can be better than it is - that it can be fairer, more equal, more just. Hope that one day the weapons the world has wielded will be laid down forever. Hope for the folk whose lives are as much of a mess as the Samaritan woman by the well. The woman to whom Jesus offered the water of life; the water of renewal. That's what we are meant to do, and we can't do it if we keep looking backward, if we stay in our comfort zones. We are meant to point to a Promised Land, and there is no turning back. And why should we, when we can strike the rock so that the people can drink?

Lord, keep us moving forward. Give us the water of life each day that we might offer hope to those around us; hope of your Promised Land

Hymn

CH4 514 Onward Christian Soldiers

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before.

Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;
Forward into battle see His banners go!
*Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before.*

At the sign of triumph Satan's legions flee;
On then, Christian soldiers, on to victory!
Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise;
Lift your hearts and voices, loud your anthems raise.

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,
But the church of Jesus constant will remain.
Gates of hell can never gainst that church prevail;
We have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail.

Onward then, you people, join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices in the triumph song.
Glory, laud and honor unto Christ the King,
This through countless ages men and angels sing.

Benediction

Onward Go

Onward go

Ever onward, reaching for the goal

The goal of becoming who you are meant to be

Onward go

Ever onward, through all the challenges life throws at you

And know that the Lord goes with you

Before you

Beside you

Behind you

Onward go

Ever onward, carrying the light that is God's love