

# A Month of Sundays June 2024



Preston Ribble Circuit

Ministry Team

# Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2024

## Call to worship

The psalmist wrote, saying to God:  
it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.  
Let us come to God today with our hearts and minds  
full of the same confidence and praise.  
We too are made and called by God.

## Bible reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

### The LORD Calls Samuel

**3** The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.  
**2** One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. **3** The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. **4** Then the LORD called Samuel.  
Samuel answered, "Here I am." **5** And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."  
But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.  
**6** Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."  
"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."  
**7** Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.  
**8** A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."  
Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. **9** So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.  
**10** The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"  
Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

# Hymn Stf 18: Be still and know that I am God

- 1 Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am God.
  
- 2 I am the Lord who saves and heals.  
I am the Lord who saves and heals.  
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
  
- 3 In you, O Lord, I put my trust.  
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.  
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

Anonymous  
Based on Psalm 46:10-11

## Prayers of intercession

We pray, Lord God, for the people who have helped us along life's road:  
those who have nurtured us and cared for us;  
those who have taught us and trained us;  
those who have embraced and emboldened us.  
For them all:

**Lord God, I pray.**

I pray for those who have a troubled road to travel:  
those who find themselves lonely and friendless;  
those who find themselves frail and faltering;  
those who find themselves angry and aggrieved;  
those who find themselves frightened and fearful;  
those who find themselves disgruntled and dissatisfied;  
those who find themselves empty and desolate.

For them all:

**Lord God, I pray.**

I pray for those who cannot see the treasures they have;  
treasures that come from those around them, or from you.

For them all:

**Lord God, I pray.**

**Amen.**

## **Reflection**

God calls Samuel's name. Our name is our personal identity, and it is so important to us. Our name allows us to hear someone calling us – calling us, specifically! How do we respond when someone calls our name? That may depend on a number of factors: who is calling, the tone of voice, our history with that person, the present context, and more. But what if it is God who calls?

In the popular hymn 'I, the Lord of sea and sky', Samuel's response in this week's reading – 'Here I am Lord' – is followed by a question, 'Is it I?' That stage probably comes for most of us before we can confidently say 'yes' to God, before we can turn the questions into a confident statement 'It is I!' Understanding our calling may be a long, drawn-out process, with a decision coming only after a time of exploring and testing. That is particularly true of formal 'vocations', of course, but it can also be true at a more personal level. We think about things for a long time, we warm to ideas and then get cold feet, we chat about things with those who are close to us. But then, how often do you hear someone say, once they have taken the plunge, 'I should have done this ages ago'?

The point is that, in terms of being called by God, we have to be open to that call. We have to be open to the prayerful counsel of those in whom we trust. We have to be open to the possibility that God's call may not lead where we expect or particularly desire. That it may demand hard things of us. But, sometimes, hearing hard things can move us out of our comfort zone, and that may be exactly what we need to do.

## **Say the Lord's Prayer**

## **A sending out prayer**

We open our hearts to God.

(hands on chest then spread wide)

And we open our minds, too.

(hands on head then spread wide)

We open our hearts to all who do God's work.

(hands on chest, spread wide and look around)

We open our minds to see God at work everywhere.

(hands on head, spread wide and look around)

And we thank God for all the good that is done.

**Amen.**

# Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2024

## Call to worship

From a world of choices  
we choose to spend time with God;  
let us offer him what we have and who we are.  
The consequence of our choice  
is that God meets us and speaks to us;  
let us not fail to listen.

## Bible reading: 1 Samuel 8:4-20, 11:14-15

<sup>4</sup> So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. <sup>5</sup> They said to him, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead<sup>[a]</sup> us, such as all the other nations have.”

<sup>6</sup> But when they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. <sup>8</sup> As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. <sup>9</sup> Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.”

<sup>10</sup> Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. <sup>11</sup> He said, “This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots.

<sup>12</sup> Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. <sup>13</sup> He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup> He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. <sup>15</sup> He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants.

<sup>16</sup>Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle<sup>[a]</sup> and donkeys he will take for his own use. <sup>17</sup>He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. <sup>18</sup>When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

<sup>19</sup>But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. <sup>20</sup>Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”

<sup>14</sup>Then Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship.” <sup>15</sup>So all the people went to Gilgal and made Saul king in the presence of the LORD. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the LORD, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration.

## Reflection

Our way of life needs energy. We are increasingly aware of the dangers of extracting our energy from fossil fuels, but where do we draw the boundary? Vegan, vegetarian or omnivore? Electric cars, hybrid or no car? Long haul flights or stay at home? There are pros and cons to each choice. The people of Israel made a choice for monarchy, a new way of leadership for them. There were pros and cons for that choice too. Samuel began with his face set against it – it offended God, the true ruler of Israel. God, however, was a little more pragmatic; the boundaries were actually in a different place. But Samuel was still given a solemn warning to declare. In the end, it made no difference; the people remained wedded to kingship, and God allowed them to have a king. This was a compromise in which God retained the right to choose – the king would be God’s anointed – but it also gave the people what they wanted. Where do the boundaries lie for us? What part does God play in the choices we make, whether on a global or national scale, or in everyday living?

Saul was God’s original and first choice as king. But later we learn that Saul misused his power, and God instructs Samuel to identify and anoint another (David) as Saul’s successor. This happened a long time before David actually became king, so it gave him time to grow into the role. But we might wonder whether God had made a mistake in choosing Saul

and subsequently changed his mind. Or perhaps we see this as illustrating the risks that God takes in choosing fallible men and women, and how success (from God's perspective, at least) depends on how the chosen one accepts and uses what God has given them. Either way, we cannot and should not second guess God. We can only faithfully go with what we truly believe God is calling us to do and be. How does this affect our understanding of leadership in the church and society?

## **Prayer of Adoration**

'Lord God, when I called you answered me, you greatly emboldened me. I will bow down toward your holy Temple and will praise your name for your unfailing love and faithfulness.'  
(Psalm 138)

Lord God, whatever age we are, you show us your love and compassion. Whether we are new in the faith or have known you more years than we care to remember, you are there for us. Even when the consequences of our choices aren't good, you show us your mercy. We bow to our powerful God for whom nothing is impossible.

**Amen.**

## **Hymn StF 518: Father, hear the prayer we offer**

- 1 Father, hear the prayer we offer:  
not for ease that prayer shall be,  
but for strength that we may ever  
live our lives courageously.
  
- 2 Not for ever in green pastures  
do we ask our way to be;  
but the steep and rugged pathway  
may we tread rejoicingly.
  
- 3 Not for ever by still waters  
would we idly rest and stay;  
but would strike the living fountains  
from the rocks along our way.



4 Be our strength in hours of weakness,  
in our wanderings be our guide ;  
through endeavour, failure, danger,  
Father, be there at our side.

Love Maria Willis (1824–1908)

## **Prayers of intercession**

God of truth,  
we pray for those who are slandered today;  
for those in the public eye whose lives are laid open to the world...  
**Protect them mentally and physically and draw them close to you.**

We pray for sportsmen and women facing the pressures of winning...  
and losing...  
**protect them mentally and physically and draw them close to you.**

We pray for families where half-truths have destroyed trust and broken  
relationships,  
where there is estrangement....  
**protect them mentally and physically and draw them close to you.**

We pray for one another,  
especially where we have been hurt by the words of others and felt  
excluded.  
**protect them mentally and physically and draw them close to you.**

In Jesus name we pray.  
**Amen.**

## **Say the Lord's Prayer**

### **A sending out prayer**

May God give us eyes of faith to see God's way  
in the face of the many choices we face.  
May God be in our choices and our plans.  
May God bless us and all those we seek to serve.  
**Amen.**

# Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024

## A gathering prayer

Our God looks on us and loves us;  
come with thanks and praise.

Our God sees us and knows us;  
come in worship and adoration.

Our God leads us and cares for us;  
come to listen and go out in faith.

## Hymn Stf 287: When I survey the wondrous cross

1 When I survey the wondrous cross,  
on which the Prince of Glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.

2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
save in the death of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

3 See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4 His dying crimson, like a robe,  
spreads o'er his body on the tree;  
then am I dead to all the globe,  
and all the globe is dead to me.

5 Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were an offering far too small;  
love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

## A prayer of confession

Lord, forgive us when we don't see change as a positive thing; when we try to hang on to things because we are used to them; when we don't acknowledge that we need change, and only you can do it.

**Forgive us, Lord, help us to change and grow.**

We often only look at outward appearance, make snap judgements, reject someone on looks alone, see the negative and not the positive. We might not cope with a change in circumstances. We might try to change others but are not open to change ourselves.

**Forgive us, Lord, help us to change and grow.**

**Amen.**

## Say the Lord's Prayer

### Bible readings: 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13

<sup>34</sup> Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. <sup>35</sup> Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

#### Samuel Anoints David

**16** The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

<sup>2</sup> But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' <sup>3</sup> Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."

<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

<sup>5</sup> Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” <sup>9</sup> Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” <sup>10</sup> Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” <sup>11</sup> So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

<sup>12</sup> So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

<sup>13</sup> So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

## **Bible readings: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17**

<sup>6</sup> Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we live by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

<sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

<sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

## Reflection

'Your mission, should you choose to accept it...' (made famous in the 1960s American TV series *Mission: Impossible* and subsequent films) signals the invitation to embark on a highly dangerous but heroic mission, with only the barest of briefings. Samuel's situation was a bit like this – and he certainly wasn't looking for an adventure, being lost in his grief over Saul's failed kingship. But God has a mission for him: 'Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' This sentence highlights the way God chooses to work with human beings to bring about change, helping us to discern what's our part and what's God's part. It seems an altogether risky approach: what if the person (in this case, Samuel) refuses? Or fails?

Samuel dares to query God's instructions and is given further reassurance ('I will show you what you shall do'), and 'Samuel did what the Lord commanded'. He is willing to change: to let go of his grief and to take hold of God's new purpose for him. What if God has a mission for us – either individually or as a church? What might it be, and how will we respond?

But there's more. Samuel has allowed God to turn him around; now God is going to turn him upside-down. He has to learn that just as we can be held back by regrets and 'if onlys', so too can we be held back by our prejudices and preconceived ideas. Perhaps you remember a time when you had to eat something you would never have chosen – and decided you'd been missing a treat? If we're going to go on with God, we have to be 'life-long learners', always ready to accept that we might be wrong – and change our minds. This was David's experience: he learnt that 'the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart'. He got the message, and then he had to stay in close touch with God as he put his learning into practice, trusting

God to show him which of Jesse's sons would receive the divine seal of approval: 'this is the one.'

God wants to change us: to change our minds, and thus our attitudes and behaviour. As Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.' Let's end with an experiment. Fold your arms, just as you always do. Now unfold them, and fold them again – but the other way round. It's quite tricky to do, isn't it? And the new way doesn't feel right. Habits are hard to change; the psychologists tell us it takes about six weeks to change a habit, as we gradually get used to 'the new normal'. Being a Christian means being free to change. Dare we be open to God's amazing changing grace this week?

## **Prayers of intercession**

Eternal, ever-present God, visible and yet invisible,  
we bring our prayers for those we know  
and those unknown to us.

We seek to journey with you and with them,  
to support and uphold them with prayer and love.

For those who journey with illness and pain,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those searching for meaning and purpose,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those wanting to belong and yet seemingly always on the edge,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those who lack confidence in themselves,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those who have no faith, no vision for an eternal future,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those who live with lies, secrets and untruths,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those who live without the very basic foundations of life: without food  
and water and homes,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

By praying for these, we know that we must walk and work hand in hand with you, to relieve their suffering and pain. We trust our prayers, our loving and our living, to your almighty and eternal presence.

**Amen.**

## **A sending out prayer**

Thank you, Lord, that you love us and you can change us:  
help us to trust you this week.

Thank you, Lord, that you love this world and you can change it:  
help us to work with you this week. Amen.

# Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024

## A gathering prayer

Creator God, you are big, and we are small:

**help us to worship you.**

Lord Jesus Christ, you are perfect, and we get things wrong:

**help us to turn to you.**

Holy Spirit, you are powerful, and we are weak:

**help us to trust you.**

## Bible reading: 1 Samuel 17:32-49

<sup>32</sup> David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

<sup>33</sup> Saul replied, “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.”

<sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. <sup>37</sup> The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you.”

<sup>38</sup> Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. <sup>39</sup> David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. <sup>40</sup> Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.



<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. <sup>42</sup> He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. <sup>43</sup> He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. <sup>44</sup> “Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!”

<sup>45</sup> David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. <sup>46</sup> This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. <sup>47</sup> All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

<sup>48</sup> As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. <sup>49</sup> Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

## Reflection

1 Samuel 17 tells the story of three very different characters: Goliath, Saul and David. Let’s ask the same question about all three and notice how very different the answers are. The question is: who or what did they trust?

Goliath trusted in himself – his size, his armour and his shield-bearer. Saul, ‘dismayed and greatly afraid’, only had his age, his experience and his armour, and he knew that these were no match for Goliath. But when he saw how determined David was, he clothed him with his armour, just in case God wasn’t able to save him otherwise.

David heard Goliath as he repeatedly defied ‘the ranks of Israel’, and we can speculate about his feelings. But he said to Saul, ‘Let no one’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine... since he has defied the armies of the living God’. He immediately recognised that the battle was a spiritual one. So, he trusted not in Saul’s armour but in his own familiar weapons – small stones and a sling

– and ‘in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom [Goliath has] defied’. It was many years since David had been anointed as the future King of Israel, but he had found God to be faithful and he was determined ‘that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear’.

Unlike Goliath and Saul, David trusted in God. But he also made use of his own God-given resources. What about us? Who or what do we trust? What are our God-given resources, our gifts, talents and passions? What life lessons have we learnt, and what skills have we acquired? What might God be preparing us for? If we are ready and willing, there’s no limit to what God can do with us.

‘Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.’ (Hebrews 13:20-21)

## **Prayer of praise**

‘Who is on the Lord’s side, who will serve the king?’  
David made careful provision for his flock and belongings; as a boy he went out in your name and became a man of God. We praise you that he was on the Lord’s side, he served the king. He shows us that we too can step up to the mark, put our total trust in you and sally forth in your name. ‘We are on the Lord’s side, Saviour we are thine.’ **Amen.**

## **Hymn StF 83: Praise my soul, the king of heaven**

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
to his feet thy tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
who like thee his praise should sing?  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise the everlasting King!

2 Praise him for his grace and favour  
to his people in distress ;  
praise him, still the same for ever,  
slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Glorious in his faithfulness.

3 Father-like, he tends and spares us ;  
well our feeble frame he knows ;  
in his hands he gently bears us,  
rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Widely as his mercy flows.

4 Angels in the height, adore him ;  
ye behold him face to face ;  
sun and moon, bow down before him,  
dwellers all in time and space.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

Henry Francis Lyte (1793–1847)

## Prayers of intercession

We open our hearts to the needs of the world  
and cry with the tears of the sorrowful.  
We mourn with the grieving souls of the world  
and feel their loss and share their pain.  
We share our love with the lonely and loveless  
and feel the pulse of their life.  
We offer our touch to the untouchable folk  
who are shunned by a passing throng.  
We catch the whisper of the unspoken truths  
that burden the lives of so many.  
We decipher the cries of a traumatised world  
for whom peace is an impossible dream.  
Hear our prayers, Lord, and let us be the servants  
you would have us be. **Amen**

# Say the Lord's Prayer

## A sending out prayer

Great, powerful God, help us to trust you with the big things;  
*(throw arms out wide)*

Great, loving God, help us to trust you with the little things;  
*(make a small shape with your fingers)*

All-knowing God, help us to trust you with everything, always.  
*(make a large circle with your arms)*

**Amen.**

# Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024

## Call to worship

Come, bring your praises and your pains.  
Come, bring your joys and your sorrows.  
Come, bring your thanks and your regrets.  
Come, bring your hopes and your fears.  
Come, bring all you are to God, and find blessing.

## Bible reading: 2 Samuel: 1, 17-27

1 After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days.

### David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan

<sup>17</sup> David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, <sup>18</sup> and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):

<sup>19</sup> "A gazelle<sup>[a]</sup> lies slain on your heights, Israel.  
How the mighty have fallen!

<sup>20</sup> "Tell it not in Gath,  
proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,  
lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad,  
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.

<sup>21</sup> "Mountains of Gilboa,  
may you have neither dew nor rain,  
may no showers fall on your terraced fields.<sup>[b]</sup>

For there the shield of the mighty was despised,  
the shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil.

<sup>22</sup> "From the blood of the slain,  
from the flesh of the mighty,  
the bow of Jonathan did not turn back,  
the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied.

<sup>23</sup> Saul and Jonathan—  
in life they were loved and admired,  
and in death they were not parted.

They were swifter than eagles,  
they were stronger than lions.  
<sup>24</sup> “Daughters of Israel,  
weep for Saul,  
who clothed you in scarlet and finery,  
who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.  
<sup>25</sup> “How the mighty have fallen in battle!  
Jonathan lies slain on your heights.  
<sup>26</sup> I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother;  
you were very dear to me.  
Your love for me was wonderful,  
more wonderful than that of women.  
<sup>27</sup> “How the mighty have fallen!  
The weapons of war have perished!”

## **Hymn Stf 526: Lord of all hopefulness**

- 1 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,  
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.
- 2 Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,  
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,  
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.
- 3 Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,  
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.
- 4 Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,  
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Jan Struther (Joyce Placzek) (1901–1953)

## Prayers of intercession

Living God, in our prayers, we bring to you those who are desperate for help, and those who take great risks in their search for healing. We ask your blessing on those who transcend political and cultural barriers to take aid and medical care to those in greatest need – organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières – and all who work in war zones across the world, reaching out to the hungry, the traumatised, the displaced.

**Lord, break down the barriers we put up;  
turn obstacles into opportunities  
and touch those in need of healing. Amen.**

Living God, we give thanks for the best work of social media, that which brings into our homes the lives of the faces in the crowd, and draws us closer to them and their concerns. We pray for reporters who risk their lives to bring us news, for photographers, camera and sound operators. We pray for more opportunities for people's stories to be shared and heard, for injustices to be highlighted and positive change to be celebrated.

**Lord, break down the barriers we put up;  
turn obstacles into opportunities  
and touch those in need of healing. Amen.**

Living God, we pray for those who fear that help will come too late, for all who have lost hope, for those who have lost livelihoods, homes, and loved ones. We pray for those waiting for hospital treatment, for transplants, for a diagnosis. We pray especially for children who are seriously ill and for their families. We pray too for those applying for citizenship, especially those waiting to hear if they will be sent back to countries they have fled from. And we continue to pray for all who make decisions about budgets, those who analyse data, those who decide policy, those who have the power to prioritise who is helped first and who must

wait, and those around the world – political leaders, scientists and medical staff alike.

**Lord, break down the barriers we put up;  
turn obstacles into opportunities  
and touch those in need of healing. Amen.**

Living God, we pray for the church and for one another,  
that we would reach out across barriers of culture and creed  
with faithfulness and integrity.

Help us also to reach out to you in prayer for guidance, for strength, for wisdom,

and to reach out to one another as we journey together in Jesus' name.

**Lord, break down the barriers we put up;  
turn obstacles into opportunities  
and touch those in need of healing. Amen.**

## **Reflection**

There's no getting away from the pain expressed in this week's Old Testament reading, as David grieves over the loss of the two most important people in his life: Saul, his king, and Jonathan, his closest friend. And there's no getting away from the fact that we all experience loss. For some it may feel more distant: our losses have been relatively minor, or we have moved on from our major losses. But for others it is 'up close and personal' – so let's take care of one another.

In a book published in 1982, William Worden introduced 'The Four Tasks of Mourning' – a 'map' that can be helpful to those who are grieving, and especially to those who are supporting them. As we reflect on David's lament, and our own experiences, this approach may offer some insight. So here are the four tasks, or stages of recovery: to accept the reality of the loss; to work through the pain; to adjust to life without the person; to begin to move on. As anyone who has experienced a major loss will know, this isn't a linear process: sometimes it can feel like a never-ending cycle. And sometimes we need professional help.



David's song of lament illustrates something of the agony of the first two 'tasks': facing the reality and working through the pain. As he begins to accept the fact that 'the mighty have fallen', he can express his grief. And he does this by remembering the best things about Saul and Jonathan – composing what we might call a tribute or eulogy. As far as Jonathan was concerned, their relationship had been an altogether beautiful thing: 'greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women'. But David's relationship with Saul had been complicated, to say the least: he spent the second half of 1 Samuel trying to avoid being killed by him! Nevertheless, he manages to forgive him, and his lament focuses entirely on Saul's strengths.

As we reflect on our own losses and give thanks for many good memories, we may also recognise that relationships are often complicated: although all human beings are created and loved by God, we are all damaged by life, and we are all capable of damaging each other. So, working through the pain of loss may well involve forgiving a loved one, and until, by God's grace, we are able to do this, it's hard to let go and move on.

As we move on from our own losses, we may find ourselves better equipped to support others at the beginning of their painful journey through grief – often just by quietly keeping them company on the way. We may also find ourselves reflecting on our own mortality: one day others will be mourning our departure, even as we 'rest in peace'. Of course, we want them to share our resurrection hope in God's gift of eternal life, but we know they will also feel the pain of loss. What will they say about us? How will we be remembered? And what can we do now to make sure that our legacy is a good one?

## **Say the Lord's Prayer**

### **A sending out prayer**

Lord, be with us on our journeys with others and open our eyes to you. **Amen.**