

Welcome

Hello my name is Nolan

and welcome to this online service
for the Anglican churches
of Thrapston Denford and Islip.

In the Bible, in the letter of James, he warns believers
who are making bold and brash plans, saying.

*"Why... you do not even know
what will happen tomorrow."*

It's a truth we know all too well at the moment,
as rules and regulations continue to change
and what we must or cannot do
varies from week to week.

All of that makes planning ahead very difficult.

Many of you will be finding that to be the case,
whether it's to do with work life or community life,
and as a family of six,
we've felt it particularly in family life this week

Those uncertainties are there in church life as well,
which is why, subject to me staying well,
we'll continue to focus our efforts
on these video services over the coming months
and into Christmas,
as these are least vulnerable to restrictions.

Physical gatherings, as you can imagine,
have to be planned in the diary
much more in pencil than in pen at the moment.
But whilst we can, and whilst people still want to attend,
we'll aim to have at least one communion service
in the benefice, each Sunday.

Over the next couple of Sundays
there'll be a few more services than that,
and you can check the website
to see when the services are taking place
in each of the churches.

But from the beginning of October
we'll be aiming at one communion service
for the whole benefice at 10.00am.

And that service
will rotate round the three church buildings
over the course of the month.

Again, do see the calendar on the website for more details,
and don't be surprised if we have to change things again.

As the increasingly popular phrase goes,
we are keeping things under constant review.

If you do want to come to church in the buildings,
I would love you to keep on doing so,
and why not come to some of the services
in one of the church buildings
that isn't your normal one.

Because never has there been a more important time
to be encouraging one another
and working together as one church family
across the three churches.

But if you are not able, ready
or wanting to come in person at the moment,
then give thanks to the Lord, that we can still worship
and be fed from God's word, in our own homes.

So let's begin our service by praising God now,
praising the God who deserves all our worship.

Because he has not abandoned
this fallen and sinful humanity,
but has sent his Son
to bear the punishment our sin deserves
and to open up
eternal relationship with God, to us

Let's sing praises to God
as we sing: To God be the glory

Hymn: 708 - To God be the glory

To God be the glory!
Great things he hath done;
so loved he the world
that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life
an atonement for sin,
and opened the life gate
that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father,
through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory;
great things he hath done!*

O perfect redemption,
the purchase of blood!
To every believer
the promise of God;
the vilest offender
who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus
a pardon receives.

Praise the Lord...

Great things he hath taught us,
great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing
through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher
and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture,
when Jesus we see.

Praise the Lord...

Frances van Alstyne (1820-1915) (Fanny J Crosby)

Creed:

We've been singing there
about God the Father and God the Son.
So let's continue to reflect
on their great and saving plan
of Christ's life, death and resurrection
as we declare what we believe
using words from Colossians Chapter 1.

Let's declare our faith by saying together

**The Son is the image
of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation.**

For in him all things were created:

**things in heaven and on earth,
visible and invisible,**

whether thrones or powers

or rulers or authorities;

all things have been created

through him and for him.

He is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
And he is the head of the body,
the church;
he is the beginning and the firstborn
from among the dead,
so that in everything
he might have the supremacy.

For God was pleased
to have all his fullness dwell in him,
and through him
to reconcile to himself all things,
whether things on earth
or things in heaven,
by making peace through his blood,
shed on the cross.
Amen

Bible Reading Introduction:

In our sermon today

we are going to be thinking about another of the psalms.

The psalms were like the hymn book and prayer book
of the Old Testament Temple.

There are 150 psalms in total,
and each one teaches us how to speak to God
about the various life experiences we face,
each one guides us with godly wisdom
about the differing situations we come across.

They are a wealth of inspiration and help,
that teach us how to worship God
with our whole selves, heart, mind and body.

Today's psalm is all about how to respond,
when everyone around you,
seems to have it in for you.

So let's listen, as Mary Barnard reads to us from Psalm 83.

Bible Reading:

The Bible reading comes from Psalm 83

A song. A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, do not remain silent;
do not turn a deaf ear,
do not stand aloof, O God.
- 2 See how your enemies growl,
how your foes rear their heads.
- 3 With cunning they conspire against your people;
they plot against those you cherish.
- 4 'Come,' they say, 'let us destroy them as a nation,
so that Israel's name is remembered no more.'
- 5 With one mind they plot together;
they form an alliance against you -
- 6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,
of Moab and the Hagarites,
- 7 Byblos, Ammon and Amalek,
Philistia, with the people of Tyre.
- 8 Even Assyria has joined them
to reinforce Lot's descendants.
- 9 Do to them as you did to Midian,
as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the River Kishon,

- 10 who perished at Endor
and became like dung on the ground.
- 11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb,
all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
- 12 who said, 'Let us take possession
of the pasture-lands of God.'
- 13 Make them like tumble-weed, my God,
like chaff before the wind.
- 14 As fire consumes the forest
or a flame sets the mountains ablaze,
- 15 so pursue them with your tempest
and terrify them with your storm.
- 16 Cover their faces with shame, Lord,
so that they will seek your name.
- 17 May they ever be ashamed and dismayed;
may they perish in disgrace.
- 18 Let them know that you, whose name is the Lord -
that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.

Thanks be to God

Hymn Introduction:

We'll think a bit more about that psalm in a moment
but before we do, let's sing again,
singing about the foundation of our faith,
the only solid rock on which we can stand
through all the storms and challenges
of life and death.

Let's sing, In Christ Alone.

Hymn: In Christ alone

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied -
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

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Talk

I suspect we all know what it feels like
to be ganged up on and threatened from all sides.
Even if it's only in small ways.
I remember those feelings from the playground,
and especially on school camps.
That constant dread, as I was terrorised by sixth formers
who were planning to stick my head down a toilet.

Others will have experienced much more serious threats,
family members scheming against you,
colleagues plotting your downfall,
social media trolls laying into you,
or local gangs out to get you.

I suspect we all know what it feels like
to be ganged up on and threatened from all sides.

We will know something of the fear that fills us,
the anger that rises,
the passionate desire for justice,
the temptation for revenge
and the desperate longing to be rescued.

We will know something of those situations,
and this psalm is a song to help us pray in those situations.

But it's a psalm... like many in the Bible,
that can also make us feel uncomfortable,
because it seems filled with bloodthirsty language.

We can find ourselves shocked
by these cries to destroy enemies.

Appalled that this savage poetry is even in the Bible,
it seems so gruesome, extreme and.....
ungodly even...

It is tempting to have that response as you read it.

But I think we need to have the humility
to listen to what is really going on in this prayer.
Especially if, we've had few greater threats in life
than sixth formers and a bit of raw sewage.

Because I suspect if neighbouring towns or countries
were plotting to slaughter our children and grandchildren.
If they were conspiring to commit genocide
and annihilate our entire ethnic or faith group.

I suspect our feelings
might also be quite strong and bloodthirsty.

We too, might quite understandably,
be crying out for the destruction of our enemies.

And that is the situation this psalm really speaks into.

This is a song to help believers handle
the most extreme situations,
together with the most extreme feelings.

So how does it do that?

How does this psalm help believers

to pray when surrounded by such genuine terror?

Well it does it by giving us the example of a prayer

from a particularly threatening time in Israel's history.

A prayer from one particular moment

that gives us an example of how to pray

when we face similar situations.

And it starts by encouraging believers to cry out to God

openly and honestly

expressing our heartfelt fears to God

about what is really going on.

Like the psalm does from verse 1:

- 1 O God, do not remain silent;
do not turn a deaf ear,
do not stand aloof, O God.

- 2 See how your enemies growl,
how your foes rear their heads.
- 3 With cunning they conspire against your people;
they plot against those you cherish.
- 4 'Come,' they say, 'let us destroy them as a nation,
so that Israel's name is remembered no more.'
- 5 With one mind they plot together;
they form an alliance against you -
- 6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,
of Moab and the Hagrites,
- 7 Byblos, Ammon and Amalek,
Philistia, with the people of Tyre.
- 8 Even Assyria has joined them
to reinforce Lot's descendants.

That list of countries and people groups
is a list of Israel's neighbours.

The Edomites and Ishmaelites live to the south east
with the Moabites and Hagrites to the east.

Byblos and Ammon are to the south
and Amalek to the north

Phylistia is over by the coast in the south west
and Tyre is in the north west.

All around them, north, south, east and west
Israel's neighbours growl and threaten.

Even Assyria, the looming great empire to the North
seems keen to support this ring of hostility
as they seek to harm to Israel.

And what harm do they want to do?

Well they join together and make pacts
plotting the utter annihilation of God's chosen people.

⁴ 'Come,' they say, 'let us destroy them as a nation,
so that Israel's name is remembered no more.'

They plot a Jewish holocaust,
an ethnic and religious genocide...
And sadly, this would not be the last time
countries plotted to eradicate the Jews.....

Israel's neighbours don't seem to have attacked yet.
It's still only a threat... But it is a real threat.

This planned destruction is not just a sick racist joke,
it's backed up by leadership summits,
policy documents and political treaties.

The threat and danger to Israel is all too real,
as they live surrounded by these growling nations,
that loom, waiting to pounce.

So it's not surprising God's people cry out
with such desperation to God:

¹ O God, do not remain silent; do not turn a deaf ear,
do not stand aloof, O God.

Hear our prayer Lord! Please help!

Because..... and here's something
really important for us to note,
as we learn to pray from this psalm.

Because they are **your** enemies God, **your** foes,
they form alliances against **you** and **your** people,
the people **you** cherish.

When the psalm was read,
did you notice all the you and yours that referred to God.

It's quite subtle,
but as we carefully pray this prayer,
it reminds us that all sin and wickedness
is ultimately an act against God.

And all hatred towards God's people,
simply because they are the people of God,
is ultimately, hatred towards the Lord.

As threatened believers pray this psalm,
we are encouraged to remember
who our attackers are really picking a fight with...
they are picking a fight with you God.

And that's really important to remember
Because it helps us to adopt a very different attitude
to the one we might have been tempted to have.

First it reminds us, that we are not on our own...
Being surrounded by attackers
who growl with unjust hatred towards us,
could make us feel isolated, vulnerable and got at.

But the start of this prayer helps us to remember...
that I am not alone in this.

These people are also growling and raising their fists
at the Holy God of rightness, truth and justice,
they are raging against him and his ways...
not just me.

Like kids in the playground

they are not just picking a fight with me

but also with my dad...

and my Heavenly Father is seriously big.

So instead of feeling isolated

and as if it's all down to me or us to sort it out,

we can be assured that we are not alone in this,

and those who sinfully threaten,

will ultimately answer for what they have done...

to you God.

But the reassurance that God is with us

is not the only change of attitude that comes

from knowing they're picking a fight with God.

Because second,

this guards us from responding in ungodly ways...

Knowing this is really an offence against God,

stops us from being viscous in return

or taking revenge.

That's what the next part of the psalm is about

where God's people pray:

⁹ Do to them as you did to Midian,

as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the River Kishon,

¹⁰ who perished at Endor

and became like dung on the ground.

¹¹ Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb,

all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,

¹² who said, 'Let us take possession

of the pasture-lands of God.'

¹³ Make them like tumble-weed, my God,

like chaff before the wind.

Now you might be thinking... that really does not sound,

like it's helping God's people to respond in godly ways.

Whatever those places and people are about

all of that seems really viscous and vengeful.

Why are they calling on God to do these things?

Well the events these places and people recall
are events you can find recorded
in the book of Judges, chapters 6-8.
Jabin was a Canaanite king
and Sisera his military commander.
They plagued Israel with war, attacks and trouble
for twenty years,
until the Lord finally brought judgement on them.
It came through an army led by Deborah the prophetess
and the victory was so conclusive
there wasn't anyone left to bury
the dead Canaanite soldiers.
Oreb and Zeeb were army commanders
of the Midianite army
whilst Zebah and Zalmunna were Midian Kings.
On a yearly basis they invaded the land of Israel
to burn all the crops and slaughter all the animals.

They made life for the Israelites so desperate and awful
that all the people could do,
was watch their food be destroyed for another year
as they hid in caves and starved to death.
Finally God raised up Gideon to defeat the Midianites,
and in the end, thanks to God's help
he won the battle with an army
of only three hundred Israelite soldiers
some clay jars and flaming torches.
These were stories of God
dramatically bringing justice for God's people,
through judgement on those who'd attacked them.
And that's what this psalm
encourages believers to cry out for,
for wrong to be stopped and punished
and for right to be restored.

These words sound full of anger

they sound full of rage as they call on God
to judge these enemies.

And I have no doubt they are.....

but that's the point... the rage is spoken to God,
not inflicted on others.

We do get filled with anger...

we get filled with anger

when somebody cuts us up on the road,
never mind

when someone threatens to slaughter our family

We get filled with rage when somebody lets us down,

never mind plotting the annihilation
of our entire religious group.

The question is what we then do with that anger and rage...

We could direct it at the people who threaten us,
we could take revenge.

But this psalm says...

give it to God and call on him to bring justice.

Give all that rage, that anger,

give those desperate cries for justice to God.

Report your rage to your Heavenly Father

instead of inflicting it on others,

and let him decide what is right.

As Paul says in Romans 12:19:

¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends,

but leave room for God's wrath,

for it is written: "It is mine to avenge;

I will repay," says the Lord.

Put your enemies in God's hands,

don't take things into your own hands.

Because take things into your own hands

and you not only risk becoming like them,

you may find that God is just as much opposed
to your ways, as he was to theirs.

And we do not want to make ourselves
enemies of the living God...

Instead this psalm encourages us
to express all our heartfelt anguish to you Heavenly Father
and leave him to decide, how to act.

And as we do that,
there is a third change of attitude that will probably come.
It will be a desire for God to be recognised
and seen to be God.

Either in waiting patiently for God
to bring judgment against wickedness,
or even better... in praying that those who are wicked
recognise the error of their ways,
and bow down to accept the living God.

That is what the third part of this song is about,
as it concludes from verse 14:

¹⁴ As fire consumes the forest
or a flame sets the mountains ablaze,
¹⁵ so pursue them with your tempest
and terrify them with your storm.
¹⁶ Cover their faces with shame, Lord.....
so that they will seek your name.
¹⁷ May they ever be ashamed and dismayed;
may they perish in disgrace.
¹⁸ Let them know that you, whose name is the Lord -
that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.

Let a wild fire rip through their lives Lord,
let a hurricane throw them about,
let a storm thoroughly shake them... Why?
So their faces are covered in shame...
so their pride is shaken and their world is rocked...
Rocked enough, for them to wake up
to the wickedness and ungodliness of their ways... Why?

So that they will seek your name...

So that they will turn to the Lord and...

And where this psalm doesn't quite get to

because it was written

before the whole story was revealed,

is that they would turn to the Lord and... be saved,

be forgiven, pardoned for their wickedness.

Pardoned ultimately thanks to Jesus Christ

and his death on the cross.

Because there he took the judgement

that all our sin and ungodliness deserves.

There he perished bearing our disgrace

so that he could pardon and give life... eternal life,

to all who seek and trust in his name.

Writing many hundreds of years before Jesus

the psalmist did not know the whole story yet.

But what he did pray,

was that one way or another, God would act.

Whether the Lord chose to disgrace them as rebels,

or turn their hearts to be humbled and forgiven,

was up to God.

But either way...

the psalm encourages us to pray for God to act

so that the world would see,

through grace or wrath, mercy or judgement

that God is God and the Most High over all the earth.

We all know what it feels like

to be ganged up on and threatened from all sides.

Even if it's only in small ways.

And this psalm, as bloodthirsty as it may appear at first,

it teaches us how to handle

those extreme emotions we feel

when surrounded by attackers.

It's a song that helps us to remember
that their greater offence is against God,
and we are not alone.

It is a prayer that encourages us
to express our rage to God
and give our enemies into his hands
rather than taking matters into our own hands.

And as we do that,
knowing what a terrible thing it is
to be an enemy of the living God
and knowing what a wonderful thing it is
to be a forgiven follower of the lord,

This psalm encourages us to ask
for our enemies to be so shaken in some way,
that they are awoken to the reality of their sin
and come to know God's offer of forgiveness.

But that either way,
whether through grace or righteous judgement
it's a prayer that God's will would be done,
not my own angry desires.

Let's be praying this prayer
when we feel under attack.

Joy Farey-Wood is now going to lead us in prayer.

Prayers: Joy Farey-Wood

“Prayer is more than an order of words or the sound of the voice praying” (TS Eliot)

Dear Father God,

May we wait on you and open ourselves to your wonderful presence as we bring our concerns to you. We praise and thank you Lord for your great love to us and your inestimable gift of Jesus.

In these uncertain times, Lord, help us to hold on to you and trust you for our present and our future. Enable us to serve you and our families and neighbours in old and new ways. Although we may not be present with one another bind us together in love, in this benefice and your whole church throughout the world,

We lift to you all those who are persecuted for their faith in various ways and different countries, like those Christian children forced into alien faith marriages.

We pray for all those struggling at this time with emotional strain or financial hardship, like those families having to succumb to child labour who make our masks for one pound a day.

Lord bring your peace, healing and relief to those suffering not only disease but war and hunger, like the twelve million children in danger in the Yemen.

Please bring help to everywhere where the humanitarian situation is dire, like Somalia and South Sudan to name but two.

So many people are fleeing, Lord. Jesus, whose family sought refuge in Egypt, please put your hand on refugees and encourage those in authority to know how to help often desperate people and situations, such as in Afghanistan, Syria and parts of South America.

Lord, give us and governments round the world, wisdom and the humility to ask for your guidance.

May your hand be upon all attempts to quell this virus and all who need comfort and healing. Bless doctors and nurses, patients and vaccine researchers that their work might quickly be successful and be with all those pursuing their daily lives in the home, in schools, offices and factories and keep them safe.

Keep us close to you and true
Lord, as we remember
All you endured-
The cross and shame,
The awful pain of alienation.
As we ponder all you did
Help us to be rid-at your cross-
Of our fears and selfishness
And see the magnitude of your willing gift to us-
Freedom from sin
And hope for eternity!
Lord, accept these prayers for the sake of your
Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Lords Prayer

Let's conclude our prayers

by saying together the Lord's prayer.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Amen.

Hymn Introduction:

Our final hymn is one of my favourites,

as I think it beautifully captures

that mixture of feelings we experience

in relationship with God.

On the one hand there is so much we cannot tell,

and we just have to trust and bow down in worship

at the wonder of God's great plans

Whilst on the other hand there is so much we can know,

because God has revealed it to us

and we have experienced him in our lives.

Let's sing, I cannot tell.

Hymn: I Cannot Tell

I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon the sons of men,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back, they know not how or when.

But this I know, that he was born of Mary
when Bethl'em's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three and thirty years.

But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted
and stays our sin and calms our lurking fear
and lifts the burden from the heavy laden;
for still the Saviour, Saviour of the world is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun will shine in splendour
when he the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when at his bidding every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when every heart with love and joy is filled.

But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
and myriad myriad human voices sing,
and earth to heav'n, and heav'n to earth, will answer,
'at last the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is King!'

Words : William Young Fullerton (1857-1932)

Music: Irish traditional melody

Conclusion

Thank you for joining us for this online Service,
and let me finish with a final prayer.

May Christ the good shepherd,
who laid down his life for the sheep,
draw you and all who hear his voice,
to be one flock within one fold;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.