



‘Worship at home’ Sunday August 11th 2024

As you worship today,
may you know the presence of Christ
with you always.



Opening

When we come for worship, we bring with us our joys and our concerns, our hopes and our fears. We bring differing expectations and needs. We bring all of who we are and what is going on for us. Sometimes, we come with particular concerns: worries over health or finance, hurts from family members, regrets over words said or words left unsaid, fears for our future, grief from the pain of loss. These can plunge us into distress and even despair. Pain from the struggles of life is very real for many of us.

The Scriptures, along with our experiences, teach us that we can call out to God from the depths of our struggles and expect that God will hear our prayers. We are assured of God’s presence with us in our pain, of God’s comfort in our distress, and of the promise of hope that God has the power to redeem and make new. God travels our journey of pain with us.

FROM THE DEPTHS OF MY
DESPAIR I CALL TO YOU,
LORD. HEAR MY CRY, O LORD;
LISTEN TO MY CALL FOR
HELP!
I WAIT EAGERLY FOR THE
LORD’S HELP, AND IN HIS
WORD I TRUST.



Reflect on the concerns you may hold at this time.

Acknowledge your struggles and fears
and name them out loud before God.

Then pray aloud this prayer for God’s mercy and help.

Prayer of Lament (based on Psalm 130)

From the depths of my despair I call to you, Lord.

Hear my cry, O Lord; listen to my call for help!

Name your calls for help...

If you kept a record of our sins,
who could escape being condemned?

But you forgive us, so that we should stand in awe of you.

Give thanks for God's presence, forgiveness and love...

I wait eagerly for the Lord's help, and in the Lord's word I trust.

I wait for the Lord more eagerly than sentries wait for the dawn.

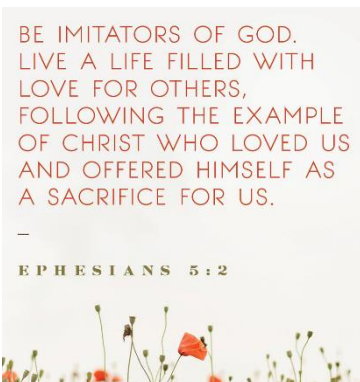
Time of silence as you wait upon God...

We wait upon the Lord's constant presence and unfailing love,

Knowing that God offers us the assurance of hope.

Affirmation (based on Psalm 130)

God's people, trust in the Lord, because God's love is constant and God is always willing to save. We find in God the assurance of hope and the promise of new beginnings. **Thanks be to God!**



The letter of Ephesians was written to encourage a group of new Christians, instructing them how to follow Christ and what it meant to be a Christian in a community made up of people from differing backgrounds and cultures. The emphasis in this letter is that in Christ we are redeemed, transformed, and made new. In the light of this, how then shall we live?

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

No more lying, then! Each of you must tell the truth to the other believer, because we are all members together in the body of Christ. If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day.

Don't give the Devil a chance. If you used to rob, you must stop robbing and start working, in order to earn an honest living for yourself and to be able to help the poor. Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words,

the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. And do not make God's Holy Spirit sad; for the Spirit is God's mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the day will come when God will set you free. Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort.

Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ. Since you are God's dear children, you must try to be like him. Your life must be controlled by love, just as Christ loved us and gave his life for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice that pleases God. Good News Bible

Reflect on these instructions for living.

Which do you find more difficult?

Which come more naturally for you?



The exhortation in this Scripture is to live in love. This passage is not intended to be merely a list of rules about righteous living, but rather a description of the consequences of living a life following Jesus Christ, in love.

Christ invites us into a new relationship, with God and with each other. Therefore, we are to put aside some of our more self-centred instincts and desires and seek to show the same attitudes and values that Jesus showed. In following Jesus Christ, we change our responses, in what we say and what we do.

There is a popular phrase, sometimes used to teach younger Christians to ask themselves "What Would Jesus Do?". It stems from a novel published in 1896 by Congregational Minister Charles Sheldon entitled, 'In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?' in which a town is revolutionised when Christians "pledge themselves, earnestly and honestly for an entire year, not to do anything without first asking the



question, 'What would Jesus do?'. A resurgence of popularity in the 1900s saw the abbreviation, WWJD?, written on wristbands, mugs, clothing, bumper stickers and jewellery.

The concept of *Imitatio Christi* (the imitation of Christ) stems from the writings of Paul and has been emphasised over many years as a focal point for the Christian life. While the question 'What Would Jesus Do?' has limitations when we consider that Jesus' actions come from a particular time and culture, it does remind us that we are called to base our lives on the attitudes and values of Christ, seeking God's ways for us and living in love.

**What difference does following Christ make
to what you say and what you do?**

How might you try to become more like Christ?

What might you need to set aside in order to do this?

What might you be able to embrace?

Pray for

- young and new Christians as they learn to walk in God's ways in a complex and changing world
- communities of faith as they grow together in love and seek to show God's love to those around them
- those who live with uncertainty, pain and fear, in situations of conflict or abuse
- families separated by hurt, distance or circumstance
- those dealing with illness, surgery, loss



Closing

We commit ourselves again to following Jesus Christ, to living with integrity and love, and to showing love to those around us, that they might come to know abundant grace and eternal life.

May the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.

