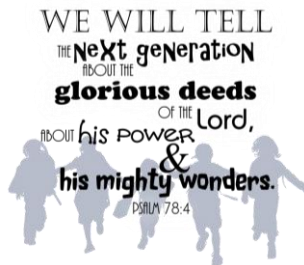




# 'Worship at home'

## Sunday October 1<sup>st</sup> 2023

We come to worship God,  
who we find in the holy  
spaces and the ordinary places  
of our lives, sometimes in  
unexpected ways.



### Opening

We come to worship God,  
to hear stories of the faithfulness of God.  
We may be hearing these stories for the first time,  
or we may have heard them many times before,  
passed down from generation to generation.  
They are stories of faithfulness and love,  
of mercy and compassion, of miracles and new life.  
In worship, we recall God's saving actions and promises  
all through the ages.  
In hearing these stories, and in remembering,  
we find hope for the future.

### Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16

*My people hear my teaching;  
listen to the words of my  
mouth. I will open my mouth  
with a parable; I will utter  
hidden things, things from of  
old— things we have heard  
and known, things our  
ancestors have told us. We  
will not hide them from their  
descendants; we will tell the  
next generation of the  
praiseworthy deeds of the  
LORD, his power, and the  
wonders he has done. He did  
miracles in the sight of their*

*ancestors in the land of  
Egypt, in the region of Zoan.  
He divided the sea and led  
them through; he made the  
water stand up like a wall. He  
guided them with the cloud  
by day and with light from the  
fire all night. He split the  
rocks in the wilderness and  
gave them water as  
abundant as the seas; he  
brought streams out of a  
rocky crag and made water  
flow down like rivers.*

*New International Version 1*

Some of our Scripture stories tell of times when the Israelites felt vulnerable and uncertain, and without hope. After they had left Egypt they travelled in the wilderness, unsure of where they were heading or how long it might take. They became tired and quarrelsome, perhaps a little like children in the back seat on a long car journey, arguing and whining... **“are we there, yet?”**

### **Exodus 17:1-7**

*The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarrelled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.”*

*Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?”*

*But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses.*

*They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?”*

*Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”*

*The LORD answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people.*

*Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.”*

*So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the LORD saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”*

*New International Version*



There are times in our lives when we too feel vulnerable and uncertain, and without hope. Like the Israelites, we sometimes grumble and complain, about our lifestyle, our leaders, the things we feel we lack. We may feel dry and desolate, or exhausted... **“Is the LORD among us or not?”**

**When have there been times when  
you have felt weary and quarrelsome?**

Moses struck the rock and brought forth a flow of water, sustaining the Israelites when they were thirsty and in need of a sign of God’s presence and love.

**At this time, what do you thirst for?  
For our church? For our world?**

Pray for a sense of God’s enduring presence to comfort and strengthen you, and for the Spirit of living water to sustain you.

**Prayer**

O God, sometimes in life we stand at the brink of what has been and what is yet to be. We long to receive the gift of your liberation and to taste the sweetness of your promises. But the way forward is unknown, and so we hesitate: discouraged, frightened, insecure, complaining. Yet we know we must move ahead on our journey. May we be mindful of your sustaining presence and, like a bird in full flight, may this assurance soar within our faith so we can rise above the challenges of this moment. Amen.



Photo: L Driver

**Words of affirmation:** God rains down manna in the wilderness and squeezes water from a desert rock. With fire and cloud, God leads us out of the bondage of our past into a future of freedom and safety. God has been with us in the past, is with us in this present moment, and will be with us forever and ever.

Moses named that place *Massah* (test) and *Meribah* (quarrel). This story reminds us of the assurance of God's enduring presence with us, even when we feel dry and empty, or quarrel and complain. In expressing our frustration, exhaustion, dissatisfaction or uncertainty, we are admitting our need for God, and opening ourselves to finding comfort and strength. We ground ourselves in the truth of God's faithfulness and love, as we find ourselves renewed and sustained by the living water, and given strength to continue.

**Prayer:** Read or sing the following song. As you do so, pray for those in need of God's comfort and strength, help and hope.



*Our God, our help in ages past,  
our hope for years to come,  
our shelter from the stormy blast,  
and our eternal home:*



*under the shadow of your throne  
your saints have dwelt secure:  
sufficient is your arm alone,  
and our defence is sure.*

*Before the hills in order stood,  
or earth received its frame,  
from everlasting you are God  
to endless years the same.*

*A thousand ages in your sight  
are like an evening gone:  
short as the watch that ends the night  
before the rising sun.*

*Our God, our help in ages past,  
our hope for years to come,  
remain our guard while troubles last,  
and our eternal home.*

*Isaac Watts  
1674-1748 alt.*

**Closing:** May we be nourished by God's gracious provision, sustained by the living water of God's Spirit, and may we bring Christ's love to those around us.