



## Worship at Home : 3<sup>rd</sup> May

In our homes, we meet to worship,  
far away from sacred space.  
By the Spirit, Christ is with us,  
making this a holy place.  
In these days of social distance,  
we are called to meet apart.  
Still we pray for one another,  
hold each other in our heart.

If this time indeed is holy,  
we must keep it truly so.  
Even in our isolation,  
God's rich blessings overflow.  
We avoid the world's distractions,  
set our minds on things above:  
Patience, kindness, goodness, mercy,  
faith, joy peace, abiding love.

*R G Huff 2020.*



Holy, holy, holy ! Though the darkness hide thee,  
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,  
only thou art holy ; there is none beside thee,  
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty !  
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky  
and sea ;  
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity !

*Reginald Heber (1783-1826) (alt.)*

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make  
known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his  
wonderful works.

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those  
who seek the Lord rejoice.

*Psalm 105*



Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee :  
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy ! All the saints adore thee,  
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy  
sea ;  
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,  
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Let us pray.

Blessed are you, Lord God, ever present in our  
lives. Through the power of your Spirit you reveal  
your glory to us in the face of Jesus Christ. Help  
us to trust in you and in the power of the  
resurrection.

Lord in these days of restricted travel, open our  
eyes to see the beauty of your world through our  
windows and in the gardens we can see. Help us  
to notice the sounds of your creatures, the birds,  
the sunshine, breeze and rain. Lord God, we  
praise you for the diversity of life on this planet,  
for the balance of nature and the goodness of the  
earth.

We ask your blessing on the areas of your world  
that are endangered, for the creatures almost  
extinct. And we ask that you would guide the  
decisions of all those who have influence upon  
our use of your world's resources.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for you have  
created the world and all that is in it out of your

love and for your love. You offer us a relationship with you through your creation and through each other. Teach us to care for your world and to respect all peoples.

Blessed are you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.



From all that dwell below the skies  
let the Creator's praise arise :

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Let the Redeemer's name be sung,  
through every land, by every tongue :

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Eternal are your mercies, Lord ;  
eternal truth attends your word :

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Your praise shall sound from shore to shore,  
till suns shall rise and set no more :

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

*Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*



## 1 Peter 2:11-25 (NRSV)

### Live as Servants of God

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. <sup>12</sup> Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

<sup>13</sup> For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. <sup>16</sup> As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. <sup>17</sup> Honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the emperor.

## The Example of Christ's Suffering

<sup>18</sup> Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. <sup>19</sup> For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. <sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

<sup>22</sup> "He committed no sin,  
and no deceit was found in his mouth."

<sup>23</sup> When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

<sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

### Reflection

It is not always easy for us to understand what it must be like to live as exiles or slaves. Yet in the first-century Roman empire estimates of those enslaved vary from between 25 to 90% of the population.

To be a slave didn't just affect how you were treated, your living conditions, or your autonomy, it went much deeper than that. It was your identity, or rather, your non-identity. Aristotle referred to slaves as 'human tools'.

To be Christian and a slave meant living with contradictory understandings. Your slave status meaning you were trapped and dishonoured while at the same time being honoured and free in the sight of God.

Perhaps then, the key verse in this passage, is this, <sup>12</sup> *Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.*

If memory serves, I think it was Billy Graham who realised early on in his ministry that if he and his wife were together, and if he never met anyone alone, then he protected himself against accusations of improper conduct.

Conduct yourselves honourably.

Peter is suggesting that it is how we conduct ourselves that will mark us out as having different values to those around us. If we behave honourably, then those deeds will be known and they will glorify God.

Maybe it sounds obvious, common sense even to us. But in the context of the time, it would mean holding fast to values despite everything else going around you. Peter encourages us to have confidence in how God calls us to live. He says that while the world may not be perfect by any means, we can still point to God by our example.

Peter never claims that this will be easy nor will it mean you avoid punishment or hardship or pain. Yet there is hope, a hope given to us in Christ who also suffered. Peter encourages them to have confidence in how they live in this world. It reminds me of another verse:

*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. ...and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8, 9b*

By keeping their attention firstly upon God and on the things of God they will be following in the ways of Jesus. Once again Peter does not say any of this as though it were an abstract thought, or a kind of 'pie in the sky' theology. Peter grounds it in the reality of their daily living and likens it to the very life Jesus led. Verses 23 & 24 read: <sup>23</sup> *When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.* <sup>24</sup> *He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

Peter urges us to be like Jesus even in difficult situations and reminds us that in so doing we can live in this world demonstrating God's kingdom. Peter asks them to respect the authority under which they live, but in doing so he echoes the words of Paul in his letter to the Galatians: *Galatians 5:22-23* <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* <sup>23</sup> *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

This passage is headed "Live as servants of God". As I reflect on all this passage contains, there are two hymns that spring to mind and maybe together they apply what we learn from Peter. As you read or sing these hymns, may they also be your prayer. May God's Holy Spirit help us to make these prayers.



Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you ;  
pray that I may have the grace  
to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road ;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you  
in the night-time of your fear ;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping ;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you ;  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you ;  
pray that I may have the grace  
to let you be my servant too.

*Richard A. M. Gillard (b.1953)*



Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love ;  
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord ;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you :  
*O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console ;  
to be understood as to understand ;  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope ;  
where there is darkness, only light ;  
and where there's sadness, ever joy :  
*Refrain*

Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving unto all that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

*Sebastian Temple (1928-1997) from the Prayer of St Francis*

