

**Call to worship** Wherever we are worshipping today- in a church building, on zoom, at home or in unfamiliar surroundings, we remember that Best of all, God is with us. He is the God who has spoken through his prophets from generation to generation. This is the same God who wants all people to be drawn to his love and grace, to know his forgiveness and the joy of walking in the way of Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. And so we join together in worship and praise.

**Hymn Let all the world in every corner sing StheF 57 H&P 10**

<https://youtu.be/PfXldoDnvq4>

<p>1 Let all the world in every corner sing : my God and King ! The heavens are not too high, his praise may thither fly ; the earth is not too low, his praises there may grow. Let all the world in every corner sing : my God and King !</p>	<p>2 Let all the world in every corner sing : my God and King ! The Church with psalms must shout, no door can keep them out ; but above all, the heart must bear the longest part. Let all the world in every corner sing : my God and King !</p> <p>George Herbert (1593–1633)</p>
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### Prayer

Gracious God, you are a strong rock in whom we trust  
All our confidence rests in you.  
Deep in our mother's wombs, you knew us  
Before our limbs were formed, you yearned for us  
When we were still unseen, you cherished the thought of us.  
When we are silent, you understand our thoughts,  
When we shout and rage, you hear our plea and our uncertainty,  
When we stammer, you form the words in our mouths.

Gracious God, you are the rock in whom we put our trust  
All our meaning is contained in you,  
And apart from you there is no place of safety.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we do give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. We ask you, give us that due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days, and In this time of worship, give us discernment to hear your word,  
Courage to let you embrace us with your power,  
And in this holy fellowship to approach each other not as strangers but as pilgrims and travellers together in mission and service to the world.

**Bible reading.** Psalm 103

## Hymn God has spoken by his prophets StheF 157 H&P 64

<https://youtu.be/RoPiKqKTmbg>

<p>1 God has spoken — by his prophets, spoken his unchanging word ; each from age to age proclaiming God, the one, the righteous Lord. 'Mid the world's despair and turmoil one firm anchor holding fast : God eternal reigns forever, God the first, and God the last.</p> <p>2 God has spoken — by Christ Jesus, Christ, the everlasting Son, brightness of the Father's glory, with the Father ever one ; spoken by the Word incarnate, God from God, ere time was born ; Light from Light, to earth descending, Christ, revealing God to all.</p>	<p>3 God is speaking — by the Spirit, speaking to our hearts again, in the age-long word expounding God's own message, now as then. Through the rise and fall of nations one sure faith is standing fast ; God still speaks, the Word unchanging, God the first, and God the last.</p> <p>George Wallace Briggs (1875–1959)</p>
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## Bible reading Matthew 18 verses 21-35

Sermon [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AKS\\_qcB9fttbbW4U1k7Orfw3lwlBHii0/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AKS_qcB9fttbbW4U1k7Orfw3lwlBHii0/view?usp=sharing)

Nigel and I were on a River Cruise holiday: Budapest to Vienna via various places, including Vukovar in Croatia. It is Croatia's largest river port, at the meeting of the Sava and the Danube rivers. Between Aug and Nov 1991 Under Siege by an invasion of about 36,000 Yugoslav People's army supported by paramilitary forces from Serbia. They were equipped with heavy armour and artillery. Vukovar was defended by around 1,800 lightly armed soldiers and civilian volunteers. During the battle, shells and rockets were fired into the town at a rate of up to 12,000 a day. At the time, it was the fiercest and most protracted battle seen in Europe since 1945, and Vukovar was the first major European town to be entirely destroyed since WW2.

I am not commenting on the politics or the rights and wrongs but noting that 90% of V's buildings were destroyed and there was much death on both sides. Today, V is a restored town very little remains physically to show that conflict. The church of St Philip and St James was extensively damaged and was completely rebuilt apart from one wall which they allowed to remain in a damaged state as a memorial to that past conflict. Whilst Nigel and I were there, we were speaking to one of the locals – very good English- who was talking about this damaged wall. He something like *we keep it because we must never let our town forget they were and shall ever be our enemies. Never again shall we be friends.*

Now I am all for memorials. We have a particularly marvellous one at the Tilehurst Triangle for remembering those whose lives were lost in conflict, in war. It is right that we should honour them and mourn them and never forget their sacrifice.

But in the eyes of that local keeping a memorial is so that it perpetuates hatred, so that it perpetuates hostility, so that it perpetuates a continuing animosity, so that it perpetuates an abhorrence of persons.

The phrase that kept repeating itself in my head whilst we were there was this:

IF WE DON'T HEAL THE WOUNDS OF THE PAST, THEY BLEED ALL OVER OUR FUTURE.

Some of us reading this, or listening to this may be finding forgiveness hard.

When our wounds are deep, our sores still running, our hurt overwhelming that is when we need to seek the help of others. If that is you, do speak to your minister and make a plan for moving forward perhaps with professional help and guidance. Remember, IF WE DON'T HEAL THE WOUNDS OF THE PAST, THEY BLEED ALL OVER OUR FUTURE. This is why Jesus tells us about forgiving to 70 times 7.

Reading the Gospel passage I have a picture in my mind of Peter in this story. With a bit of a grin on his face: thinking, I have cracked this one, as he says to Jesus "Lord how many times should I forgive..up to seven times."

At the back of Peter's mind would have been the teaching in the book of Amos. There we see that God's forgiveness extends to three offences but you are punished the 4<sup>th</sup> time round! So here is Peter expecting his question to be warmly received by Jesus- after all Peter has doubled the three and added an extra one for good measure..7! In Jewish thought 7 is the number of perfection.

Of course, 70 also has a meaning in Scripture. is made up of the factors of two perfect numbers, seven (representing perfection) and ten (representing completeness and God's law). As such, it symbolizes perfect spiritual order.

So, perfect spiritual order and forgiveness go hand in hand.

Our gracious and forgiving God, whose Son Jesus gave up his body to blood-soaked planks of wood and proclaimed from the agony of the nails "Father forgive them", that same God, that same Jesus call us to place our lives where righteousness and peace embrace each other.

May we who have been forgiven much, have ask for the grace to forgive one another.

And remember this:

IF WE DON'T HEAL THE WOUNDS OF THE PAST, THEY BLEED ALL OVER OUR FUTURE.

### **Prayer**

Gracious God we come before you and before one another as people in need of forgiveness. We hold before you sins which are too heavy for us to carry. Forgive us what our lips tremble to name and what our hearts can no longer bear. Forgive us too for those times we have held a grudge, those times when we have turned our hearts away from those who have hurt us. We ask you, set us free from a past we cannot change and by your forgiveness open to us a future in which we can be changed more and more into the likeness of Jesus. Thank you that you cover us with pardon and with mercy. For this we are truly thankful.

Amen

<https://youtu.be/2YuxbnxsjxM>

<p>1 Thou God of truth and love, we seek thy perfect way, ready thy choice to approve, thy providence to obey ; enter into thy wise design, and sweetly lose our will in thine.</p> <p>2 Why hast thou cast our lot in the same age and place, and why together brought to see each other's face, to join with loving sympathy, and mix our friendly souls in thee ?</p> <p>3 Didst thou not make us one, that we might one remain, together travel on, and share our joy and pain, till all thy utmost goodness prove, and rise renewed in perfect love ?</p>	<p>4 Then let us ever bear the blessed end in view, and join, with mutual care, to fight our passage through ; and kindly help each other on, till all receive the starry crown.</p> <p>5 O may thy Spirit seal our souls unto that day, with all thy fullness fill, and then transport away : away to our eternal rest, away to our Redeemer's breast.</p> <p>Charles Wesley (1707–1788)</p>
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## Prayers

Gracious God, gladly we live and move and have our being in you, the one who is always seeking us out. Yet in the midst of that we see sin's shadow and feel death's darkness.

Around us in the earth, the sea, the sky our misuse of creation

Beside us there are the broken, the hungry and the poor; our betrayal of one another as our brothers keeper. But you are the one who through all generations have sought meeting places with us and sought to challenge and empower us through your Holy Spirit. So with hope and with confidence in you, we bring our prayers.

Gracious God, we hold before you our fragile earth. In this Creation tide season

Give us the will and the courage to simplify the way we live,

to reduce the energy we use,

to share the resources you provide,

and to bear the cost of change.

May we find the will to cherish and protect our planet.

Gracious God, we hold before the government and leaders of councils in our country. May they lead with wisdom.

Gracious God, we hold before you those who call themselves by the precious name of Jesus. May we who have found faith and commitment in the family in the Body Of Christ, cling to the words of Scripture that you will pour out your spirit on all people, so that young and old, people of all races, whatever their gender or their lifestyle wherever they live, whatever their situation, may have confidence that each one is invited to play a part in working for human dignity, justice and the revealing of Jesus as Saviour of all who turn to Him.

Gracious God we hold before you those who have lost their way in the troubles of addiction or crime or a sense of hopelessness. May they find the way to fulness of life.

Gracious God we hold before you those whose illness is limiting their lives. In a few moments of quiet we pray for those who suffer in mind or body.

And we hold before you those who grief the loss of a loved one. May they hold fast to the words of Jesus that He has gone to prepare a place for us so that where he is, we may be also.

We gather up all our prayers in the words that Jesus gave us. OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN...

Hymn Guide O thou great Jehovah StheF 465 H&P 437

<https://youtu.be/5j48TLIRb4Q>

<p>1 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land ; I am weak, but thou art mighty ; hold me with thy powerful hand : Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore ; feed me now and evermore.</p> <p>2 Open thou the crystal fountain whence the healing stream shall flow ; let the fiery, cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through : strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield ; be thou still my strength and shield.</p>	<p>3 When I tread the verge of Jordan bid my anxious fears subside ; death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side : songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to thee ; I will ever give to thee.</p> <p>William Williams (1717–1791) <i>translated by Peter Williams (1727–1796)</i></p>
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Closing prayer.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.