

DSW Circuit Written Service 23rd June 2024 prepared by Rev Ruth Lownsborough
'Confidence in God'

Call to Worship from Psalm 9: 9-10

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.
And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Hymn StF 455 All my hope on God is founded

1 All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone calls my heart to be his own.

2 Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

3 God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,

beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

4 Daily doth the Almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

5 Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

Prayers

'Lord of all life' written by Dennis Wrigley of the Maranatha Community

Lord of all life, be my Lord, be my Life.
To live is to grow, to know in greater measure, your love, your peace, your joy.
Help me to grow, to blossom, to bear fruit.
In growing, take from me the lazy stubborn heart, the fear of change, the dread of the unknown.
In growing, set my pace be it fast or slow.
May I be ever knowing your life, your love in greater measure, in richer treasure. Amen

Confession

Forgive me, Lord, for the times I forget that you have my back;
when I put my confidence in myself instead of you;
when I bury my head in the sand, hoping my troubles and challenges will all go away.
Forgive me for the times when I say empty words;
when I put my trust in the wrong things;
when I'm not ready to take on a challenge;
when I have to be nudged, rather than following willingly;

Assurance of forgiveness

Forgiving God, it's easy to feel daunted by how people, such as David, have responded to challenges. But you had their backs, and you have mine. With faith, hope and love, you make me ready to fight my battles. You forgive my past and my hesitations, doubts and inadequacies. You fill me with your confidence and make me whole. Amen.

Reading 1 Samuel 17: 32-49 (NIV)

David has confidence that God is with him

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

³³ Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, ³⁵ I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷ The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you."

³⁸ Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armour on him and a bronze helmet on his head. ³⁹ David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

"I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David.

Reading

Mark 4: 35-41(NIV)

Jesus stills a storm

³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.' ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'

³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'

⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'

Reflection

Have you ever had the difficult experience when circumstances feel overwhelming and you don't feel that you have the resources to overcome whatever it is that you're facing?

Yesterday I was in just that situation. Over the past couple of weeks the subject of election hustings had come up and was anyone holding one on Portland? It felt like God was saying to me, 'You can organise the hustings'. My immediate response was, 'No, I can't do that! I've never even attended a hustings. I don't know where to start!' After a number of conversations in which people were supportive and happy to help, no-one had said they would take on the organisation. God was still saying, 'You do it'.

Yesterday, feeling quite overwhelmed and right out of my comfort zone and asking God's blessing on my reluctant efforts, I sent off the invitations to a hustings on Portland at the end of June, to all the candidates standing in the General Election. People are stepping forward to help with practicalities, others offer encouragement. I am learning afresh to have confidence in God, that when we are obedient to his call, God will supply all that we need to fulfil it.

At some time or another we will all know storms of fear and sorrow, challenges of confidence and capability; to whom do we turn then?

King Saul did not have much faith in David's ability to succeed in a fight with Goliath, an experienced Philistine warrior of immense proportions and physical strength. Saul wanted to protect David by dressing him in his own armour but David was sure, not only of his own skills in defending his sheep against predators but also that, despite the odds, the Living God was with him and would give him victory over Goliath. David's trust in God to accomplish the mission was unshakeable, despite the seemingly overwhelming odds against him. Goliath thought the prospect of his own defeat at the hands of someone so small as David, laughable. Neither Saul nor Goliath had reckoned for David's trust in God in the battle.

David chose to use his familiar stones and sling as he went to fight in God's name, and God invites us to use our strengths, skills and experiences too. Spend some time listing the gifts or talents that God has blessed you with and think about how you are using them now or could use them in the future.

Mark, the gospel writer, relates the story of the disciples battling a storm on the lake whilst Jesus remains asleep in the boat. The disciples were experienced fishermen, used to wind and waves but even they were being overwhelmed by the forces of chaos unleashed over the water and they cannot understand how Jesus could possibly be asleep. In a panic they wake him up and ask him to do something, and quickly.

Jesus commands the wind and waves to be still and it happens!

Suddenly the disciples understanding of who Jesus is thrown into confusion. They have seen Jesus' power to heal all kinds of ailments, physical and mental, they have seen miracles of provision and they have heard his teaching. Now they witness Jesus' power to command the natural world; even the forces of chaos are brought to order and peace by his voice.

The disciples are learning that they can have complete confidence in Jesus for all situations; despite all that may happen, good or bad, Jesus is in control of all things and cares for each one who trusts their life to him.

John Wesley was caught in a wild storm whilst crossing the Atlantic. During the storm a group of Moravian Christians were worshipping God with such confidence that it made a huge impression on Wesley. It made him consider closely what it meant for himself to trust in God.

Following Jesus doesn't exempt us from the hard challenges of life and faith but we can lean on his promise that he will always be with us in the storms, leading and guiding us through. Like the disciples, our focus must not be on the wind and waves but on Jesus. Jesus is the one who watches over our going out and coming in, and we can have confidence and trust in him to keep our life in this world and the next.
Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Response after each section: Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer

Holy God, draw near to me now as I lay before you, the concerns of my heart, for I am confident in your presence and in your power....

For the world: *pray for countries where there is violence and conflict within and across borders; pray for peoples who have fled from their homes because of war or persecution; pray for nation leaders to have confidence and take courage in the ways of justice, peace and reconciliation....*

For the church: *pray for confidence in the Living God who reigns over all things; pray for openness of heart to hear God speaking; pray for your local church and all who serve there; pray for wisdom and confidence to reach out to others with the good news of Jesus....*

For the community: *pray for wisdom and discernment in the run up to the general election; pray for good relationships between different community groups, people coming together to serve the community; pray for all politicians, that honesty and integrity are their watchwords....*

For those known to you who need confidence in the presence of Jesus with them: *pray for those who are ill and those who take care of them; pray for those who are weighed down by anxiety, loneliness or financial worries....*

This time of prayer is drawn together in the words of the **Lord's Prayer...**

Hymn StF 736 In heavenly love abiding

In heavenly love abiding,
No change my heart shall fear;
And safe is such confiding,
For nothing changes here:
The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?

2. Wherever he may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack:
His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim,

He knows the way he taketh,
And I will walk with him.

3. Green pastures are before me,
Which yet I have not seen;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me,
Where the dark clouds have been;
My hope I cannot measure,
My path to life is free;
My Saviour has my treasure,
And he will walk with me.

Blessing & sending

Prayerfully consider how, this week, you might use a gift or talent confidently for God...

Great God of power and love, help me to trust you for the big things and the little things in my life. Amen

Be confident of God's presence and blessing with you, this day and always. Amen