

Worship Service

BY JOHN S. WOODS

Prelude

Call to Worship

Today we gather
 to offer ourselves to God.
Today we sing
 in gratitude for Christ's gift.
Today we imagine
 through the sacred words of Scripture.
Today we hope
 in the promised reign of God.
Today we listen
 for the Spirit's whisper.
Today we prepare
 to more fully welcome Christ.
Today we proclaim
 we have come to worship God.

Chiming of the Hour

*Silent Meditation*¹

Bracketed between the first
tentative prayer, a silence fills
this place, a shadowed listening
as our separateness seeks out
the Spirit's focus for this hour
and gathers strength enough
to peer and soar
into small, shining arcs of praise
held at their lower ends
by the old hymns. Christ
in this crowd of rest and rising
humbles himself again to our
humanity; and like the sheep
(trembling in the shearer's hands)
surrenders to us once more
in quietness.

Luci Shaw

Introit Hymn

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” (verses 1, 3, and 4)

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly minded,
for with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
our full homage to demand.

Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
that the powers of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.

At his feet the six winged seraph;
cherubim, with sleepless eye,
veil their faces to the Presence,
as with ceaseless voice they cry,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Lord Most High.

Liturgy of St. James (fifth century); *translated by Gerard Moultrie* (1864)
Tune: PICARDY

Choral Prayer of Gratitude²

“Pilgrim’s Hymn”

Even before we call on your name
to ask you, O God,
when we seek for the words to glorify you,
you hear our prayer;
unceasing love, O unceasing love,
surpassing all we know.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Even with darkness sealing us in,
we breathe Your name,
and through all the days that follow so fast,
we trust in you;
endless your grace, O endless your grace,
beyond all mortal dream.

Both now and for ever,
and unto ages and ages,
Amen.

Michael Dennis Browne (1997)

Music: Stephen Paulus (1997)

Words © 1997 Michael Dennis Browne

Praying for the World

Caring God,
sovereign of every corner of creation,
hear our prayers on behalf of our sisters and brothers
across the street and around the globe.

(The congregation is invited to pray for the needs of the world. Prompts for prayer may be printed in the worship guide or projected. A prayer chime signals the congregation to attend to the next prayer emphasis.)

Prayer of Confession and The Lord's Prayer

Highest God,
You are our Father in heaven,
yet we have ignored your loving guidance;
we fail to acknowledge your place as Creator above creation.
Your name is to be honored,
yet "me" and "I" pervade our speech;
we speak your name only in sudden crisis or panicked alarm.
Your kingdom should be our priority,
but we find it much easier to make excuses for what is,
instead of acting to bring heaven to earth.
You provide all that we need,
yet we silently take from the provision of others
and claim it as blessing.
You forgive our many sins,
but we would rather cling to what we know,
resisting the changes you require.
You pardon all those who sin against you,
and still we keep score and hold grudges,
calling it "justice."
You deliver us from evil and are present in the midst of trial,
yet our faith is constantly wavering.
Yet we want to be different,
we want to practice what we preach;
so we practice by praying as you taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Song of Forgiveness and Praise

“Rejoice, the Lord is King” (verses 1, 2, 3, and 6)

Rejoice, the Lord is King:
your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing,
and triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Jesus, the Savior, reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains,
he took his seat above:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

His kingdom cannot fail,
he rules o’er earth and heav’n;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus giv’n:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Rejoice in glorious hope!
Our Lord and judge shall come
and take his servants up
to their eternal home:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Tune: DARWALL’S 148TH

Scripture Reading: Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.”

And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Song of Response

“God of Grace and God of Glory” (verses 1, 2, 3, and 5)

God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your power.
Crown your ancient church’s story,
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil ’round us,
scorn your Christ, assail his ways.
Fears and doubts too long have bound us,
free our hearts to work and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

Heal your children’s warring madness,
bend our pride to your control.
Shame our wanton selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom’s goal,
lest we miss your kingdom’s goal.

Save us from weak resignation,
to the evils we deplore.
Let the gift of your salvation,
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1930), alt.
Tune: CWM RHONDDA

Sermon

Call to Imagination

“A Searing, Blazing Hope”

Terry W. York
(pp. 60-62 of this volume)

Benediction

May the Creator who called you to imagine in Christ’s name and for Christ’s people,
give you the faith to walk unknown paths,
the courage to walk with humility,
the audacity to speak what matters,
and the joy of journeying with others,
so that all God’s people might catch a vision of “Thy Kingdom come,”
in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

NOTES

1 Luci Shaw, “Bethany Chapel,” *Polishing the Petoskey Stone: Selected Poems* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 208. Used by permission of the author.

2 Michael Dennis Browne, “Pilgrim’s Hymn,” © 1997. Used by permission of the author. This hymn concludes “The Three Hermits,” a church opera based on a story by Leo Tolstoy. The opera, with music composed by Stephen Paulus, premiered in 1997 at House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. SATB and SSAATTBB arrangements for church choir are available from Paulus Publications, 1719 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105, and online at www.stephenpaulus.com.



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