

Traditional Home Service

Sunday 26th November

OPENING PRAYER

Eternal Father,
Whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet;
Who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour, in what we have thought, in what we have said and done, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love, and marred your image in us. We are sorry and ashamed,
and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light. Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.
Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:
Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (Great is Thy Faithfulness)

READINGS – Ephesians 1.15-23
Proverbs 3.5-6

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (The Lord's My Shepherd)

CONCLUSION

The Lord bless you and watch over you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

1. Great is Thy Faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness
O God my Father
There is no shadow
Of turning with Thee
Thou changest not
Thy compassions they fail not
As Thou hast been
Thou forever wilt be

*Great is Thy faithfulness
Great is Thy faithfulness
Morning by morning
New mercies I see
All I have needed
Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness
Lord unto me*

Summer and winter
And springtime and harvest
Sun moon and stars
In their courses above
Join with all nature
In manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness
Mercy and love

Pardon for sin
And a peace that endureth
Thy own dear presence
To cheer and to guide
Strength for today
And bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine
With ten thousand beside

2. The Lord's my Shepherd

The Lord's my Shepherd I'll not want
He makes me lie in pastures green
He leads me by the still still waters
His goodness restores my soul

*And I will trust in You alone
And I will trust in You alone
For Your endless mercy follows me
Your goodness will lead me home*

He guides my ways in righteousness
And He anoints my head with oil
And my cup it overflows with joy
I feast on His pure delights

And though I walk the darkest path
I will not fear the evil one
For You are with me
And Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know

TALK – Ephesians 1.15-23 & Proverbs 3.5-6: Saying ‘YES’ to God

This morning I want to talk about the idea of us saying ‘yes’ to God. We’ll unpack more about what I mean by that in the next few minutes, and I’m going to draw upon those two Bible passages we’ve heard read for us to help us as we do that.

First, I’d like to start with those encouraging words we heard from Ephesians 1. At the start of his letter, Paul gives thanks for the church and encourages them to keep on going in their faith journey. I’d like to draw our attention to v17-19 – Paul prays that the church would receive from God wisdom and insight by the Holy Spirit, and that God would open their eyes so that the church would know him better and would know the hope to which God has called them.

I believe this is not just a prayer relevant to the early church, but that these are all things that us as the church today should still be praying for and seeking from God...so I’d like to turn this into my prayer for us today:

That God would give US wisdom and revelation so that WE would know him better. That God would open the eyes of OUR hearts so that WE would know the hope to which he has called us, that WE would know the riches of his glorious inheritance, that WE would know more of God’s incomparably great power.

God HAS called and IS calling each of us to a place of hope. He offers us life in all its fullness, and he wants us to take hold of it, to step into it, to live a life close to him in relationship with him.

God invites us to say ‘YES’ to him. If we truly want to experience all those things that Paul prays for the church, we have to say ‘YES’ to God and make ourselves fully available to him, so that he can grow those things inside of us and in our lives.

And so, let’s think about what it means to say “yes” to God...

I’m not sure what’s come to mind for you, but perhaps the most obvious kind of “yes” we can

give to God, is the “yes” that says we choose to give our lives to following God and having a relationship with him. That’s a big “yes” we can say to God – one that I know lots of us in this room have said to God at some point in our lives.

But from my experience, saying a real and proper “yes” to God is not only about the moment when we first say yes to following God or becoming a Christian. I think saying “yes” to God is something we have to choose to continue to do again and again as we go through the different seasons of our lives. There are big yesses and little yesses. It’s not just a one-off thing. Certainly, for me, I know I have to make the choice to say “yes” to God every single day, depending on what kind of day I’m having, sometimes it might even be every hour or every minute that I have to actively choose to give God my “yes”!

For me, saying “yes” to God is about opening ourselves up and making ourselves available to God, so that he can reveal himself to us more and more, so that we can know the hope to which he has called us to. Saying “yes” to God is ultimately about completely and totally trusting in God – trusting that God is good and that he loves us. Trusting that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives. Trusting that God is faithful and will keep the promises he makes in the Bible.

So, saying “yes” to God is about putting our trust in God and trying to live our lives faithfully for him. I think this idea of saying “yes” to God is helpfully summed up in that second reading we heard this morning, from Proverbs 3:5-6:
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Well-known verses...but what are they really saying?

These verses instruct us to trust in God completely with our whole hearts, and to not lean on our own understanding – that doesn’t mean we don’t take notice of our own feelings

and ideas, but we've got to take those things to God. We've got to include God in our decision making. We can't build our lives solely on our own feelings and ideas, or even on the feelings and ideas of those around us. The message version puts it like this: "don't try and figure everything out on your own".

Leaning not on our own understanding but on God, is about letting go of trying to be self-sufficient, letting go of control, and instead trusting completely in God to lead, guide, and provide for us in all aspects of our lives. And when we put our trust in God and fully submit ourselves to him, and when we give God a great big "yes" in all areas of our lives, God will make our paths straight. That's nice and easy...!

I can be guilty of reading these verses, particularly the bit about God making our paths straight, and thinking that that means that when I say "yes" to God and choose to trust him with something, that things will be easy. Actually, what I tend to read this verse as is "*trust in God, and he will lead you to a straight path*". Say "yes" to God, and he will put an easy road in front of you to walk down.

But that's not what it says! It doesn't say trust in God, and he will give you a straight path. Instead, we're told that if we say "yes" to God, he will **MAKE** our paths straight. If the Bible says that God is going to make our paths straight, then this implies that there are going to be things getting in the way – we might not even be able to see very far down the path God leads us down.

The idea of God making our paths straight is something active and real. God is going to have to actively be at work and do something to make our paths straight for us. That's what the word used for "straight" here in the Bible really means – the idea of a pathway being cleared, and the road being levelled for us so that we can safely take the next step forward.

When we say "yes" to God, the journey is not always going to be easy, but it will be worth it. And the good news is that we're not the ones

who are left to clear the paths and make a way on our own – God does that with us and for us. God is our way-maker, isn't he?

And I believe that in all things, God always faithful in making a way for us to follow him, even when we can't quite see it yet. But it's a process, and it's probably not a quick one. It's an ongoing journey. Which is why I'm convinced that saying "yes" to God is not just the thing we do once when we become Christians, but it's an ongoing choice we have to make, something we learn to do.

As we go through life with God, trying to faithfully follow him, we have to continue to choose to trust that God *is* clearing the path for us bit by bit.

[EXAMPLES...]

These kinds of things don't just get in the way of us giving God our 'yes' in the big things, but the little things too. It could be anything. I wonder what things get in the way of you saying 'yes' to God? What things has God had to clear from your path as you've tried to put your trust in him?

In my life, things haven't always gone the way I expected or always how I wanted them to and continuing to choose to give God my "yes" and put my complete trust in him hasn't always been easy. But I still firmly believe that saying "yes" to fully trusting God is the very best thing we can do with our lives.

And why do I think that? – Why is it worth saying "yes" to trusting God?

If we think back to Paul's prayer for the church in Ephesians, his prayer that we would know God more and more, that we would know the hope to which he is calling us, that we would know his power in our lives...if we want to grow in these things, we've got to be brave enough to give God our 'YES', and not just as a one off. We've got to keep on choosing God continuously.

There might be times when the idea of continuing to keep trusting God feels scary. But God *is* faithful, and God *is* good. We can trust

him because he loves us and knows us. God has good plans for all of us that will not lead us into harm, but ultimately into flourishing. While there might be trouble all around us now, God promises us that there is so much hope and life for us in the future. And of course, in Jesus, God gave the ultimate “yes” for us. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, overcoming sin and death, he gave absolutely everything for us. That’s God’s way of showing just how much he loves us, just how big his “yes” for us really is. I think it’s worth responding to that by continuing to say “yes” to trusting in him.

It’s OK to find this hard. Putting our trust in God is something we have to learn to do. And I think God is really patient and gentle with us in learning to trust him more and more.

Is there a “yes” we need to say to God?

Is there an area in your life where you need to say “yes” to trusting God?

Could be a relationship, finances, work, your children, your health, the future, a conversation...

Where might you need to say an intention “yes” to trusting God?

Is there something stopping you from saying “yes” to trusting God in a certain area of your life?