

Worship at Home

20th September 2026

Prepared by Revd Anna Flindell

South Molton & Ringsash Methodist Circuit

Formatted by the Devon Moor to Shore Circuit team



Opening Prayer

God of all the Earth,
we sing glory to your name and give you praise.
How awesome are your deeds!
Time and time again you have delivered us;
over and over you have provided for us.
We have seen what you've done and that's why
we're here to bring you our thanks.

But, Lord, we confess that we are often anxious
about whether you will deliver again, whether you
will provide now. We are afraid of following you out
onto a limb. We want to be in control and to have all
the answers. We prefer a Christianity without risk,
without cost. Help us follow you through what we're
facing today, what you're calling us into now.
And, on the other side, may we say,
"Come and see what God has done."

Father, as we come before you today,
we ask for the courage to accept the challenges you
call us to through your example, and we bring you
our thanks for your constant, unchanging love and
your forgiveness. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

STF 255: The kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores what sin would destroy;
God's power and glory in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed, the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened in place of despair.

The kingdom of God is challenge and choice,
believe the good news, repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross,
our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun, in heaven made whole;
the heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory to God all in all!

Bryn Rees (1911-1983) © Alexander Scott

Bible Reading: Luke 12:49-56

Message

At the very start of his ministry in Florence,
Savonarola the Italian political reformer (1452-1498)
noticed an elderly woman who used to come and
pray regularly before a statue of the Virgin Mary.

One day, Savonarola took an elderly priest aside. The
priest had been serving in the cathedral for many
years and new most of the regular worshippers.
Savonarola pointed to the woman as she was
kneeling and said "Look how devoted this woman is.
She comes every day to offer prayers to the blessed
Mother of Jesus. What a marvellous act of faith."

But the elderly priest replied: "Do not be deceived by
what you see. Many years ago, when the sculptor
needed a model to pose for this statue of the blessed
Mother, he hired a beautiful young woman to sit for
him. This devout worshipper you see here every day
is that young woman. She is worshipping who she
used to be."

In the same way, we too must be very careful that we

do not worship an image of Jesus Christ that is untrue
or water down the Bible to make its message more
palatable. If we only know Jesus as meek and mild
then we are most certainly kidding ourselves. Jesus
was radical and was put to death on a cross because
he was such a threat to the Roman governance and
the Jewish leaders of his time.

Jesus' teachings were revolutionary because he
exposed a corrupt society, and those same lessons
are equally controversial today. What is interesting is
that he started with the Church of his day and not the
Roman oppressors.

Jesus' ministry was prophesied from his birth as
being controversial. Before Jesus was even born, his
mother Mary realised that she was about to give
birth to a Son who was destined to challenge the
status quo.

On the day of Jesus' dedication to God in the Temple,
the old prophet Simeon held Jesus in his arms and
said to Mary, "This child is destined to cause the
falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign
that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of
many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce
your own soul too." (Luke 2:34b-35).

Luke's account of Jesus' ministry begins in his
hometown synagogue in Nazareth. There Jesus read
from the prophet Isaiah that day, and the
congregation was so incensed by what he said that
they drove him out of town and tried to throw him
over a cliff.

As Jesus says in our gospel passage this morning:
*"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I
wish it were already kindled!"*

Fire and division are the words we need to pay
attention to in this passage.

This year we have had a long hot summer and our
fire brigades are being stretched to their limits
throughout the UK. We have received emergency
alerts on our mobile phones regarding the dangers of
wildfires being started. People have witnessed fires
starting in one area and consuming acres of field in
minutes and residential properties destroyed.

Fire can be frightening but for fire to burn it needs a source of ignition which creates a spark; oxygen, and food to keep it burning. Once started, a fire can consume almost anything and if the flames are fanned by winds, it can change direction rapidly.

Instead of calling down fire from heaven to destroy us, Jesus is referring to calling down a fire from heaven to cleanse our souls, to free us from the bonds and wages of our wrongdoings.

It is also the fire that starts within each of us, that makes us want to spread the Message of the Gospel to others. Each of us carries the spark of that 'Fire' upon our hearts. We are called by God to pass the igniter of that spark on to others. That igniter is the hope we receive in Christ.

So, in a sense, Jesus does want the whole world consumed by fire. He wants it to be consumed in our awakening to the call from the Holy Spirit. He wants us to spread his message to all. Why? So that everybody in the world will not have to experience the fire of the final judgment. Jesus tells us these things to give us a sense of urgency in the matters of the spirit. He also tells us as we take up this cause that it will not be easy for those around us.

Jesus tells the crowd that they are wrong if they think he had come to bring peace to their families and lives. In fact, finding Christ in your life can often have the opposite effect upon a family.

A church that is too comfortable and rarely challenged by the message of the gospel will not grow. But Jesus will stir it up out of complacency. He gave his Church one Commission and that was to "make disciples." To continue this work for God's kingdom, the church as a living, breathing body must change to face new challenges and times to stay relevant.

When we get that far we will then realise that seeing people come to a saving faith far outweighs the discomfort of change. As Christians we are called to pray more for the kingdom of God to come in this land – and less for our own comforts. The fire of the Holy Spirit will do its work if we are open to it.

STF 372: Come down, O love divine
Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing
true lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler
part, and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with
loathing.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will
long, shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace, till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Bianco da Siena (d. 1434)

translated by Richard Frederick Littledale (1833-1890)

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, please hear our prayers for the human family in its happiness or its distress.

Gather us up into the reconciling fire of your love, so that we may be cleansed of all that fosters misery, and included in everything that creates love, joy and peace.

- We commend to you those who feel ground down or broken, isolated or alienated.
- We bring before you our farming community who have had to face so many challenges this year and continue to battle crop failure and the Bluetongue virus affecting their livestock.
- We commend to you the hungry or homeless, anxious or in agony.
- We bring before you those who through terrorism and war are shattered and despairing.
- We remember those who are coming to the end of their lives and those who are grieving.

- We commend to you the tempted and the fallen, the fearful and the faithless.
- We bring before you all who serve Christ, and work for reconciliation, justice, compassion, and peace throughout the world.

God of Christ Jesus, we submit these prayers to your refining fire. Purify all that pleases you for the service of your kingdom of grace, where no good thing is discarded, and no loving deed wasted.

We ask these prayers in the name of Christ. **Amen**

STF 362: Meekness and majesty

Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity,
in perfect harmony - the man who is God.
Lord of eternity, dwells in humanity,
kneels in humility and washes our feet.

Oh, what a mystery - meekness and majesty:
bow down and worship,
for this is your God,
this is your God!

Father's pure radiance, perfect in innocence,
yet learns obedience to death on a cross:
suffering to give us life, conquering through sacrifice
and as they crucify, prays, 'Father forgive.'

Oh, what a mystery....

Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible,
love indestructible in frailty appears:
Lord of infinity, stooping so tenderly,
lifts our humanity to the heights of his throne.

Oh, what a mystery....

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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Blessing

May the love of Jesus Christ bring us wholeness, the grace of God the Father grant us peace, the breath of the Holy Spirit instil passion and the unity between them give us strength for this and every day. **Amen**

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